THE REPRESENTATION OF VICTIMHOOD, AGAPE AND EROS IN SELECTED INTERWAR AND POST-1990 FIRST WORLD WAR PROSE FICTION

By

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A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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May 2024

Abstract

My thesis assesses the cross-cultural literary treatments of the trope of innocent victimhood that became apparent in commemorations between 2014 and 2018 of the centenary of the First World War in Germany, Turkey, Armenia, France and Britain. These literary treatments challenge the notion, promoted by national centenary commemorations, that participants in the conflict were innocent victims of tragic circumstances. Although these centenary commemorations were set in specific national contexts, their transnational common denominator is their silence concerning the predicaments of victims of state-induced injustices and on the question of human agency during the conflict. This thesis examines innocent victimhood in fictional First World War texts in which the victims of state-induced injustice take center stage. The four war-related injustices are anti-Semitic discrimination, ethnic cleansing, military injustice, and inhumane psychiatric treatment. The trope of innocent victimhood is examined in four separate chapters. In each case, one interwar novel is compared to thematically related post-1990 texts. The novels originate from a wide range of cultural backgrounds.

I argue that in First World War prose fiction dealing with state-induced injustice, the cross-cultural recurring pattern that emerges is the nexus between the fictional protagonists' feelings of guilt and love, which are discussed in relation to the portrayal of victimhood in the texts. In each of the novels under examination, guilt and love complicate the trope of innocent victimhood that marks the official commemorative discourses. The presence of these two feelings allows these protagonists to retain a considerable amount of human agency despite being victims of injustices. The notion of guilt has not received sufficient attention by literary critics of First World War fiction so far. The thesis shows that two kinds of love, selfless agape, based on a sense of solidarity with other victims of

injustice, and self-centred eros, based on romantic love and family relations, emerge in the texts. The thesis demonstrates that, in the world of First World War fictional prose, human agency is portrayed in all its complexity. Drawing on Primo Levi's concept of 'vast grey zones of conscience', my thesis describes how the clear-cut distinction between victims and perpetrators is blurred by the portrayal of the protagonists' guilt in the context of the state-induced crimes committed against them. I argue that by highlighting the issue of responsibility for actions and decisions taken by victims of injustice, literature can provide an important corrective to the over-simplified public perceptions that participants in the conflict were innocent victims.

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Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the relentless support of Nicholas Martin, whose advice, encouragement and patience have been invaluable. I would also like to thank my second supervisor, Elystan Griffiths, for his patience and advice.

Warm thanks also go to my family, especially my wife, whose patience and indulgence have supported me.

List of Abbreviations

Alh	Pierre Lemaitre, *Au revoir là-haut* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2013)
ED	Pat Barker, *The Eye in the Door* [1993] (London: Penguin, 2008)
GR	Pat Barker, *The Ghost Road* [1995] (London: Penguin, 2008)
GRI	Arnold Zweig, *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* [1927] (Berlin: Aufbau, 2006)
JF	Arnold Zweig, *Junge Frau von 1914* [1931] (Berlin: Aufbau, 2014)
MD	Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* [1925] (Ware: Wordsworth, 2003)
P	Ahmet Ümit, *Patasana- Mord am Euphrat* [2000] (Zurich: Unionsverlag, 2013) Translated from Turkish by Recai Hallaç
SE	Avi Primor, *Süß und ehrenvoll* (Berlin: Quadriga, 2013) Translated from Hebrew by Beate Esther von Schwarze
SG	Chris Bohjalian, *The Sandcastle Girls* (New York: Vintage, 2012)
R	Pat Barker, *Regeneration* [1991] (London: Penguin, 2008)
TMD	Franz Werfel, *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh* [1933] (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2015)
Uldf	Sébastien Japrisot, *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* (Paris : Folio, 1991)

Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis argues that the representation of guilt experienced by victims in the portrayal of injustice in First World War prose fiction has not been examined in sufficient depth. The thesis seeks to address this gap in scholarship. Its cross-cultural approach will reveal that focusing on the expiatory functions of two kinds of love, selfless agape and self-directed eros helps to establish the experience of guilt as a major, transnational preoccupation in the field of literary representations of the First World War. Analysing the experience of guilt is crucial in providing a more nuanced view of the morally complex fictional worlds examined in this study. The fictional protagonists in the twelve texts under investigation are variously portrayed as to some extent victims of four different types of state-orchestrated injustice: anti-Semitic discrimination; ethnic cleansing; military injustice; and the inhumane psychiatric treatment of shell shock. Despite the injustices which befall them, the characters in these texts retain a considerable amount of human agency and responsibility, as illustrated by their morally ambivalent actions when faced with these crimes.[1] By analysing the feelings of guilt experienced by protagonists in twelve representative texts, the thesis will challenge the limiting focus on innocent victimhood that characterises state-sponsored commemorations of the First World War centenary in five different countries: France, Germany, Britain, Turkey, and Armenia.

[1] Arnold Zweig, *Junge Frau von 1914* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2014); Arnold Zweig, *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2006); Franz Werfel, *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2015); Avi Primor, *Süß und ehrenvoll*, trans. by Beate Esther von Schwarze (Berlin: Quadriga, 2013); Sébastien Japrisot, *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* (Paris: Folio, 1991); Pierre Lemaitre, *Au revoir là-haut* (Paris: Gallimard, 2012); Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (Ware: Wordsworth, 2003); Pat Barker, *Regeneration* (London: Penguin, 2008); Pat Barker, *The Eye in the Door* (London: Penguin, 2008); Pat Barker, *The Ghost Road* (London: Penguin, 2008); Chris Bohjalian, *The Sandcastle Girls* (New York: Vintage, 2013); Ahmet Ümit, *Patasana*, translated by Recai Hallaç (Zurich: Unionsverlag, 2013).

The reason for selecting these twelve texts lies in the opportunity that they offer to deepen our understanding of the complex relationship between the individual and state authorities in the context of the notion of innocent victimhood in the First World War. Looking at this relationship through the lens of fiction helps us to interrogate the generally one-sided view, propagated in state-orchestrated commemorations, that individuals in the First World War were passive victims of tragic historical circumstances. As will be seen, this view neglects the varying degrees of implication and perpetration played by many individuals who were also victims of state-induced injustices.

State-level commemorations tend to ignore both the rationale and the active roles played by the state authorities in implementing large-scale discrimination and crimes against humanity, as well as the varying degrees of active involvement of the victims in these injustices. The selected novels recreate, at the level of creative fiction, controversial issues that remain important in the perception of the First World War in different national contexts: in the case of Turkey and Armenia, the issues are the use of state and individual violence in the context of ethnic cleansing; in the case of Germany, France and Britain, questions of ethnic, religious and gender identities are set in the context of patriarchal cultural structures. Although ethnicity, religion and gender are important issues in remembering the First World War, they are not the primary focus of my thesis. Its focus is the question of victimhood, which can be seen as a means of overcoming the state's own wrongdoing in the past by foregrounding innocent victimhood and glossing over difficult moral questions. The different framings in different national contexts share the fact that the

'politics of memory rests in significant ways on a politics of innocence', as pointed out by Jonathan Bach and Benjamin Nienass.[2]

Foregrounding the feelings of guilt incurred by fictional protagonists in five different national First World War contexts, this thesis establishes that the recurring pattern that characterises fictional representations of state-orchestrated First World War injustice is the interconnection between guilt and love. The various forms that this interconnection takes prevent the reader from drawing hasty moral conclusions about the predicaments depicted in these novels. In contrast to the anonymous abstraction of war as a universal tragic fate befalling passive victims, which is often characteristic of state-level commemorations of the conflict, the fictional universes in the selected novels establish complex levels of responsibility, depicting protagonists in concrete moral dilemmas that tend to counteract the trope of innocent victimhood.

The Politics of Innocence in First World War Commemorations

As pointed out by Bach and Nienass, memory can be a powerful tool to uncover the 'entwining of innocence and implication, but it can also be employed to divert attention from it.'[3] Innocence itself functions as a myth, independent of specific cases. Especially when juxtaposed to guilt in a binary way, it

> empowers subject positions to claim a space seemingly unencumbered and unimplicated by those complex causalities that fit uneasily into individualistic and legalistic notions of responsibility. The myth of innocence thus brackets implication; yet, in doing so, it implicates its subjects even more – innocence and implication are intertwined.

[2] Jonathan Bach and Benjamin Nienass, 'Innocence and the Politics of Memory', *German Politics and Society*, Issue 135, 39/1 (Spring 2021), (1-14), p. 1.
[3] Ibid., p. 2.

The aim of this study is to show that even though official commemorations bracket implication or human agency by focusing on innocent victimhood, the diegetic universe of the selected fictional prose works foregrounds their protagonists' implication in the state-induced injustices.

The most important intersection between the politics of memory and the politics of innocence for the purpose of this study is the 'identification of innocence with the figure of the victim, or, more accurately, with the figure of the vulnerable body that, by dint of its vulnerability, is at risk of becoming a victim'.[4] The general idea that memory politics is based on innocent victimhood, and the more specific idea that this trope of victimhood is embodied in the figure of the vulnerable body, are relevant to my argument in this thesis. In Chapter Two, the body as a victim is visible in *Junge Frau von 1914*'s portrayal of its female heroine Lenore Wahl as a victim of rape. In Chapter Three the physical annihilation of the Armenian villagers in *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh* is another illustration of the vulnerability of the body as a central tenet of victimhood. In Chapter Four of this thesis on military injustice, with the themes of self-mutilation and facial disfigurement in *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* and *Au revoir là-haut*, the vulnerable body takes centre stage in my discussion of victimhood. In Chapter Five, on shell shock and its psychological and physical symptoms, this vulnerable body will be analysed in detail in the context of the themes of revenge and selfhood.

A second point made by Bach and Nienass that is relevant to my thesis is that

> innocence is not about absolute states of being but about the transition into or out of them – specifically, the state of losing innocence or regaining it. […] innocence is less a present condition than something either already lost and needing to be regained, or at risk of loss and needing to be protected. Innocence is thus connected to

[4] Ibid., p. 3.

> nostalgia for a lost past, […] and to the desire to redeem that loss through setting the terms of action in the present and for the future.[5]

For the purpose of my argument, this non-static, temporal view of innocence, as a force turned both to the past and the future, is important to highlight its redemptory potential. Redemption is defined as the desire to go back to the past to recover lost innocence, but it can also be that redemption is the desire to reboot the present by projecting into the hope for an end to victimhood. In my reading of the twelve texts under scrutiny in this thesis, the state of innocence was lost through the protagonists' implication in their own predicaments.

Five National Contexts, Two Time Frames and One Theme

The five national contexts that form the focus of the thesis - France, Germany, Britain, Turkey, and Armenia - were chosen for three different reasons. First, from a historical and political point of view, the events of the First World War continue to play an important part in the cultural identity of these nations. This will be illustrated by analysing the various forms of state-level commemorations of the First World War centenary (2014-18) in these national contexts, and the ways in which these commemorations tended to foreground tropes of innocent victimhood. Second, from a literary viewpoint, the events of the war continue to inspire works of narrative fictional prose in these five national contexts. Running counter to state-level narratives, the protagonists of these fictional texts are often shown as both victims *and* perpetrators in the events of the First World War. Third, the selected fictional texts dealing with the First World War allow the reader to compare and contrast literary treatments of moral agency in the context of four different injustices (anti-Semitism, ethnic cleansing, military injustice and inhumane psychiatric treatment) in two different time frames: the interwar period and the period after 1990.

[5] Ibid., p. 3.

In the case of Arnold Zweig's *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* (1927) and *Junge Frau von 1914* (1931), fictional characters' feelings of guilt, resulting from their actions taken in the context of the four injustices, are set in the cultural and political context of the interwar years in Germany. The Austrian writer Franz Werfel's *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh* (1933) describes Armenian resistance against ethnic cleansing during the First World War. Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) is set in the context of an interwar Britain traumatised by the aftermath of the First World War. Including a second time frame, starting approximately in the year 1990, allows the reader to compare and contrast representations of these four injustices, and moral dilemmas associated with these, in First World War-related settings in prose fiction over sixty years later.

Although each of these different texts is embedded in its own specific context, the representation of injustice links the two different time frames. Above all, these representations of injustice over an extended period of time allow for a nuanced analysis of the fictional characters' feelings of guilt, resulting from their actions taken in the context of their exposure to one of four kinds of injustice (anti-Semitism, ethnic cleansing, military injustice and inhumane psychiatric treatment). I argue that the characters' decisions blur the boundaries between victims and perpetrators. The fact that these victims of injustices can themselves become perpetrators in various situations creates an awareness of the complex pressures under which the fictional protagonists have to take decisions when faced with state-induced injustices. The fictional worlds depicted call into question the often disproportionate focus on passive, innocent victimhood that tends to be foregrounded in official memory of the First World War in France, Germany, Britain, Turkey, and Armenia.

The Role of State-Level First World War Commemorations and the Choice of Texts

We will now examine state-level centenary commemorations of the First World War between 2014 and 2018, and even later, in each of the five national contexts mentioned above. This provides essential context for an analysis of how the specific commemorative themes foregrounded in each of these national contexts, which tend to highlight the trope of innocent victimhood, are reconfigured or challenged by the First World War prose fiction analysed in the main body of the thesis. The aim is to interrogate and add nuance to the underlying assumptions of state-level commemorations of the conflict by juxtaposing them with literary treatments of it.

The twelve novels under examination have also been chosen in part because they highlight the ways in which state authorities deal with religious or ethnic minorities. Chapter Two analyses the literary treatment of the discriminatory policies of the Imperial German state against its Jewish minority, while Chapter Three discusses the fictional representation of the Ottoman empire's attempted ethnic cleansing of its Armenian ethnic minority in 1915. Chapters Four and Five discuss texts in which the minorities suffering callous treatment at the hands of military authorities are French, Russian and British soldiers: Chapter Four considers military injustice in a case where several First World War soldiers have been sentenced to death for espionage or for self-mutilation.[6] Chapter Five analyses fictional representations of inhumane psychiatric treatment; the shell-shocked British soldiers in these texts can also be considered as representing a minority, albeit a large one.[7] In each of these chapters, the literary treatments of the events recreated in the novels are discussed

[6] In the French army, the number of soldiers sentenced to death and executed reaches less than one per ten thousand, as pointed out by Olivier Guillot and Antoine Parent: 'Les fusillés de la Grande Guerre sont-ils morts au nom de leurs idées pacifistes? Une approche quantitative', in *Revue de l'OFCE*, 2021/1, (135-159), p. 135.

[7] Jay Winter claims that nearly 20 percent of British soldiers were unable to return to active service because they suffered from psychiatric disabilities. See Jay Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War, Vol III: Civil Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 330.

with a view to analysing the complex pressures and constraints under which the fictional protagonists must act, while suffering from state-induced injustices. In none of the examples discussed, can the protagonists be characterised as wholly innocent victims.

The analytical focus of each of these four chapters is on the moral complexity of the actions taken by the fictional protagonists to cope with or resist the injustices they face. This focus on marginalised or minority protagonists is one reason why certain classic works of First World War fictional prose, such as Erich Maria Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues* (1928), are not included in the novels selected for this study on guilt in the face of injustice.[8] Remarque's main protagonist, Paul Bäumer, is neither a member of an ethnic minority, nor does he suffer from a specific state-induced injustice in the context of serving in the First World War. Bäumer considers himself and his comrades in arms to be victims of the cruelty of war in general. The same is true of another classic First World War novel, Henri Barbusse's *Le feu* (1916), which is largely a fictional first-hand account of French soldiers having to cope with the horrors and anxieties of frontline combat situations.[9] The twelve novels selected for this study do not focus primarily on the combat experiences of their protagonists, with the exception of Pierre Lemaitre's *Au revoir là-haut* (2013). Even this text devotes only its first few chapters to descriptions of frontline combat.

Nearly all the fictional protagonists in the twelve novels under examination in this thesis are instead the victims of various representatives of the state, in the shape of military authorities or societal structures during the First World War, away from the frontline of fighting. The only exception is Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), which is set on one day in the year 1923. Its main fictional protagonist, the war veteran Septimus Smith, is, however, portrayed as a victim of the authoritarian psychiatric treatment by psychiatrists who are

[8] Erich Maria Remarque, *Im Westen nichts Neues* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 2019).
[9] Henri Barbusse, *Le Feu* (Paris : Flammarion, 2014).

portrayed in the novel as members of the patriarchal structures that prevail in interwar British society. As will be seen throughout, the feelings of guilt of the fictional protagonists are the result of their decisions either to satisfy or to resist the demands of these state authorities. In each novel under examination, these feelings of guilt are seen as evidence of the ambivalent nature of this agency: in each individual case, the fact that these actions are taken under varying degrees of coercion automatically blurs the over-simplified perspective on innocent victimhood that is characteristic of state-level commemorations. Given the five different national contexts in which the selected novels are set, the guilt incurred by the protagonists cannot be seen as homogeneous or uniform. Nevertheless, the thesis argues that its strong presence in prose fiction emanating from each of the five different national contexts illustrates that, in First World War prose fiction that highlights state-induced injustices, guilt is a transnational phenomenon.

State-level commemorations in Germany, France, Britain, Turkey and Armenia tend to be characterised by an emphasis on innocent victimhood, which often excludes consideration of complex issues of public and private responsibilities for the events of the First World War. On 11 November 2008, the ninetieth anniversary of the Armistice, French President Sarkozy's speech at Douaumont near Verdun included the words: 'Souvenons-nous de leur souffrance, elle est la clé de notre salut.'[10] The French state took a central role in commemorating the conflict during the centenary, either in organising ceremonies of commemoration, or in sponsoring exhibitions on other, family-related perspectives on the conflict. A good example is the exhibition called 'Familles à l'épreuve de la guerre' that took

[10] 'Let us remember their suffering, it is the key to our salvation.' 'Déclaration de M. Nicolas Sarkozy, Président de la République, en l'honneur des anciens combattants de la Première Guerre mondiale, à Douaumont le 11 novembre 2008' <https://www.vie-publique.fr/discours/173016-declaration-de-m-nicolas-sarkozy-president-de-la-republique-en-lhonn>. [Last accessed 3 February 2024].

place between 2 June and 2 December 2018 in the *Musée de la Grande Guerre* in Meaux.[11] It received the label 'exposition d'intérêt national' by the French Culture Ministry. It focused on the various impacts that the war had on marriage, birth rates and relations of authority between fathers who fought in the war and their children at home. The exhibition's chief organiser was the First World War historian Jean-Yves Le Naour, who declares in the exhibition brochure that the most impressive detail is the tomb plaques that bereaved families put on their fallen family members' graves: 'On y sent à la fois la fierté et l'abattement: la fierté du sacrifice pour que la patrie vive, la tristesse infinie d'avoir perdu celui qui faisait le sel de la vie.'[12] Le Naour's focus on the sense of national sacrifice that French families made in order to save France reflects the general notion of sacrifice and suffering for the cause of the nation that pervades the exhibition. The overarching message is that victimhood and suffering are necessary if the nation is threatened.

In contrast to this picture of a nation unified in sacrifice and suffering, the novels selected in Chapter Four of this thesis on military injustice in the French context, Sébastien Japrisot's *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* (1991), and Pierre Lemaitre's *Au revoir là-haut* (2013), portray a much less harmonious relationship between the family affected by war and national sacrifice.[13] Both novels combine the depiction of dysfunctional families suffering from unjust decisions taken by military authorities (Japrisot), and a father-son relationship that was already damaged before the war even started (Lemaitre). These family portrayals are seen through the perspectives of fictional protagonists who either reject the heroisation

[11] See: <https://www.museedelagrandeguerre.com/programmes/exposition-temporaire/familles-a-lepreuve-de-la-guerre/>. [Last accessed 8 March 2024].

[12] 'One can feel pride and dejection at the same time: pride in the sacrifice made so that the homeland can live on, unlimited sadness for having lost the person who made life worth living.' *Dossier de Presse 'Familles à l'épreuve de la Guerre'*, p. 4 (My translation). The press file can be read here: <https://www.museedelagrandeguerre.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/DP-Exposition-Familles-a-lepreuve-de-la-guerre-1.pdf>. [Last accessed 8 March 2024].

[13] Sébastien Japrisot, *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* (Paris: Folio, 1991) ; Pierre Lemaitre, *Au revoir là-haut* (Paris: Gallimard, 2013).

of the soldier-victim (Japrisot's main female heroine Mathilde), or who use the commemoration industry and its glorification of sacrifice as a means to exploit bereaved families financially (Lemaitre's fictional First World War French veteran-soldiers Edouard Péricourt and d'Aulnay-Pradelle). These two post-1990 texts deconstruct the image of the French family as a key institution that willingly sacrificed its happiness to save the French nation.

Although initiatives like 'Familles à l'épreuve de la guerre' are praiseworthy in their attempt to keep the events of the conflict alive over a hundred years after its outbreak, French historian Annette Becker criticises the fact that they remain silent about many controversial aspects of the understanding of the war, which are foregrounded in the texts under discussion in this thesis:

> Suffering has been rendered universal, facilitating narratives of European unity and internationalization of the war story in public, while marginalizing to the point of denial the hatreds that had so animated the belligerents. Alternative narratives are thus rendered anti-victim in complexion.[14]

Agency and perpetration are marginalised in favour of victimhood in these 'alternative narratives'. A good illustration is provided by the ceremony on 11 November 2023 to mark the 105th anniversary of the Armistice of 1918. During the ceremony, French President Macron said that the image of the unknown soldier unites all kinds of political and religious convictions, and unites the French soldiers despite their different ethnic backgrounds:

> L'inconnu est tous les soldats de la France. Il est de tous les horizons, de la métropole et de nos Outremers, du Maghreb et d'Afrique, des Caraïbes au Pacifique. Il est de

[14] Annette Becker, 'Museums, Architects and Artists on the Western Front. New Commemoration for a New History?', in Bart Ziino (ed.), *Remembering the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 90-109 (p. 95).

> toutes les convictions, croyants et francs-maçons, agnostiques et libres-penseurs, protestants et musulmans, catholiques et juifs.[15]

Macron's words can be seen as prioritising the idea of the nation above that of ethnic origins. The controversial debates in France concerning the history of colonialism provide the background for using the figure of the unknown soldier as an event to look upon the colonial history of France as something positive.[16] The ceremony also honoured three French soldiers who were killed in Iraq in August 2023. During the same ceremony, the French-Jewish First World War officer Alfred Dreyfus, wrongly sentenced for high-treason in 1894, was also commemorated.

The French soldiers born in France's former colonies and Alfred Dreyfus can be seen as representative victims of state-orchestrated discrimination, namely colonial exploitation and structural anti-Semitism within the French army. Macron's nationalist narrative implies that the will to sacrifice one's life for the French nation transcends the fact that this very nation can be accused in some cases of mistreating its soldiers. In this sense, the figure of the unknown soldier blurs ethnic and social differences by giving sacrifice a unifying, redemptive function. It evades a nuanced understanding of complex issues such as the relationship between victims of ethnic discrimination and national identity. It is the portrayal of these nuances, in the fictional prose works selected for this thesis, that will be discussed in the main chapters.

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[15] 'The unknown soldier is all the soldiers of France. He comes from all horizons, from the metropolitan France and from overseas, the Maghreb and Africa, the Caribbean to the Pacific. He is of all convictions, be they religious believers and freemasons, agnostics or free thinkers, protestants or muslims, catholics or Jewish.' (My translation). See Clara Hidalgo, '11 Novembre: une commémoration de l'armistice particulière', in *Figaro*, 11 November 2023 : <https://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/11-novembre-une-commemoration-de-l-armistice-particuliere-20231111>. [Last accessed 18 February 2024].

[16] In this context, the French parliament voted a law on repatriated people on 23 February 2005, mentioning the positive role played by French colonization, especially in North Africa. The controversial debates following this law have so far prevented the creation of a national French museum on its colonial history. See Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard, 'The colonial issue is the last taboo of France's 19th and 20th century history', in *Le Monde*, 5 November 2023: <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/opinion/article/2023/11/05/the-issue-is-the-last-taboo-in-france-s-19th-and-20th-century-history_6229376_23.html>. [Last accessed 18 February 2024].

In Germany, the national commemoration day for all the victims of political violence, deportation and war, the 'Volkstrauertag' (National Day of Mourning), displays a similar political will to erase the nuances and differences between the situational contexts in which a host of different historical events took place. The German-Jewish involvement in the First World War, discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis as an example of the support of parts of the German-Jewish population for the Imperial German war effort, was commemorated on 23 November 2023 at a ceremony at the military cemetery in Berlin-Weißensee. The former chairman of the German Bundestag, Wolfgang Thierse, honoured the memory of the fallen German-Jewish First World War soldiers, while also commemorating the Israeli victims of the Hamas attacks on 7 November 2023.

> Indem wir hier und heute jüdischer Soldaten gedenken, tun wir dies in dem Wissen, dass das, was gegenwärtig im Nahen Osten geschieht, mit deutscher Geschichte zu tun hat. Indem wir hier der jüdischen Gefallenen in einem deutschen und europäischen Krieg gedenken, drücken wir auch unser Mitgefühl aus mit den Opfern der um ihre Existenz kämpfenden jüdischen Heimstatt Israel.[17]

The immediate context of this ceremony is the need to combat growing anti-Semitism in Germany, which is, of course, embedded in the responsibility of Germans for the Holocaust.[18] However, Thierse's allusion to the Hamas attacks appears to equate German-Jewish First World War soldiers, Holocaust victims and victims of the Hamas attacks. As will be seen in Chapter Two, the fictional accounts of Jewish agency during the First World War to some extent challenge the equation between Jewishness and innocent victimhood.

In the above-mentioned examples of German and French state-led commemorations, one can argue that agency and perpetration have been largely displaced in favour of a

[17] 'Volkstrauertag: Politiker erinnern an Opfer von Krieg und Gewaltherrschaft', *Zeit Online*, 19 November 2023: <https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2023-11/volkstrauertag-pistorius-juedischer-friedhof-berlin>. [Last accessed 18 February 2024].

[18] See Ashifa Kassam, "'Rise in anti-Semitism 'brings Germans back to most horrific times'", *The Guardian*, 24 October 2023: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/24/rise-in-antisemitism-brings-germans-back-to-most-horrific-times>. [Last accessed 18 February 2024].

unifying discourse in which suffering and victimhood are associated with passive endurance of adverse circumstances. In the novels under scrutiny in this thesis, human agency will be discussed with the help of the fictional representations of actual injustices that occurred during the First World War. In the selected novels, agency is portrayed in the context of the complex relationship between victimhood and state-induced injustices. The different situations in which these injustices are represented necessarily produce different varieties of guilt. The variety of the fictional protagonists' reactions towards the injustices from which they suffer in various contexts prevents any kind of over-simplified victim-blaming. As will be seen, the agency-related guilt incurred in the novels under scrutiny crosses national and cultural borders and can be seen as the texts' common preoccupation.

A second example of the character of German commemorations of the First World War that is relevant for this thesis is provided by the Munich Jewish Museum's exhibition called *'Krieg! Juden zwischen den Fronten 1914-1918'*, which was shown between July 2014 and February 2015. It simultaneously addressed the patriotic German-Jewish support for the German war effort and the anti-Semitic discrimination against German-Jewish soldiers by their own military authorities. The exhibition addresses nine different aspects of German-Jewish involvement in the First World War.[19] The four most relevant aspects for this exhibition are the portrayal of Jewish codes of masculinity in relation to militarism, the impact of the Jewish census ('Judenzählung') of 1916 on the self-perception of German-Jews serving in the Imperial German army, the hardships suffered by Eastern European Jews during the war, and the ambivalent role played by the German-Jewish chemist Fritz Haber,

[19] See the exhibition catalogue: Ulrike Heikaus, Julia B. Köhne (eds.), *Krieg! Juden zwischen den Fronten 1914-1918* (Berlin & Leipzig: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2014). See also two reports on this exhibition: Alexander Kluy, 'Die deutschen Juden standen zwischen allen Fronten', in *Die Welt*, 9 July 2014: <https://www.welt.de/kultur/article129928387/Die-deutschen-Juden-standen-zwischen-allen-Fronten.html>. [Last accessed: 7 March 2024]; and Kathleen Hildebrand, 'Grausam vergeblich', in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 9 July 2014: <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/krieg-juden-zwischen-den-fronten-1914-1918-grausam-vergeblich-1.2036627>. [Last accessed: 7 March 2024].

who pioneered the use of chemical gas warfare on the Western front. The exhibition illustrates that young German men of all confessions looked upon military service as not only a duty for the nation, but also a necessary educational step in their growing masculinity: 'Man akzeptierte ihn [military service] nicht nur als „Schule der Nation", sondern zunehmend als „Schule der Männlichkeit"'.[20]

The issue of Jewish masculinity is examined in this thesis in the context of German militarism in Arnold Zweig's *Junge Frau von 1914* (1931). In contrast to the exhibition's absence of a female perspective on Jewish masculinity, Zweig's text problematises the link between male behaviour and militarism through the perspective of a female victim of rape, Lenore Wahl. In Zweig's novel, the clash between male and female perspectives on the impact of war illustrates that the diegetic world of *Junge Frau von 1914* is able to provide greater nuance than many centenary commemorations and exhibitions on the moral complexities of Jewish involvement in the First World War. The same is true of the post-1990 novel analysed in this context, Avi Primor's *Süß und ehrenvoll* (2013). By adding a female perspective to that of the main male protagonist, Primor relativises his main male German-Jewish protagonist's unconditional support for the German war cause. This complicates the fact that, in the official centenary commemoration mentioned above, the active part of German-Jewish soldiers fails to be mentioned. As will be seen in both novels, although the male and female fictional Jewish protagonists are portrayed as victims of anti-Semitic discrimination, their morally questionable choices during the course of the conflict are also depicted. The sense of innocent victimhood is thus more nuanced in the literary representation of German-Jewish involvement in the First World War.

[20] Ulrike Heikaus, Julia B. Köhne (eds.), *Krieg! Juden zwischen den Fronten 1914-1918*, p. 58.

In Turkey, the centenary of the First World War was commemorated through the nationalist perspective of the official Turkish narrative of the conflict. Official Turkish commemorations aimed to silence, or drown out, the centenary of the 1915 Armenian genocide, as will be discussed in more detail at the beginning of Chapter Three of this thesis. During the preparations of the 2015 official centenary commemorations of the Battle of Gallipoli, President Recep Tayip Erdogan's party, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), celebrated the campaign as part of a 'struggle of Muslim martyrs against Christian invaders'.[21] The official Turkish narrative of commemorating the First World War is thus based on a sense of ethno-religious, innocent victimhood. This is at odds with the representation of victimhood and guilt in the texts on the Armenian genocide analysed in this thesis. The three novels selected for analysis in Chapter Two have been chosen because they portray fictional characters who voice differing views on the Armenian genocide. Furthermore, their common denominator is that they not only problematise the use of violence on the side of the Ottoman perpetrators, but they also depict the use of violence used by the Armenian characters in their attempts to resist the Ottomans' genocidal crimes. This adds ambiguity to the view that Armenian victims of the genocide are innocent martyrs, which is the narrative characteristic of official Armenian state representatives during the centenary commemorations.

As just indicated, the commemorations in Armenia itself of the Armenian genocide are based in part on a narrative that turns the victims of the genocide into martyr-like victims. The language used is that of religious martyrdom, set in the context of Armenian suffering. This language contrasts both with the non-religious language of unifying national

[21] See Demet Lüküslu, 'Creating a Pious Generation. Youth and Education Policies of the AKP in Turkey', *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 16.4. (2016), 637-649 (p. 642); see also Nazan Maksudyan, 'Centenary (Turkey)', in Ute Daniel et al. (eds) 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2015-07-09 <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/centenary_turkey>. [Last accessed 15 August 2023].

sacrifice seen in President Macron's speech and with the moralising language of historical duty or responsibility that was identified in the German commemorations of German-Jewish involvement in the First World War discussed above.

In Werfel's *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh* (1931), the main fictional character, Gabriel Bagradian, is partly portrayed as a martyr-like resistance hero, yet his psychological journey is marked by ambivalence, especially his use of violence. This ambivalence will be analysed in Chapter Three of this thesis. In Armenia's official commemoration in 2015 of the genocide, the leader of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Karekin II, the Catholicos of All Armenians, decided to proceed with the canonisation of one and a half million 'martyrs' who 'perished for their faith' during the genocide.[22] This decision was taken on the eve of 24 April 2015, which marked the centennial of the beginning of the genocide. The Republic of Armenia has placed the international recognition of the genocide at the centre of its foreign policy since the late 1990s.[23] This recognition is, however, implemented in a far more nuanced manner in the three novels selected for analysis in Chapter Three. The three novels recognise the genocide in the sense that they create awareness of important parts of it in their narratives. In the diegetic world of these texts, the events and actors of the genocide are fictionalised in a way that shows their different degrees of responsibility in the events. Here again, there is a wide range of responsibilities and various kinds of guilt, resulting from the multitude of different situations in which the fictional protagonists experience the events of the genocide.

Chapter Three will analyse the representation of the trope of Armenian martyrdom and victimhood in prose fiction, by examining three representative novels dealing with the

[22] 'Armenian Church Makes Saints of 1.5 Million Genocide Victims', France 24, 23 April 2015 <https://www.france24.com/en/20150423-armenia-church-turkey-canonization-sainthood-genocide-victims>. [Last accessed 15 August 2023].

[23] See Boris Adjemian, 'Centenary (Armenia)', in 1914-1918-online <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/centenary_armenia>. [Last accessed 15 August 2023].

Armenian genocide: Franz Werfel's *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh* (1931) features the figure of the Armenian martyr-like resistance fighter; Ahmet Ümit's *Patasana* (2000) addresses the question of the most appropriate means to punish the perpetrators of the genocide; and Chris Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls* (2012) raises the issue of the genocide's legacy for members of the Armenian diaspora. In each of the novels, the fictional Armenian protagonists use violence in different contexts and at different stages of their exposure to the threat of ethnic cleansing by the Ottoman authorities.

Werfel's novel of 1933 has been chosen because it simultaneously portrays Armenian heroism in resisting the powerful Ottoman attempts to deport the Armenian inhabitants of a small village, and the Armenians' use of violence, even against their own kind, which is portrayed as a necessary means to achieve military success against the aggressor. The same is true of the two post-1990 novels on the Armenian genocide. Ümit's *Patasana*, partly set in the late 1990s in Anatolia, portrays the blood revenge of a descendant of a victim of the 1915 Armenian genocide against the descendants of those who murdered his relatives some seventy years earlier. In Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls*, the use of vindictive violence is also problematised in the shape of a husband who kills the Ottoman official who ordered his wife and daughter to be deported. Although these three novels portray their Armenian protagonists as both victims and, to some extent, perpetrators, the absence in these texts of moralising comments from any of the fictional characters or narrative voices prevents the reader from drawing clear-cut conclusions about the actions which are set in the extreme conditions of the Ottoman deportation orders.

Whereas in Chapter Three, the issue of violence, as an illustration of human agency, is discussed from the perspective of the Armenian victims threatened by ethnic cleansing, the discussion in Chapter Four focuses on the impacts of state-induced violence set in the

context of military justice. Bach and Nienass' idea of innocence as symbolised by the figure of the vulnerable body comes into play here. The violence of the state and that of war in general on the soldiers' body is foregrounded by the three novels by Zweig, Japrisot and Lemaitre. Arnold Zweig's eponymous Russian soldier Grischa in *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* (1927) may be the victim of a callous Imperial German military justice apparatus. Yet the main representative of this system, General Schieffenzahn, is portrayed in a manner that prevents the reader from drawing any simplified conclusions. Zweig's differentiated psychological portrayal of Schieffenzahn, the military ruler of German-occupied territories in Eastern Europe who is responsible for Grischa's death sentence, illustrates that even high-ranking perpetrators display pangs of conscience in the diegetic universe. Those who fight for Grischa's life, a small group of law-abiding German officers, are also portrayed ambivalently. Grischa changes into a pacifist and accepts his death sentence, an act that can be seen as a noble repentance for his former life as a Russian soldier. However, the gruesome details of the execution work against any attempt to glorify Grischa's sacrifice. Grischa's human agency in the shape of his conscious choice to reject attempts to rescue him is therefore problematised. At the same time, the normal German soldiers are portrayed as powerless figures within the powerful military apparatus that governs the German-occupied territories in Eastern Europe. Both Grischa and Schieffenzahn can therefore be seen as both perpetrators and victims of the pressures that the war situation places upon them. Their ambivalent portrayals blur the simplified distinction between innocence and moral responsibility, and also between victim and perpetrator.

The two French post-1990 novels selected in Chapter Four also leave ample space for various interpretations of the guilt incurred by their fictional protagonists acting in the context of the French military justice system during the First World War. Both Sébastien

Japrisot's *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* (1991), and Pierre Lemaitre's *Au revoir là-haut* (2013) juxtapose the extreme physical suffering and the sacrifices of their main characters - fictional French soldiers - with the crimes that these same soldiers commit. The soldiers in both novels are portrayed as victims of a callous, criminal military bureaucracy. The crimes they commit are embedded in the extreme hardship they must endure during their frontline fighting.

In Japrisot's *Un long dimanche de fiançailles*, the five French soldiers who mutilate their hands to avoid fighting are portrayed as perpetrators breaking military law, yet their actions must be seen in the context both of the appalling conditions on the Western Front and a military justice system that callously sentences these men to be thrown into No Man's Land. Both Japrisot's and Lemaitre's post-1990 First World War texts have been chosen because they question the over-simplified heroisation of French soldiers, which has been identified above as characteristic of French centenary commemorations. These texts contradict the language of national sacrifice and unity of the kind we have seen in President Macron's use of the trope of the unknown soldier.

In Britain, narratives of sacrifice and innocent victimhood were central to the enormous range of commemorative events during the First World War centenary. As pointed out by Helen B. McCartney, the 'First World War has become a byword for futility in Britain. […] The image of the First World War soldier as a victim is a logical consequence of these narratives'.[24] A series of public arts projects demonstrated the emotional, familial link that the British public feels with those who experienced the war. A good example is provided by the enormously popular installation of 888,246 ceramic red poppies by the Royal Historic Palaces in the moat of the Tower of London, called *Bloodswept Lands and Seas of Red*,

[24] Helen B. McCartney, 'The First World War Soldier and His Contemporary Image in Britain', *International Affairs*, 90.2 (2014), 299-315 (p. 299).

between July and November 2014. Each of the poppies represented a British, Dominion or Empire fatality during the First World War. The installation, which was supposed to represent a collective remembrance, attracted an estimated five million visitors.[25] Members of the public could buy individual ceramic poppies for £25 each, with a share of the proceeds going to military service charities. The controversial art project was described by art critic Jonathan Jones as a 'prettified and toothless war memorial'.[26] Nevertheless, the extraordinary popularity of the *Bloodswept Lands and Seas of Red* may be explained by the fact that it united the public by using the British Legion poppy, which is deeply engrained in the memory practices of the British public, as a symbol of individual loss and grief. The ceramic red poppies can thus also be regarded as a symbol of innocent victimhood, as their effect is to put every British loss on the same level of passive suffering and sacrifice. The exhibition's designer, Tom Piper, who planned and constructed the display, declared that

> This is not an installation about war, or an illustration of its violence and barbarity, it is about loss and commemoration and has given individuals a unique way to tap back into their own family history and appreciate some of that human cost.[27]

Chapter Five of this thesis analyses this received notion of the individual victim-soldier by examining the way the trope of the traumatised victim-soldier is used in Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy (1991-1995). The figure of the shell-shocked British First World War soldier is an important element of the British public's perception of the First World War, as pointed out by McCartney:

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[25] See Vanessa Thorpe, "Tower of London Poppies: 'This Is Not About War or Barbarity … It's About Loss and Commemoration'", *The Guardian*, 1 November, 2014: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/01/tower-of-london-poppies-interview> [Last accessed 7 March 2024].

[26] Jonathan Jones, 'The Tower of London poppies are fake, trite and inward-looking – a Ukip-style memorial', *The Guardian*, 28 October 2014: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2014/oct/28/tower-of-london-poppies-ukip-remembrance-day>. [Last accessed 15 August 2023].

[27] Ibid.

'Psychological injury as a result of wartime experience has been a part of popular consciousness since the First World War.'[28]

As will be seen in Chapter Five, the term 'shell shock' has become symbolic of the futility and horror of the war, especially in the English-speaking world, and especially in the last forty years. Furthermore, it is also associated with innocent victimhood. As seen above, the figure of the vulnerable body is associated with innocence because, due to its vulnerability, it is always at risk of becoming a victim. The figure of the shell-shocked soldiers serves as the second example of innocence symbolised by the vulnerable body. Jay Winter points out that it has been essential in the representation of the First World War, its meaning evolving 'from the medical to the metaphysical'.[29] The shell-shocked First World War poets Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon and Ivor Gurney described the condition, for example in Owen's poem 'Mental cases'.[30] These personal experiences of the haunting quality of modern warfare in poetry and prose influenced Virginia Woolf to use the vocabulary of war trauma for her main male protagonist in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), the traumatised war veteran Septimus Smith.

Drawing on Jay Winter's work, Virginie Renard has pointed out that the interest attached by the public and academia to shell shock is a result of an interest in traumatic memory since the end of the Vietnam war: 'Since then, the witness and victim of war has gained a semi-sacred status, as a person speaking for the dead and testifying to the terrifying truth of the past.'[31] A similar application of the concept of shell shock to a more general philosophy of history can be found in the work of Cathy Caruth, for whom trauma represents

[28] McCartney, 'The First World War Soldier and His Contemporary Image in Britain', p. 307.
[29] Jay Winter, 'Shell-Shock and the Cultural History of the Great War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 35/1, January 2000, (7-11), p. 7.
[30] Wilfred Owen, 'Mental Cases', in Jon Silkin (ed.), *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry* (London: Penguin, 1996), p. 205.
[31] Virginie Renard, *The Great War and Postmodern Memory. The First World War in Late 20th Century British Fiction (1985-2000)* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2013), p. 181.

a crisis of history, meaning that it is impossible in our age for the subject to understand history fully.[32] As the traumatic event cannot be completely experienced or assimilated as it occurs, it repeats itself continuously and haunts the subject.

Caruth claims that trauma is not experienced by the subject as a repression of the traumatic event, but as a disruption of linear temporality. The traumatic past is a persistent presence, haunting its victim as if it were possessed. This idea is the basis for Barker's pessimistic philosophy of history, as illustrated by the image of the past as a palimpsest, as will be seen in Chapter Five of this thesis. Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy applies Caruth's ideas in a complex way, mainly in *The Eye in the Door* (1993), which implies that British society is guilty of collective repression of wartime trauma.[33] The idea of victimhood is thus extended to the whole of British culture which is trying to repress the atrocities of war, but as will be seen in an analysis of the end of the trilogy, is constantly haunted by them. In this sense, British society is still fixated on its dark past.

The other trope for understanding Barker's complex use of trauma in the context of innocent victimhood is illustrated by Billy Prior's mental health issues, as symbolised by his dissociated or split personality. The *Regeneration* trilogy exemplifies a notion of selfhood based on difference instead of identity. The negative, traumatic split of Prior's personality, is portrayed in Barker's novel as an integral part of his selfhood, but it is uncontrollable. His internal other is constructed as an unfeeling and potentially violent personality. The portrayal of his trauma complicates the portrayal of Billy as a war victim. It helps Billy from going insane by blocking the horrific experiences he makes in the trenches. Dissociating himself from these experiences guarantees that he can function as a combat soldier.

[32] Cathy Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 4.
[33] Pat Barker, *The Eye in the Door* (London: Penguin, 2008).

However, the second novel of the trilogy, *The Eye in the Door* (1993), makes it clear that Billy's dissociated self is also a defence mechanism against the fact that as a teenager, he became a victim of sexual abuse. Billy is not only the shell-shocked victim-soldier, but also a victim of sexual violence. A third layer of complexity is illustrated by the theme of class in the trilogy. Billy's status as a working-class officer is ambivalent: despite his working-class origins, he gathers intelligence on his pacifist childhood friends who are arrested for high treason. In this sense, the fact that Billy Prior suffers from shell shock breaks the traditional popular trope of the shell-shocked soldier as a passive victim of traumatic experiences.

Ambivalence is also embodied in the trilogy's treatment of the theme of gender. Billy's psychiatrist Dr Rivers helps his patients to voice their fears and anxieties, but knows that by doing so, the shell-shocked men break codes of traditional masculinity, threatening their identity as men. Dr Rivers' dilemma is that, as a healer, he must undermine the masculine identities of his patients. In *Mrs Dalloway*, the cause of Septimus Smith's mental health disorder is also seen through the lens of masculinity: Septimus feels that he was not allowed to mourn for his fallen superior officer Evans, because showing his emotions is discouraged by the cultural codes that identify masculinity with the repression of emotions. Displaying grief in public would be considered effeminate and not befitting a war veteran.

For the purpose of this thesis, class and gender are less important than the different approaches Woolf's and Barker's novels display towards the issue of selfhood. These approaches depend on the portrayal of victimhood in each of the two works. The difference between Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy lies in their different portrayals of the relationship between the self and the other. In *Mrs Dalloway*, the other is defined as a person separate from oneself, and embodied in the character of Septimus. Although Clarissa briefly admires Septimus' suicide as an act of self-preservation against the

forces of social conformity, she also realises that she needs to make compromises between her wish to preserve her integrity, and her complicity with the forces that corrupt personal autonomy. The figure of Septimus is a victim of mental health issues triggered and worsened by shell shock, yet he plays a central part in Clarissa's process of self-awareness: Clarissa believes that her mission is to facilitate, through her parties, the exchange between people from diverse backgrounds. I argue that despite the satire contained in Woolf's portrayal of the upper middle-class characters in *Mrs Dalloway*, there is a serious side to Clarissa's process of self-awareness.

The notion of otherness that is externalised in *Mrs Dalloway* through the figure of Septimus, is internalised in Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy via the trope of the dissociated self from which Billy Prior suffers. This trope is applied to the wider context of Barker's philosophy of history, as it comes to stand for the repression of traumatic events in British history.

The Commemorative Turn

The tendency of state-level commemorations of the First World War to focus on innocent victimhood and sacrifice can be regarded as confirming an ethical turn in commemorative practices, which, according to Aleida Assmann, began in the mid-1980s. This turn was the result of a new focus on the perspective of the victims of transnational crimes, highlighting the experiences of victims of the Holocaust and colonisation. In Germany, Chancellor Kohl's decision to turn the Berlin 'Neue Wache Unter den Linden' into a commemorative site for all the victims of 'Krieg und Gewaltherrschaft' in 1992, such as victims of concentration camps, resistance fighters, or exiled ethnic Germans, marked the beginning of a new political will to universalise the notion of victimhood and to blur the distinction between victims and perpetrators:

> In diesem grenzenlosen Gedenken einer universalen Viktimisierung wird mit der Differenz zwischen Opfern und Tätern auch die Erinnerung aufgehoben. Was bleibt, ist ein allgemeines katastrophisches Schicksal, das alle teilen, und ein vages Pathos, das jeder Besucher des Denkmals nach eigenem Bedarf füllen kann.[34]

This new approach is seen as ambivalent by Assmann, as it has led, on the one hand, to the acceptance, in international affairs, of new moral standards that condemn discrimination and crimes against humanity. On the other hand, however, foregrounding the perspectives and experiences of victims has also led to an over-emotional view of history and a disproportionate emphasis on suffering at the expense of a focus on agency and individual responsibility.[35] The second group of fictional prose texts on the First World War, those published after 1990, has been chosen to examine whether this new focus on universal innocent victimhood is mirrored in these later fictional representations of the conflict. As will be seen in the four main chapters of this thesis, the diegetic universes of these complex, nuanced post-1990 texts do not generally reflect the arguably over-simplified ethical turn in commemorations identified by Assmann.

As pointed out by Becker, a major effect of this near-exclusive focus on death and suffering is that agency and responsibility are largely removed from the commemorative picture:

> In today's commemorative awareness, this status is more acceptable than being an agent of suffering and death. Death is always suffered, always anonymous, never inflicted: the individual is, always, the victim.[36]

This thesis challenges the trope of innocent victimhood and argues that the omnipresence, in the selected fictional prose texts, of the three key concepts of guilt, human

[34] Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungspolitik und Geschichtspolitik* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2021), p. 76.
[35] Ibid., p. 77.
[36] Annette Becker, 'Museums, Architects and Artists on the Western Front. New Commemoration for a New History?', p. 94.

agency and love helps the reader to gain a more nuanced perspective on the moral dilemmas facing the fictional victims of war-related injustices. As will be seen in the analysis of the individual texts, their moral universes display sufficient examples of situations in which the reader is asked to acknowledge that, although the fictional characters carry a limited amount of responsibility for their victimhood, their actions must be seen as embedded in specific coercive circumstances. Even though they are victims of state-orchestrated injustices, the line between victim and perpetrator is blurred to a point where black-and-white moral judgments become impossible. That is why the expression 'vast zone of grey consciences', usually set in the context of Holocaust literature, is appropriate to describe the acts and omissions of the fictional protagonists.[37]

First World War Prose Fiction: The 'Vast Zones of Grey Consciences'

The concept of the 'vast zone of grey consciences' is first used by the Italian author and Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi in his short novel *Story of a Coin* (1977), which is based on the story of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, the leader of the Lodz ghetto (1941-1945). Levi expands upon Rumkovski's ambivalent relationship with the Nazi occupiers in his book *Die Untergegangenen und die Geretteten* (*The Drowned and the Saved*, 1986). Rumkowski epitomises the character who, although forced to live under a repressive regime in which he is a victim, occasionally also becomes involved in the crimes perpetrated by that regime. The moral problem here is that it is difficult to judge characters who cross the victim-perpetrator boundary:

> It is typical of regimes in which all power rains down from above and no criticism can rise from below, to weaken and confound people's capacity of judgment, to create a

[37] For a detailed description of the origins of this term, see Martina Mengoni, 'The Gray Zone: Power and Privilege in Primo Levi', 2012: <https://www.auschwitz.be/images/_inedits/mengoni.pdf>. [Last accessed 3 February 2024].

> vast zone of gray consciences that stands between the great men of evil and the pure victims. This is the zone in which Rumkowski must be placed.[38]

Rumkowski was an elderly man chosen by the Nazis to be the Elder of the Lodz ghetto. He is identified by Levi as a dictator who collaborates with the Nazis, while simultaneously empathising with his fellow-Jewish citizens: 'Although despised, derided, and sometimes beaten by the Germans, Rumkowski probably thought of himself not as a servant, but as a lord.'[39] Levi uses the ambivalent figure of Rumkowski, as well as of the Sonderkommandos in the concentration camps, to give a vague definition of the 'grey zone' ('eine Grauzone mit unscharfen Konturen')[40]:

> Es muß uns klar sein, daß die Hauptschuld das System, die eigentliche Struktur des totalitären Staates trifft; die Mitschuld der einzelnen großen und kleinen Kollaborateure (die niemals sympathisch, niemals durchsichtig waren!) ist immer schwer zu bewerten. […] Der Umstand, daß einer ein Leidtragender ist, schließt seine Schuld nicht aus, und oftmals ist sie objektiv schwerwiegend, aber ich kenne kein menschliches Tribunal, dem man die Aufgabe der Beimessung der Schuld zuweisen könnte. Wäre ich gezwungen, zu Gericht zu sitzen, hinge ein Urteil von mir ab – ich spräche alle leichten Herzens frei, deren Mitschuld gering war, während der Zwang, unter dem sie handelten, sehr groß war.[41]

Rumkowski was a benefactor who had hospitals and orphanages built in the ghetto, but he was also forced by the German occupiers to select 20,000 of his Jewish fellow citizens, including all the children, to be deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau in September 1942. Unlike other Jewish ghetto leaders, Rumkowski did not commit suicide and carried out the order.[42] Historian Raul Hilberg praises him for being an autocrat who kept his autonomous will under

[38] Primo Levi, 'Story of a Coin', in *Moments of Reprieve* (London: Penguin, 2002), translated from the Italian by Ruth Feldman, pp. 161-172, p. 171.
[39] Ibid., pp. 166-167.
[40] Primo Levi, *Die Untergegangenen und die Geretteten*, trans. by Moshe Kahn (Munich: DTV, 1993), p. 39.
[41] Ibid., pp. 41-42.
[42] For a summary of Rumkowski's ambivalent role in the Lodz ghetto, see René Schlott, Jochen Leffers, '"Väter und Mütter, gebt mir eure Kinder!"', *Spiegel online*, 26 January 2018: <https://www.spiegel.de/geschichte/chaim-rumkowskis-rede-im-ghetto-lodz-gebt-mir-eure-kinder-a-1189369.html> [Last accessed: 4 February 2024].

extreme coercion, whereas Saul Friedländer sees in the Lodz ghetto leader a megalomaniacal quasi-dictator.

Levi's concept of the 'grey zone' is a useful concept in this thesis because the fictional moral universe of the twelve novels under scrutiny is characterised by varying degrees of responsibility borne by the fictional characters in their predicaments. The interconnection between feelings of guilt and love, which is visible in each of these prose texts, undermines the misplaced and misleading notion of innocent victimhood, which as we have seen is characteristic of recent state-sponsored First World War commemorations. As will be seen in the four main chapters of this thesis, the fictional protagonists in the twelve selected novels are united by their feelings of guilt incurred in situations which prevent hasty Manichean moral judgments.

The most obvious parallel between Primo Levi's characterisation of Rumkowski and the fictional world of the selected First World War novels is illustrated in Chapter Three of this thesis, which deals with the moral ambivalences of Armenian fictional characters faced with the Armenian genocide in 1915. Gabriel Bagradian's actions as an Armenian resistance leader in Franz Werfel's novel *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh* (1933) blur the line between victim and perpetrator: he is forced, by circumstances imposed upon him by the potential annihilation of his native Armenian village by the Ottoman oppressor, to use punitive violence to maintain military discipline. At this early moment of the thesis, it is therefore important to define the grey zones of human agency, guilt and love that complicate the notion of innocent victimhood in the texts under discussion.

Human Agency and Coercion

The concept of 'human agency' is controversial and disputed. The absolutist position claims that a person can only be called a free agent when they can make choices for which they can be held fully responsible. Philip Pettit argues that being held fully responsible for a certain choice means that a person will 'fully deserve blame should the action be bad, and fully deserve praise should the action be good'.[43] As pointed out by Pettit, this definition entails the absence of coercion, and must be seen in relation to feelings of guilt and innocence:

> And you will not be fully free if, as a person, you are the victim of an unwelcome form of pressure or duress or coercion that makes it more difficult to do one or other of those things. Such conditions generally serve to exculpate or at least excuse an agent; they remove or reduce the responsibility. And so if freedom is just fitness to be held responsible, they will also count as conditions that destroy or diminish the agent's freedom. […] This shows up in the fact that we feel guilty about what we did in the past, and blame ourselves for our actions, as of course we may equally feel innocent and think that there is nothing to blame ourselves for.[44]

Nevertheless, Pettit concedes that even under hostile coercion, in which an individual is forced to take a decision against his/her free will, the coercee is still left with a 'choice, and with rational control over how that choice is to be made'.[45] This theory of freedom as rational control is defended by, for example, A. J. Ayer, who claims that an agent is free in doing something when the action is caused by beliefs and desires in the rational way, but not when it is caused by constraining factors.[46] Pettit concedes that

> how fit they [the agents] were will depend on how credible and how challenging the threat in question was. We may think that responsibility for what was done rests as

[43] Philip Pettit, *A Theory of Freedom. From the Psychology to the Politics of Agency* (Cambridge: Politi, 2001), p. 12.
[44] Ibid., pp. 13-14.
[45] Ibid., p. 45.
[46] A. J. Ayer, 'Freedom and Necessity', in Gary Watson (ed.), *Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 21.

> much with the coercer as with the coercee but we will in any case think that the coercee's responsibility is mitigated or reduced.[47]

As will be seen in the diegetic world of the novels selected for this thesis, coercion is evident in the case of the Armenian genocide (discussed in Chapter Three), where the Armenian minority is deported and killed by the Ottoman state in its plan to ethnically cleanse Anatolia of its Armenian minority. In Franz Werfel's *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh* (1933), as well as in Chris Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls* (2012), the Armenian protagonists narrowly escape physical annihilation. In Chapter Four, on military injustice, we see that Arnold Zweig's eponymous hero Grischa in *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* (1927) is sentenced to death for being a Russian spy, and that Sébastien Japrisot's fictional French soldiers are also sentenced to death for self-mutilation. In Chapter Two, which discusses the portrayal of anti-Semitism, we see that, in Arnold Zweig's *Junge Frau von 1914* (1931), coercion by force takes the shape of gendered violence, when its main female heroine, Lenore Wahl, is raped by her fiancé Werner Bertin, who has adopted codes of excessive masculinity.

In Chapter Five, however, coercion takes the shape of cultural gendered coercion, as illustrated by the underlying theme of patriarchal oppression of female homosexuality. Clarissa Dalloway, the eponymous heroine of Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), is portrayed as a victim of this repression, as her thoughts turn around her unrequited love for her friend Sally Seton. A similar kind of cultural coercion can be identified in Woolf's main male protagonist, Septimus Smith, whose mental health issues are caused by his repression of feelings such as mourning for a friend, considered by codes of masculinity to be effeminate. Coercion is represented, for example, by Clarissa's inability to admit to her

[47] Pettit, *A Theory of Freedom*, p. 46.

sexual orientation (Clarissa Dalloway's relationship with her friend Sally Seton) in the repressive, patriarchal context of postwar Britain.

These examples seem to illustrate that both physical or cultural coercion may evoke the sense that the fictional protagonists had no choice when they took decisions in specific situations. However, my reading of the presence of feelings of guilt in these novels shows that these characters are aware that their choices are problematic, in the sense that they belong to Levi's grey zones of individual or collective agency under external coercion. In Chapters Two and Three of this thesis, this agency is not to be taken in a collective sense, as the focus of interest is the relationship between the state-induced injustices of anti-Semitism and anti-Armenian ethnic cleansing. The fictional victims of these two injustices are embodied in the novels as representatives of their ethnic minorities. In Chapters Four and Five, the focus is on the individual soldier-victim and his reaction to military injustice and inhumane psychiatry. The fictional protagonists in the novels under scrutiny in these chapters do not embody ethnicity. This awareness is the proof that despite coercion, there remains a certain degree of agency, or rational control, when the protagonists react against the injustices from which they suffer. This is why, for the sake of this study's emphasis on the complexities illustrated in the moral universes of the twelve First World War novels under examination, I use the term agency without moral connotations.

Agape, Eros and Redemption

The presence of two kinds of love, selfless agape and self-directed eros, plays an important part in the protagonists' attempt to cope with their morally ambivalent actions. A close analysis of the interconnection between guilt and love results in a more nuanced view of the cultural trope of the innocent victim in First World War fiction. This interconnection will

show that despite being victims of injustice, these fictional protagonists retain human agency when faced with specific moral issues. As will be demonstrated in each of the four central chapters, these characters take morally questionable decisions. As a consequence, their supposed moral innocence as victims of war is undermined.

Agape and eros complicate the idea of moral innocence by seemingly offering the fictional characters a means of rescuing their lost innocence (agape), or by prompting the fictional characters to use morally questionable means while becoming the victims of injustices (eros). The term 'agape' derives from the various Hebrew words for love, as translated in the *Septuagint* (the Greek Old Testament), and adopted later by Christianity as the word for humble, altruistic selflessness.[48]

The dichotomy between agape and eros only makes sense in the religious context of St. Augustine's doctrine of grace, which allows us to redirect earthly desires upwards to the divine. He calls the love for the sake of God 'caritas', which is selfless and marked by the dispossession of the ego. We can only experience 'caritas' with the help of the divine. By contrast, self-centred love without God is called 'cupiditas'.[49] In the context of this thesis, I equate 'caritas' with agape, and 'cupiditas' with eros, while using them in a non-religious, secularised sense. As seen above, I understand agape as a mechanism by which the fictional protagonists in the interwar novels try to atone for their feelings of guilt. The altruistic love displayed in the four interwar novels is geared towards making amends for the emancipatory transgression of social norms, set in the context of coercion.

Concerning eros or the romantic/family love on display in the post-1990 texts, I argue that this kind of love is a device to illustrate the grey zones in which their fictional characters

[48] See Simon May, *Love. A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 21-22.
[49] See Augustine, *Treatises on Various Subjects*, trans. by Mary Sarah Muldowney (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1952), p. 252.

are forced to act. In contrast to agape, actions prompted by eros are morally questionable because they produce negative effects. In Chapter Two, in *Süß und ehrenvoll*, eros is associated with Ludwig Kronheim's absence of feelings of guilt. In Chapter Three, eros is associated with the Armenian character's ambivalent use of violence while resisting the Armenian genocide. In Chapter Four, eros is set in the context of blood revenge (*Un long dimanche de fiançailles*) and revenge for a perceived social injustice (*Au revoir là-haut*). In Chapter Five, eros, in the shape of fatherly love (*Regeneration* trilogy) is set in the context of the ambivalent role of military psychiatrist Dr Rivers.

However, the two concepts of 'agape' and 'eros' have themselves been interpreted in different ways. The term 'agape' derives from the various Hebrew words for love, as translated in the *Septuagint* (the Greek Old Testament), and adopted later by Christianity as the word for humble, altruistic selflessness.[50] I argue that this interconnection between guilt and these two kinds of love (agape and eros) constitutes a recurring pattern in First World War fiction dealing with injustices. In each of the four types of injustice in the context of fiction set during the First World War examined in this thesis – anti-Semitic discrimination, ethnic cleansing, military injustice and the inhumane psychiatric treatment of shell shock – the awareness of any guilt incurred by the fictional characters is conditioned by whether the love they experience and express is in the form of agape or eros. This entanglement creates moral universes in which the rigid categories of good and evil partially break down. In each of the individual novels under discussion in this thesis, the contrast between victim and perpetrator becomes blurred.

For the purpose of my thesis that the fictional prose texts selected for this study add nuance and complexity to the trope of innocent victimhood pervading official First World

[50] See Simon May, *Love. A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 21-22.

War commemorations, I would like to refer back to the idea of the temporality of the notion of innocence seen above. Bach argues that there is an interplay of innocence as exculpatory (focused on the past) and anticipatory (focused on the future). Analysing the design of the 'Humboldt Forum', a prestigious government-sponsored art project in Berlin, he differentiates between these two interrelated aspects of innocence to bring to the fore the redemptory potential that, according to Bach, makes the notion of victimhood so attractive:

> Exculpatory myths close down discussions by imitating an imagined innocent era frozen in time, bracketing its failings and extolling its virtues. Anticipatory myths seek a reboot of the present in the hopes of capturing the sense of possibility of an era that is not yet fully formed. […] myths of innocence are always open to appropriation in a dynamic, dialectical process with an uncertain outcome.[51]

I would like to argue that these two sides of innocence are embodied in the novels under examination by the two kinds of love feelings, agape and eros, which are prominent in these texts. In each of the novels under examination, the fictional characters attempt to break away from a social norm or authoritative structure. However, there are differences and nuances in the motivations behind these perceived transgressions. In the four interwar novels, this process of breaking away is emancipatory, as it is linked to anti-authoritarian, altruistic ideals. Emancipation is embedded in the protagonists' feeling of altruistic love, or agape. I argue that agape (selfless love) in the interwar novels is a mechanism to atone for the characters' feelings of guilt. In the post-1990 novels, however, the motivations for the actions are less noble, and more self-centred, since they are based on feelings of eros-love, in the shape of romantic or family love. The nature of self-centred eros is ambivalent

[51] See Jonathan Bach; Benjamin Nienass, 'Innocence and the Politics of Memory', p. 11. The 'Humboldt Forum' was accused of racism and colonial theft of artefacts by memory activists: Paul Starzmann, '"Beutekunst" in Berlin: Warum Aktivisten das Humboldt Forum stoppen wollen', in *Vorwärts*, 11 December 2017: <https://vorwaerts.de/kultur/beutekunst-berlin-warum-aktivisten-das-humboldt-forum-stoppen-wollen#:~:text=Es%20ist%20eines%20der%20teuersten,reichen%20von%20Raub%20bis%20Rassismus.>. [Last accessed 11 May 2024].

because it represents both a powerful emotional link between the characters, while also producing negative effects. Eros has an ambivalent function in the post-1990 novels: it is both a powerful driving force behind the actions of the fictional characters, while also being the source of their feelings of guilt. Using Bach's terminology of exculpatory versus anticipatory redemption to describe the nature of innocence, I would argue that agape possesses the same anticipatory desire to alleviate one's guilt in the future. Eros can be described as a mechanism geared above all towards exculpating, or justifying, ambivalent moral decisions that were taken in the past, without hoping for a better future. Given the justificatory nature of eros, it can be described as self-centred. In addition to Bach's theory of innocence, I apply the difference between exculpatory and anticipatory innocence to the fictional universes in the twelve novels of this study to complicate the agency of the fictional protagonists.

The analysis conducted in this thesis of the link between feelings of guilt and love in First World War prose fiction is important because of its cross-cultural approach. The twelve novels selected for this study were originally written in five different languages (German, Hebrew, French, English, and Turkish). Arnold Zweig's *Junge Frau von 1914* (1931), his *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* (1927), and Franz Werfel's *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh* (1933) were originally written in German. Although this study uses the German translation of Avi Primor's *Süß und ehrenvoll* (2013), it was originally published in Hebrew. Sébastien Japrisot's *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* (1991) and Pierre Lemaitre's *Au revoir là-haut* (2013) were first written in French. Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy (1991-1995) and Chris Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls* (2012) were first published in English. Ahmet Ümit's *Patasana* (2000) was first published in Turkish. This study uses its German translation.

It is precisely the absence of guilt that characterises state-sponsored First World War commemorations. In the French and German contexts, these commemorative practices are based on the idea of international cooperation within the European political context, while commemoration of the First World War in Britain remains firmly rooted in the national context. In Turkey, the official narrative of the First World War as marking the beginning of modern, secular Turkey also ignores the complexities of the war experience in favour of a political agenda. In this sense, the diegetic world offers a more nuanced picture by encompassing a wider range of complex human and moral situations.

Guilt and the Grey Zones of the Fictional Protagonists

The feelings of guilt incurred by the fictional protagonists in the four interwar novels are multifarious. The fictional characters act in the grey zone between societal and legal pressures and free agency. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, the feelings of guilt experienced by Arnold Zweig's fictional German-Jewish character Lenore Wahl in *Junge Frau von 1914* after her illegal abortion is set in the context of the threat of losing the affection of her family. The norm internalised by Lenore is that of the middle-class daughter whose role in society is to be a supportive wife for a husband from the same social class. In Franz Werfel's *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh*, the price of Gabriel Bagradian's involvement in the Armenian resistance, discussed in Chapter Three, is the destruction of his former family life and the estrangement from his wife and adolescent son Stephan. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, the internal voice of conscience of Zweig's fictional Russian soldier Grischa in *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* tells him to stop his killing of enemy soldiers. Grischa thinks that his death sentence is a just punishment for his earlier crimes and he therefore refuses to be saved from execution. In the last of the four interwar novels, Virginia Woolf's

Mrs Dalloway, discussed in Chapter Five, the repressive sexual norms from which both women and men suffer cause Septimus Smith to feel guilty for his lack of empathy for his former superior officer Evans.

As will be seen when analysing the moral universe of novels published since 1990, the external figure of authority can be identified in the different father-figures who play a crucial part in the feelings of guilt of the other fictional protagonists. This is above all the case in Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy, where Barker's main male hero, army psychiatrist Dr Rivers, is a father-figure to his shell-shocked patients. Rivers feels guilty because, instead of protecting his patients, he must send them back to the frontline. In Chris Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls*, the main female protagonist, Laura Petrosian, feels guilty for not having investigated her grandfather's complex past as a survivor of the Armenian genocide. In Avi Primor's *Süß und ehrenvoll*, the main German-Jewish protagonist Ludwig Kronheim hates his overbearing father, yet, he shares with him an exaggerated faith in the right cause of the German war effort. In this novel, it is the absence of guilt of its main male German-Jewish protagonist, Ludwig Kronheim, that is highlighted by setting it in the context of his romantic love for his fiancée. In Pierre Lemaitre's *Au revoir là-haut*, Marcel Péricourt shuts out his son Edouard on account of the latter's homosexuality. When he thinks that Edouard has been killed in action, Marcel feels guilt at the way he treated his son. In each of these novels, the fictional characters experience feelings of guilt as a result of having failed to respect what is expected from them, either in the realm of their families, or in the domain of cultural norms. The agency that these characters retain despite their status as victims of these norms is illustrated by the ambivalent actions that they take.

This cross-cultural approach will reveal that focusing on selfless agape and self-directed eros helps to establish the experience of guilt as a major, transnational

preoccupation in the field of literary representations of the First World War. It is precisely the absence of guilt that characterises state-sponsored First World War commemorations. In the French and German contexts, these commemorative practices are based on the idea of international cooperation within the European political context, while commemoration of the First World War in Britain remains firmly rooted in the national context. In Turkey, the official narrative of the First World War as marking the beginning of modern, secular Turkey also ignores the complexities of the war experience in favour of a political agenda. In this sense, the diegetic world offers a more nuanced picture by encompassing a wide range of complex human and moral situations.

The First World War as a 'Victim's Tale' in Literary Criticism

In the field of literary criticism, two major ideas expressed by three different critics are scrutinised in this thesis to question the validity of the cultural trope of the 'victims' tale', defined by Jay Winter and Antoine Prost as a 'populist memory of victimhood in wartime'.[52] The first idea is that First World War soldiers were 'passive, innocent victims' of tragic circumstances and injustices. This idea has been advanced notably by cultural and literary historians such as Paul Fussell, in his *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), and Samuel Hynes, in his *A War Imagined* (2006).[53] Central to Fussell's view of the war experience is that combatants were innocent victims of circumstance, whose ironic detachment was a result of failing to see any meaning in their war effort. The war experience is given coherence or retrospective meaning through literature in general, and

[52] Jay Winter and Antoine Prost, *The Great War in History. Debates and Controversies, 1914 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 235-237.
[53] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined. The First World War and English Culture* (London: Pimlico, 1990).

irony in particular. It brings out the pattern of destroyed innocence, as for example in Fussell's representation of the first day of the Battle of the Somme:

> The innocent army fully attained knowledge of good and evil at the Somme on July 1, 1916. That moment, one of the most interesting in the whole long history of human disillusion, can stand as the type of all the ironic actions of the war.[54]

Hynes links literary and non-literary descriptions of the war experience by constructing the cultural matrix of the suffering soldier-martyr that now dominates the memory of the First World War:

> The war itself had come to seem the only source of energy in its world: guns roared, bullets flew, armies moved; but individual men could only suffer. Years later, Wyndham Lewis would describe the Hemingway hero [in Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929)] as the 'man things are done to'; that phrase exactly describes the soldier-figures who huddle in the poems and prose writings, and even the paintings, of the last years of the war: men who inflict wounds on their own bodies, suicides, cowards, mental cases, and hysterics […] the *damaged* men; and the others, the silent, passive sufferers who simply endure.[55]

Crucially, this thesis asks the question whether this trope of innocent victimhood, which connotes the passive endurance of injustice, is compatible with the notion of human agency, which brings with it the idea that the fictional protagonists are actively involved in the events described in First World War fiction. Chapter Two of this thesis, which discusses the theme of anti-Semitism in selected novels of the First World War, and Chapter Three, which investigates literary portrayals of the Armenian genocide, illustrate that agency and victimhood can go hand in hand. The link between the two is established by the guilt incurred by the fictional protagonists who over-identify with their nation or their ethnic community. In Chapter Four, which discusses the theme of military injustice, and Chapter

[54] Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, p.31.
[55] Hynes, *A War Imagined*, p. 208.

Five, which deals with literary treatments of inhumane psychiatric practices during and after the First World War, it will be shown that the guilt incurred is more on the individual level.

The thesis as a whole will argue that the fact that the fictional characters feel guilty for their ambivalent actions is a sign that, even under coercion, they retain a certain degree of agency. The constraints imposed on these characters by the cultural codes or legal structures prevent the reader of the selected First World War novels from rushing to moral assessments of the characters' actions and behaviour. In this sense, the twelve prose texts are located in Levi's idea of grey zones of conscience. The ambivalent portrayal of these actions contrasts with the trope of innocent victimhood that characterises recent state-level First World War commemorations. The role of the two kinds of love, agape and eros, will be evaluated throughout in relation to the issue of human agency. This re-evaluation of agape and eros will help to define the ambivalent nature of this agency within the complex moral universes depicted in each of the First World War novels under scrutiny.

Chapter Two

Emancipation and Guilt in the Portrayal of Jews in First World War Prose Fiction

This chapter focuses on the complexities of the emancipatory struggles of the fictional characters in Arnold Zweig's *Junge Frau von 1914* (1931) and Avi Primor's *Süß und ehrenvoll* (2013). Emancipation is the first of four issues discussed in this thesis on the literary representation of innocent victimhood in First World War fictional prose. In the next three chapters, the issues that will be discussed are violence (Chapter Three), revenge (Chapter Four) and selfhood (Chapter Five). Each of these issues helps to demonstrate that, in contrast to the official centenary commemorations in various countries, the diegetic world of fictional First World War prose works highlights the moral complexities of human agency in the context of injustices caused by the war.

The common feature between Zweig's and Primor's texts is the fact that their protagonists' actions are prompted by their wish to emancipate themselves from state-induced misogynism and anti-Semitic discrimination. I argue that despite the coercive situations in which these decisions are taken, the novels illustrate that their German-Jewish protagonists retain a considerable degree of human agency. Drawing upon Primo Levi's concept of the grey zones of conscience described in Chapter One, I will demonstrate that the characters' feelings of guilt illustrate that the protagonists are aware, albeit to varying degrees, that their actions might be morally ambiguous. The second concept developed in Chapter One, the presence of selfless agape and self-centred eros, is used to discuss whether these feelings of guilt can alleviate the guilt incurred by the characters (agape), or whether they can be seen as the source of their guilt (eros).

The German-Jewish protagonists experience two kinds of injustice: the first is cultural and structural anti-Semitism; the second is in the shape of sexual violence and misogynist

societal structures.[56] The impact of the First World War on men is portrayed differently from the way it affects the lives of the female characters. In both novels, the male fictional protagonists suffer from the anti-Semitic structures within the German army, whereas the female characters suffer from the paternalistic laws and family structures prevailing in Wilhelmine Germany. I argue that, in the diegetic world of these two novels, the notion of Jewish victimhood is problematised through the portrayal of the ambivalent, often conflicting, attitudes of the Jewish characters in their efforts to emancipate themselves from these injustices.

Furthermore, the two novels discuss differing attitudes and contemporary debates concerning female and Jewish emancipation. The fact that the fictional characters' struggle for overcoming the two kinds of discrimination is firmly set within cultural and legal constraints prevents the reader from drawing hasty conclusions about Jewish involvement in the First World War. In contrast to the over-simplified view presented in recent official centenary commemorations of this involvement, the fictional universes depicted in Zweig's and Primor's novels draw a heterogenous picture of German-Jewish efforts to gain autonomy. The protagonists' agency ranges from collaboration with and rejection of various kinds of discrimination in Wilhelmine society.

The two texts were chosen for two reasons. First, from the perspective of gender relations, *Junge Frau von 1914* establishes a close link between the issue of sexual violence against women and the adoption of militarist codes of masculinity, set in the context of nationalist support for the German war cause. In Zweig's text, both male and female fictional German-Jewish protagonists are victims of Prussian militarism and its glorification of

[56] Arnold Zweig, *Junge Frau von 1914* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2014); Avi Primor, *Süß und ehrenvoll*, translated from the Hebrew by Beate Esther von Schwarze (Berlin: Quadriga, 2013).

excessive, violent codes of masculine behaviour. However, there is a clear differentiation between the devastating physical impact of this militarism on women, and the psychological effect of nationalist militarism on the male characters. This difference is illustrated with the help of gender-aware criticism on *Junge Frau von 1914*, which problematises the status of Lenore Wahl as its heroine, in her efforts to emancipate herself from paternalistic and misogynistic structures within the legal and cultural restrictions of her society. My reading of Zweig's text is doubly contextualised: first by including gender-oriented literary criticism that raises the question whether Lenore's attempts to emancipate herself can be seen as successful; second, by including analysis of narratives circulating during the First World War in Germany, which raise the question as to what extent women are responsible for not being able to stop the slaughter of the war.

Avi Primor's *Süß und ehrenvoll* (2013) was selected to analyse how the German-Jewish involvement in the German war cause is seen one hundred years after the beginning of the war. The two major reasons for this choice were, first, the novel's juxtaposition of fictional protagonists, Jewish or non-Jewish, with actually-existing historical figures. The former are represented by the novel's two main protagonists, the Frankfurt German-Jewish law student Ludwig Kronheim and his non-Jewish fiancé Karoline Schulzendorf. The latter consist of a host of figures who, to varying degrees, influenced or symbolised the Jewish involvement, for example the chemist Fritz Haber and his wife Clara Immerwahr, or the two Marshals Pétain and Hindenburg.[57] The combination of a Jewish soldier from the lower ranks

[57] Primor's novel includes a glossary of historical characters as an appendix (*SE*, pp. 377-381). Professor Fritz Haber (1868-1934) won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1918. He was of Jewish origin, but converted to Christianity. Haber's role in developing chemical weapons is controversial. He supervised their initial use in the Second Battle of Ypres (April-May 1915) on the Western Front in 1915. His wife, chemist Clara Immerwahr (1870-1915), is believed to have committed suicide on 2 May 1915 to protest against her husband's role. Maréchal Philippe Pétain (1856-1951) is mentioned by Primor as the French Head of State who applied the Nazis' racist legislation to France after 1942. Feldmarschall Paul Hindenburg (1847-1934) was elected President

and of his ambivalent emancipation from his overbearing father, together with the fictionalised historical figures allows the reader to gain a broader picture of the problematic German-Jewish part in the German war cause. The second reason for choosing Primor's text lies in its focus on the ambiguous nationalism of the Jewish characters. This nationalism is portrayed as blind to the state-orchestrated anti-Jewish discrimination from which the protagonists suffer, and which is also visible on the smaller level of the Schulzendorf family. *Süß und ehrenvoll* problematises the notion of innocent victimhood of the official commemorations of German-Jewish soldiers in the First World War by embedding its protagonists' nationalism in the emancipatory struggles of the couple Ludwig-Karoline. As a result, their romantic relationship, seen as an illustration of self-centred eros, can be seen as the reason why Ludwig does not display any feelings of guilt about his blind support for a state that discriminates against German Jews.

Junge Frau von 1914 presents the reader with an ambiguous portrayal of female victimhood: on the one hand, it clearly shows women as the victims of male sexual violence, which is seen as a result of the brutalisation of men during the war. On the other hand, it also voices, through various other fictional male characters, the alleged responsibility of women in the perpetuation of the slaughter of the First World War. As will be seen in the section on Zweig's novel, some of its minor female protagonists express what could be regarded as a kind of self-accusation, arguing that if only the major female organisations had raised their opposition towards the war, the conflict might have ended sooner. From the perspective of the male German-Jewish characters in Zweig's novel, the issue of guilt and collaboration with an anti-Semitic and misogynist Wilhelmine German state is also raised through the ambivalent portrayal of Lenore's fiancé Werner Bertin, and her father Hugo

of the Weimar Republic in 1926. He appointed Adolf Hitler as Chancellor in 1933. Both Pétain and Hindenburg played a considerable part during the First World War as commanders in chief of their respective nations.

Wahl. They are both shown as victims of an uncritical belief in German cultural superiority, militarism and male chauvinism. Yet Werner and Hugo are described in their emancipatory process of distancing themselves from these forces, confirming Lenore's belief in the perfectibility of human nature. Hugo's dual status as a victim of external circumstances and patriarchal head of an assimilated middle-class German-Jewish family constitutes the second reason for choosing *Junge Frau von 1914* for the purpose of discussing the literary portrayal of victimhood in fiction First World War prose.

Lenore retains a great deal of agency, as illustrated by her process of partial emancipation from these forces. Her ambivalent decision to reconcile with her rapist-fiancé and her patriarchal father is seen, in this thesis, as an example of selfless agape-love. In line with the overarching thesis, this reconciliation is discussed as an illustration of a recurring pattern in the four interwar novels selected for this thesis. Agape is identified as an attempt to atone for the feelings of guilt and the ambivalent choices of the fictional protagonists. By contrast, the second part of this pattern can be identified in *Süß und ehrenvoll*, where the feelings of self-centred eros play a negative role in preventing Ludwig from seeing the discriminatory essence that is at the heart of the Imperial German army.

In Avi Primor's *Süß und ehrenvoll* (2013), the portrayal of the main male Jewish character Ludwig Kronheim is equally ambiguous. Like Werner Bertin, he becomes the victim of his blinkered, uncritical support for the German war cause, believing erroneously that this support will eventually achieve full Jewish cultural and political emancipation once the war is won. However, although Ludwig keeps his belief in the final victory until his death in combat, he is disillusioned with the myth of a chivalrous war when witnessing the brutal murder, by his platoon, of defenceless enemy soldiers (*SE*, pp. 334-335). The agency of Primor's fictional Jewish protagonists is illustrated in their struggle against codes of behaviour that restrict

their autonomy. In contrast to Zweig's text, the ambiguity of this emancipation is restricted to the realm of the family. Ludwig Kronheim's non-Jewish fiancée, Karoline Schulzendorf, rebels against her anti-Semitic father, deciding to raise her children, born after Ludwig's death, as German-Jewish patriots. This ambiguous choice is discussed in this chapter and seen through a gender-aware perspective, focusing on the ambivalent portrayal of the female characters in *Süß und ehrenvoll*. The advantage of this perspective is to illustrate that the portrayal of female German-Jewish protagonists in this novel corresponds with the portrayal of female characters in *Junge Frau von 1914*. The crucial difference, however, is that the reference point in Primor's 2013 novel is the possibility of female emancipation from anti-Semitic structures in society, whereas the touchstone against which Lenore Wahl's female agency is measured in Zweig's interwar text is male dominance.

My reading of these two First World novels runs counter to the recurring tropes, in recent commemorations of the German-Jewish involvement in the conflict, of heroic sacrifice and innocent Jewish victimhood. In line with the overall strategy of this thesis, this chapter on Jewish victimhood starts from the one-dimensional way in which the German-Jewish community's involvement in the events of the First World War is perceived and represented in contemporary commemorations.

Centenary Commemorations of German-Jewish Soldiers in the First World War

The official discourse that commemorates Jewish involvement in the First World War is marked by two views. First, Jewish men serving in the German army had to fight against two enemies simultaneously: they were victims of the horrors of frontline combats; and they were betrayed by the state authorities that institutionalised deep-rooted anti-Semitic prejudices to be found in civilian society and the army. In this narrative of victimisation, German-Jewish war veterans were betrayed by the post-war state authorities that promised

them full political integration.[58] Second, this betrayal is measured retrospectively against the Holocaust, which overshadows the Jewish First World War experience, as seen by recent commemorations of the German-Jewish war experience. A good example is found in a speech by a high-ranking representative of the German Federal Army (Bundeswehr), made during a recent commemoration of the November 1938 Pogrom Night (Reichspogromnacht).[59] The speech illustrates that the contemporary commemoration of the Jewish First World War experience is seen through the lens of the racist anti-Semitism of the National Socialist period:

> es geht hier um nichts anderes als um späte Anerkennung und Rehabilitation. Das Thema mag uns schwer fallen, weil wir uns dem Dilemma stellen müssen, einerseits die Hingabe so vieler jüdischer junger Männer für Deutschland zu würdigen und andererseits diesen Patriotismus im Lichte des damaligen übersteigerten Nationalismus kritisch zu betrachten. Wenn wir aber zulassen, dass die Menschen damals sicher anders gedacht haben als wir heute, dann sollten wir nicht in erster Linie die Kritik am damaligen Militarismus insgesamt in den Vordergrund stellen, sondern unsere Verachtung für den Verrat an den jüdischen Mitbürgern unserer Gesellschaft und an ihrem Bekenntnis zum Heimatland, für das auch sie am Ende die Waffe in die Hand genommen haben.[60]

The underlying assumption concerning nationalism in this speech is that taking up arms for one's country remains a morally noble action, associated with the idea of

[58] This view is contained in the official speeches made by representatives of the Federal government and of the Jewish community during the commemoration ceremonies at the German-Jewish cemetery in Berlin-Weißensee on Volkstrauertag (National Memorial Day) on 15 November 2020: https://www.volksbund.de/nachrichten/umsonst-gekaempft-juedische-soldaten-im-ersten-weltkrieg. [Last accessed 7 March 2023].

[59] This event, also called 'Kristallnacht' (or 'Night of Broken Glass' in English), describes the anti-Semitic pogroms carried out by the three Nazi Party organisations, the paramilitary SA (Sturmabteilung), the SS (Schutzstaffel), and the Hitler Youth, as well as civilians, throughout Germany, Austria and Sudetenland on 9-10 November 1938. The state authorities ignored the street violence against German Jews. The pretext was the assassination, by a 17-year-old Polish Jew born in Germany, Herschel Grynszpan, of the German diplomat Ernst vom Rath in Paris. The name derives from the broken glass of windows of Jewish-owned shops, properties and synagogues.

[60] These words are taken from a speech given in November 2020 by Wolfgang Schneiderhahn, chairman of the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge (German War Graves Commission) and former Generalinspekteur der Bundeswehr (Inspector General of German Armed Forces), during a ceremony commemorating the so-called Reichspogromnacht (Night of Broken Glass) of 9-10 November 1938): https://www.volksbund.de/nachrichten/schrecklicher-verrat-und-zeichen-die-mut-machen. [Last accessed 7 March 2023].

patriotism. There is no distinction, in this speech, between non-aggressive, defensive patriotism and the potential that this patriotism may turn into aggressive nationalism, depending on the political context in which it is placed. Bertin rapes his fiancée Lenore Wahl because he fully identifies with the culture of aggressive male behaviour, which is identified by Lenore as a key ingredient of nationalism. Shortly before the rape, Bertin thinks that because he is now a soldier, he will not even need to use a condom, as fate is on his side, preventing Lenore from becoming pregnant: 'Zum Teufel mir der übertriebenen Angst, ihr könne in seiner Umarmung etwas zustoßen! Man mußte nicht immer voraussorgen […] Ein Soldat hatte Vertrauen in seinen Stern […]' (*JF*, p. 55).

The character of Lenore Wahl in Zweig's *Junge Frau von 1914* is important for this chapter's argument on innocent victimhood because her coming of age story adds the perspective of a female Jewish victim of culturally accepted misogynism to the tale of the Jewish First World War experience. Although there is nothing specifically Jewish about her becoming a victim of rape, Lenore's status as a victim of male brutalisation adds an important layer to the thematic scope of the novel. Lenore's Jewishness will become more important in the second half of Zweig's text, where she marries her rapist-fiancé Werner in a Jewish wedding ceremony. This marriage problematises her feelings of selfless agape, or forgiveness, for Werner's crime, as the wedding ceremony symbolises religious patriarchy. There is no place for the female perspective on victimhood in the official commemorations of the German-Jewish war experience, as it is concerned almost exclusively with the experience of the German-Jewish First World War soldier. Lenore's reaction to being raped and her ensuing morally ambivalent decision to forgive her rapist-fiancé Bertin also helps to illustrate that she retains a high degree of moral agency despite her status as a victim. The nexus between sexual violence and the nationalism, embodied in the novel by Bertin's rape,

is one of the examples that show that in the diegetic world of Zweig's novel, complex questions of moral responsibility are foregrounded, in contrast to the one-dimensional positive narrative on patriotism and sacrifice that marks, for example, the official commemorations in France, Turkey and Armenia.

In the fictional world of *Junge Frau von 1914*, the theme of cultural nationalism originates at the start of the novel, when Werner Bertin, upon receiving his draft letter, believes that the state institutions of Imperial Germany embody 'die Gesittung, alle seelischen Mächte, alle guten Geister des Vaterlandes.' (*JF*, p. 10). Bertin accepts that war and the use of violence are justified to defend these institutions: 'Mochte es grob hergehen und rauh, gewaltsam und blutig – einerlei.' (*JF*, p. 10). As a consequence, in my reading of *Junge Frau von 1914*, the border between victim and perpetrator cannot be clearly differentiated. The tension between, on the one hand, Werner Bertin's justification of the destruction of culture in the name of German war imperatives, and his simultaneous belief in the necessity to preserve works of culture on the other hand, constitutes Bertin's grey zone of conscience in this novel. A good example of this tension can be seen at the beginning of the novel, during a discussion between Bertin and other intellectuals in Dr Lederer's house. Lederer is a writer and art historian that Bertin highly respects. When asked if he accepted the potential bombing of Strasbourg Cathedral ('Sie würden auf das Straßburger Münster schießen, wenn das Unglück es so fügte', *JF*, p. 38), Bertin is aware that his condoning of the Cathedral bombing by German troops is equivalent to the destruction of an outstanding work of culture: 'Jetzt sollte er vor aller Welt eine Maßnahme verteidigen, unter der er ebenso litt wie sie.' (*JF*, p. 37). Bertin's dilemma is that he, as a man who is highly cultured himself, accepts the destruction of cultural artefacts in the name of the necessities of war.

In Primor's *Süß und ehrenvoll*, even though the Jewish characters' nationalist support for the German war effort in WW1 is not as aggressive as in Zweig's novel, Primor's Jewish protagonists can be seen as guilty of choosing to ignore the deeply-rooted anti-Semitism inside the army, while also experiencing anti-Semitic hatred within their own families. Both Zweig's and Primor's Jewish male protagonists can be accused of ignoring the fact that they are fighting for a nation and society that actively discriminates against women and ethnic minorities.

Commemorating Female Victims of the First World War

The second problem concerning state-led commemorations in the context of this chapter is the 'selectivity in the representation of women […] during the First World war itself, and since the conflict has been reproduced in museum and by heritage sites'.[61] A good example is the figure of Edith Cavell, the British nurse at a Red Cross hospital in occupied Brussels, who was sentenced to death and executed by the German occupiers in October 1915 for helping Allied troops to escape across the border into the neutral Netherlands. According to Bette London, although Cavell acquired a saint-like status as an innocent British martyr during and after the war, by the end of the twentieth century she had faded from memory in Britain.[62] As London points out, the creation of a commemorative five-pound coin in 2015 can therefore be seen as 'further evidence of the extent to which she has become a mere relic'.[63] In this sense, the commemoration of women in WW1 is peripheral to the commemoration of contributions by men.

[61] See Maggie Andrews, Alison Fell, Lucy Noakes and June Purvis, 'Representing, Remembering and Rewriting Women's Histories of the First World War', *Women's History Review*, 27/4 (2018), 511-515 (p. 511).
[62] See Bette London, *Posthumous Lives. World War I and the Culture of Memory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022), p. 155.
[63] Ibidem.

Concerning the topic of sexual violence against women, little mention of it was made after 1919, although rape by the enemy was used in some nationalist propaganda.[64] An example is provided by the anti-German propaganda based on the alleged atrocities of the German army that invaded Belgium in 1914.[65] As pointed out by Christa Hämmerle, Oswald Überegger and Birgitta Bader Zaar, the more general question remains about the complex nature of the relation between gender and violence in times of war.[66] The particular circumstances in which violent acts, especially against women, were used in the war must be examined. Above all, the involvement of both victims and perpetrators needs to be examined in detail to arrive at a nuanced perspective of the issue. In this sense, a gender-aware perspective on this issue is beneficial to avoid hasty judgments. The following gender-aware analysis of Arnold Zweig's *Junge Frau von 1914* aims to give a nuanced view on the central event in the novel, namely, Lenore Wahl's rape by her fiancé Werner Bertin.

Male versus Female Victimhood, Guilt and Love in Arnold Zweig's *Junge Frau von 1914* (1931)

Arnold Zweig's six-volume cycle of novels on the First World War, *Der große Krieg der weißen Männer* (published between 1927 and 1957), of which *Junge Frau von 1914* forms part, is the most extensive creative treatment of the First World War in German prose fiction. The six volumes encompass the years between 1913 and 1919. As pointed out by Wilhelm von Sternburg, the cycle of novels can be located in the tradition of the German coming-of-age novel ('Entwicklungsroman'), as its common denominator is the psychological

[64] Antoine Rivière, ‚Rape', in *International Encyclopedia of the First World War, 14-18 online*: <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/rape>. [Last accessed 17 March 2024].
[65] This issue was discussed by John Horne and Alan Kramer: *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2014). Horne and Kramer argue that these atrocities cannot be dismissed as inventions of Allied propaganda.
[66] Christa Hämmerle, Oswald Überegger, Birgitta Bader Zaar (eds.), *Gender and the First World War* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 8.

journey of its main male hero, the German-Jewish intellectual Werner Bertin, from a young writer without political views (before the outbreak of the war) towards an enlightened democrat who as a result of his war experience becomes a believer in the virtues of reason ('Vernunftdemokraten').[67]

Zweig's cycle of novels explores in detail the social and political dimensions of the First World War, using the narrative technique of omniscient narration. The common themes of the six novels are: firstly, the function of (the) war as an educator; secondly, and linked to this view, the optimistic belief that human beings can be taught how to overcome the different form of exploitation of individuals and groups by a state that does not respect basic principles of law and humanity. The third common denominator is the fact that Arnold Zweig avoids any kind of Manichaean perspective on his major and minor fictional characters. Even the attitudes and decisions of his more positive characters, such as Lenore Wahl in *Junge Frau von 1914* or Grischa Paprotkin in *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa*, are portrayed ambivalently.[68] The following reading of *Junge Frau von 1914* largely agrees with Georg Lukács' praise of Zweig's cycle of war novels, which he sees as an illustration of the everyday struggle of fictional characters who must adapt to a militarised society that is stronger than the individual:

> Und Arnold Zweigs Verdienst besteht hier darin, daß er diese Kleinkämpfe des militarisierten Alltags nicht nur in der Vielseitigkeit ihres Nebeneinanders gestaltet, sondern auch die Wandlungen ihres Charakters scharfäugig wahrnimmt und in bezeichnenden Begebenheiten darstellt. […] Die unmittelbare Macht des Apparats bleibt, bis zum Zusammenbruch, stets größer als die Macht der sich in Einzelheiten des Alltags äußernden Volksstimmung.[69]

[67] See Wilhelm von Sternburg, *"Um Deutschland geht es uns". Arnold Zweig. Die Biographie* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2004), p.146.
[68] Ibid., p. 152.
[69] Georg Lukács, 'Arnold Zweigs Romanzyklus über den imperialistischen Krieg 1914 bis 1918', in Wilhelm von Sternburg, *Arnold Zweig. Materialien zu Leben und Werk* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1987), pp. 136-169, p.151.

The first of the six volumes, *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* (1927), will be dealt with in detail in Chapter Four of this thesis, in the context of victimhood, guilt, love and military injustice. The second volume, *Junge Frau von 1914* (1931), analysed in this chapter, was called by Zweig a novel of love ('Roman der Liebe').[70] In this novel, Zweig is interested in the impact of the First World War on gender relations, which he illustrates by describing the complex romance between Werner Bertin and Lenore Wahl, a young German-Jewish couple. Chronologically and in terms of the structure of the cycle of novels, *Junge Frau von 1914* (1931) is the second of the six volumes, and *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* (1927) is the fourth. *Junge Frau von 1914* is one of the two volumes in Zweig's hexalogy that foreground the fate of a female character.

Zweig's cycle of war novels must be located within the literary and political atmosphere in the Weimar Republic of the 1920s. In the mid-1920s the vast majority of accounts of the war available to the German reading and cinema-going public were a 'mixture of military self-glorification and romantic nostalgia'.[71] Critical views of Germany's wartime leadership faced judicial repression, such as Heinrich Wandt's novel *Etappe Gent* (1921), published in expanded form in 1924. Wandt's text exposes the corruption and brutality of German officers in occupied Belgium.[72] In the late 1920s the war book returned as a popular fictional genre because of the 'thirst for information which had been denied to the German public'.[73] Another factor behind the revival of the interest in fictionalised

[70] See Eberhard Hilscher, *Arnold Zweig. Leben und Werk* (Berlin: Volk und Wissen, 1968), p. 70.

[71] See David Midgley, *Writing Weimar. Critical realism in German Literature 1918-1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.234. The chapter ‚Remembering the War' provides an overview of the narrative accounts of the First World War (pp. 226-259). For an encyclopaedic account of the number, type and sales figures of accounts of WW1 published in Germany between 1914 and 1939, see Thomas F. Schneider et al., *Die Autoren und Bücher der deutschsprachigen Literatur zum 1. Weltkrieg 1914–1939. Ein bio-bibliographisches Handbuch* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2008).

[72] Heinrich Wandt, *Erotik und Spionage in der Etappe Gent* (Berlin: Dietz, 2014). The original version is called *Etappe Gent. Streiflichter zum Zusammenbruch* (Berlin: Buchverlag der Freien Presse, 1921). By 1926, 200,000 copies were sold in Germany.

[73] Midgley, *Writing Weimar*, p. 234.

representations of the war was the ability of publishing houses such as Ullstein to sell these novels as authentic, near-documentary accounts of the simple soldier's war experience, as in Erich Maria Remarque's best-seller *Im Westen nicht Neues* (1928).[74] Although Remarque's novel was considered to break with the tradition of self-justifying officer memoirs, it nevertheless portrays the young German generation as passive victims of the lies they were told to encourage them to enlist.[75]

Zweig's cycle of war novels must therefore be seen as using the vantage point of his all-seeing omniscient narrator to give the reader differentiated views on the victims and perpetrators during the First World War, in which the notion of exclusive victimhood or perpetration is deconstructed with the help of complex psychological portrayals of his fictional characters.

The moral universe of *Junge Frau von 1914* can be located within Primo Levi's grey zones of conscience, described in Chapter One of this thesis. Zweig's novel illustrates that its fictional characters, whether German-Jewish (Hugo and Lenore Wahl) or non-Jewish (Albert Schieffenzahn), take ambivalent moral decisions. However, these decisions are partly conditioned by the cultural and legal universes in which these characters live. Whereas Hugo and Lenore take their decisions in the misogynistic world of the patriarchal family, Albert Schieffenzahn's decisions are prompted by the imperatives of the war, as illustrated, for example, by the 'Pulverkrise' (shortage of gun powder) that he discusses with Hugo Wahl at the beginning of the novel (*JF*, pp. 28-34). The combination between the agency displayed by these fictional characters and the simultaneous presence of constraints adds nuance to the portrayal of victimhood in *Junge Frau von 1914*.

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[74] For an account of Ullstein's marketing strategy, see Günther Oesterle, 'Das Kriegserlebnis im für und wider. "Im Westen nichts Neues" von Erich Maria Remarque (1929)', in Dirk van Laak (ed.), *Literatur, die Geschichte schrieb* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), pp. 213-223.

[75] An example of these self-justificatory war memoirs is Erich Ludendorff's *Meine Kriegserinnerungen* 1914-1918 (Berlin: E.S Mittler & Sohn, 1919).

Hugo Wahl is a good example for the fact that in *Junge Frau von 1914*, the figure of the perpetrator is also presented as a victim. Hugo is a perpetrator because he is portrayed as a war profiteer from the very start of the novel, as seen in the above-mentioned discussion between Schieffenzahn and Hugo: 'Unter seinen Klienten befanden sich Offiziere jeden Grades und weit höhere als ein Oberst' (*JF*, p. 31). However, as will be seen later in this chapter, Hugo becomes a victim of his unconditional admiration for Prussian militarism when he realises its anti-Semitic policies (*JF*, pp. 302-312). He becomes aware that he has been misused by German militarism because of his blind belief in the authority of the army: 'Fast fünfzig Jahre lang habe ich unser Preußen bewundert, den Soldatenrock für das beste Kleid der Welt gehalten' (*JF*, p. 312). Nevertheless, he continues to believe that family life in general must strictly obey authoritarian values: 'Für den Frieden, wie er war und wiederkommen würde, mußte die gefestigte Moral bewahrt werden, oder alles brach ein: Ehe, Sitte, Ordnung, Eigentum.' (*JF*, p. 359). Hugo Wahl's conscience is ambivalently portrayed.

As will now be analysed in detail, the first part of Zweig's *Junge Frau von 1914* describes its female heroine Lenore Wahl and her ambiguous feelings towards her fiancé Werner Bertin, who has raped her. Lenore considers that he is a victim of the aggressive masculinity glorified by Prussian militarism. Her anger is directed against his lack of empathy for her dilemma: the rape made Lenore pregnant. Lenore concludes that the First World War is the continuation of the old battle between the sexes, placing Werner's rape in the context of a gendered analysis of history. In this sense, Lenore's feelings of guilt, as well as the fact that she contextualises sexual violence, differentiates the portrayal of abortion in *Junge Frau von 1914* from other literary representations of unwanted pregnancy, such as Friedrich

Wolf's play *Cyankali* (1929).[76] Zweig takes Lenore's problem further by not letting his heroine die as a result of abortion, elevating her problem to be representative of modern woman in general. In *Junge Frau von 1914*, abortion is dictated by external conditions, making her a victim of societal forces beyond her control.

In *Junge Frau von 1914* (1931), set mostly in Potsdam between the spring of 1915 and July 1916, Zweig portrays a young middle-class Jewish heroine, Lenore Wahl, who is raped by her fiancé (*JF*, p. 69), the young German-Jewish author Werner Bertin, shortly before he joins the army. Bertin accepts being drafted because he thinks it is the right time to make personal sacrifices for the sake of defending German culture against its foreign enemies, whom he considers to be inferior. Imperial Germany is justified in imposing its alleged superiority, even at the cost of waging a war against other European nations (*JF*, p. 11). Bertin has overcome his initial sceptical attitude towards militarism (*JF*, p. 45). During his military training, Bertin adopts excessively male, misogynist patterns of behaviour, so much so that he rapes Lenore, who becomes pregnant. The middle part of the novel thus foregrounds Lenore's thoughts after she decides, together with Werner, that she needs to abort the child (*JF*, p. 75).

Throughout her medical treatment and her convalescence, Lenore believes that it was militaristic brainwashing in particular, and war in general, that caused Werner to rape her (*JF*, p. 193). Her emancipation thus automatically entails fighting against militarism: 'diese vermoderte Gesellschaftsordnung, die einem das zufügte, den Krieg, der die Männer verrohte' (*JF*, p. 127). The rape and the abortion are kept secret from Lenore's parents.

[76] See the comparative analysis of Wolf's and Zweig's portrayal of abortion in Sabine Schroder-Krassnow, 'The Changing View of Abortion: A Study of Friedrich Wolf's *Cyankali* and Arnold Zweig's *Junge Frau von 1914*', *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature*, 4/1 (8 January 1979), 33-47.

The theme of nationalism as a compensation for anti-Semitic discrimination is illustrated by Lenore's father Hugo Wahl. He represents the hyper-Prussian assimilated German-Jew who unconditionally supports Prussian militarism, until he discovers the German army's plans to ethnically cleanse its Eastern occupied territories of its Jewish population (*JF*, p. 312). Lenore eventually forgives Bertin in an act of selfless love (agape) by marrying him (*JF*, p. 284). Unwilling to alienate her wealthy father Hugo Wahl, Lenore manages to obtain her father's consent to her marrying Werner.

Werner Bertin's Guilt and Military Masculinity

Werner Bertin's coming-of-age process is illustrated by his disillusionment with the German cause in the First World War that he supported at the very beginning of the novel. In this sense, Bertin can be compared with the main fictional hero of *Süß und ehrenvoll*, Ludwig Kronheim, who undergoes a similar disillusionment. The difference between the two fictional German-Jewish soldiers is, however, that Ludwig does not display codes of military masculinity that lead him to rape his fiancé. In this sense, Werner Bertin's process of emancipation from his initial status as a perpetrator is more complex and ambiguous than Ludwig's.

Even though in *Junge Frau von 1914*, military standards of manhood are blamed, by Lenore Wahl, for Werner Bertin's sexual aggression against her (*JF*, p. 193), Bertin's portrayal is nuanced in the sense that Lenore Wahl can see that there are mitigating circumstances. He appears both as a perpetrator, raping his fiancée Lenore, and as a victim of an exaggerated internalisation of military masculinity, which makes him an ambivalent character.

Lenore's attitude towards Bertin changes over time, as she becomes increasingly worried that he will die during his military service, although he is not a combat soldier. Fräulein Hannes is Lenore's private tutor in Berlin. When Hannes' fiancé is killed during his military service, Lenore starts to feel that Bertin must be forgiven (*JF*, p. 252). She considers that military masculinity was the cause for Bertin's rape, and she thinks that militarism is an essentialised category. Nevertheless, she also believes that Bertin can emancipate himself from it. In this sense, the novel reflects on meanings of gender identities in Wilhelmine Germany. As pointed out by Sander Gilman, gender, sexual, ethnic and national identities were 'racialised', meaning that they were understood as having 'an underlying and immutable biological basis.[77] A similar view can be identified in many passages in Zweig's novel that oppose masculinity and femininity as binary opposites, while referring to images of nature or myths. An example of this can be found at the very beginning of the novel, when Werner gives up his flat in Berlin because he has been drafted as a 'Schipper' or 'Armierungssoldat', in other words not as a frontline infantryman but as a soldier deployed in the construction and maintenance of fortifications at the front and/or in the rear area. His landlady Mrs Laubschrey, whose function in the novel will be analysed later in this chapter, a fortune-teller, predicts that despite the ongoing war, Lenore will get married: 'Und hier wiederum sprach aus Frau Laubschrey ein tieferes Wissen, als sie selber ahnte: die Unzerstörbarkeit des Lebens, das sich auf weibliche Art gegen die männliche Wut des Zerstörens wehrt.' (*JF*, p. 24). A second example is Lenore's walk on the beach that she takes during her convalescence from her abortion. Lenore describes the waves of the female sea ('weiblichen Meer') as abused again and again by the male wind: 'Immer wieder ward es von

[77] See Sander L. Gilman, 'Whose Body Is It Anyway? Hermaphrodites, Gays, and Jews in N.O. Body's Germany', in Benjamin Maria Baader, Sharon Gillerman, and Paul Lerner (eds.), *Jewish Masculinities. German Jews, Gender, and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), pp. 138-151.

der Gewalt des Windes gemißbraucht. Das Männliche rauschte auf, stürzte sich in den Frauenschoß, hinterließ Samen und verlief sich.' (*JF*, p. 170). A third example of how the novel uses essentialised categories on gender is provided by Lenore's thoughts on matriarchy, which is opposed to the patriarchal structures responsible, in her eyes, for not only this war, but all wars in general: 'Der offene Krieg zwischen den Männern jetzt machte nur vergessen, daß von jeher Krieg war von den Männern zu den Weibern, von den Reichen zu den Armen, vom Lande zu den Städten.' (*JF*, p. 192).

In a discussion between Werner Bertin and Lenore's brother David shortly after Lenore's abortion, Bertin rejects possible alternatives to his decision to be transferred to the Western Front. This decision makes Lenore think that he is shirking his responsibility towards her, showing no empathy with her physical and mental suffering. However, Bertin argues that if he had deserted, he would have been interrogated by the military authorities, which would have led to Lenore's illegal abortion being exposed: '… in Verhör genommen, wobei möglicherweise der Krankheit Lenorens nachgeforscht wurde? – Nichts von alledem durfte sich an ihn hängen.' (*JF*, pp. 150-151). This passage illustrates that Lenore's accusation that Bertin is refusing to admit to his guilt openly must be set in the context of the military laws punishing desertion as well as the penal laws that had made abortion a crime since 1872. The law was not relaxed or modified until 1926-27.[78]

I argue, however, that the fact that Bertin feels guilty for Lenore's rape, even if he will not admit to his guilt, illustrates that he is capable of moral improvement. In this sense, Bertin is much more than an entirely passive victim of cultural and militarist indoctrination, as perceived by Lenore, and simultaneously much more than a simple perpetrator. It is

[78] Jost Hermand gives an account of Arnold Zweig's public stance against the repressive paragraph 218 that criminalised abortion. See Jost Hermand, 'Polygame Ehe und latente Homosexualität. Arnold Zweigs Auflehnung gegen die bürgerliche Moral', in Arthur Alt, Julia Bernhard, Hans-Harald Müller, Deborah Vietor-Engländer (eds.): *Arnold Zweig. Berlin – Haifa – Berlin. Perspektiven des Gesamtwerks. Akten des III. Internationalen Arnold-Zweig-Symposiums* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1995).

therefore important to look at Bertin's psychological development from a victim of indoctrination towards a soldier who gradually becomes disillusioned by his military service which is marked by humiliation and discrimination.

Bertin feels elated at being able to serve his country, even if joining the army casts his previous life as an intellectual in a negative light:

> Wozu hatte er nun Schulprüfungen bestanden, das Einjährige, das Abitur? Wozu sich sieben Jahre auf Universitäten herumgetrieben? Alles Dunst, verbrauchtes Leben, der große Ventilator sog es weg. […] Dennoch durfte einem das Herz wohl langsamer und lauter schlagen. Diese Behörden waren unwichtig. Hinter ihnen aber standen die Heimat, die Gesittung, alle seelischen Mächte, alle guten Geister des Vaterlandes. Mochte es grob hergehen und rauh, gewaltsam und blutig – einerlei. Krieg war in der Welt, und er regierte. Jetzt kam es darauf an, allen Ansprüchen gewachsen zu sein, mit empfindlicheren Nerven, wacherem Geiste, erregbarem Gefühl. Jetzt rief ihn Deutschland, er würde es nicht warten lassen. (*JF*, pp. 10-11)

A few pages later, in a discussion of the shelling of Reims Cathedral in September 1914 by German forces, Bertin argues that the war effort justifies the destruction of historic buildings or valuable works of art:

> Ich würde blutenden Herzens auf das Straßburger Münster schießen, wenn das Unglück es so fügte. Vielleicht käme man sein Lebelang darüber nicht hinweg …. […] Ich würde meine Last auf mich nehmen. (*JF*, p. 38)

Bertin also idealises his basic training, despite the strict military drill and the repression of individuality:

> Er genoß die Lust, Teil eines riesigen Gesamtkörpers zu sein, mitverantwortlich für eine festgefügte Gruppe, mit der man zu einer Einheit verschmolz: die Kompanieehre des Soldaten. Der geistige Mensch war nicht mehr einsam, erste Quelle des Glücks. Sobald man gelernt hatte, intuitiv zu erfassen, was der Vorgesetzte erwartete, und wie er es ausgeführt sehen wollte, empfand man sogar ein Gefühl der Freiheit, einer neuen Kollektivfreiheit, die man sich vorher nicht hätte erträumen können. […] Im vergangenen Frieden mußte man gegen Militarismus auf der Wacht sein, den Geist gegen den Zugriff der Gewalt verteidigen, die Ausschreitungen der Säbelrassler ununterbrochen eindämmen. Jetzt gingen Geist und Gewalt einig, der Krieg hatte sie verschmolzen, die Macht der Heere diente dem deutschen Wesen, und die Sehnsucht eines Knaben, dessen Vater Ulan war, durfte sich gehen lassen, eins mit

> der schöpferischen Andacht eines Schriftstellers, dessen Aufgabe Gestaltung des Seelenlebens hieß, Verfeinerung der menschlichen Natur. (*JF*, pp. 44-45)

Bertin's feeling of cultural superiority is turned into a feeling of sexual superiority, which is the result of his physical drill. The day before his fiancée Lenore Wahl comes to visit him, Bertin was prepared to violate her as a result of his brutalisation in the army:

> Sie würde von Mal zu Mal einen verjüngten Freund wiederfinden, einen kräftigeren, einen Mann. Zum Teufel mit der übertriebenen Angst, ihr könne in seiner Umarmung etwas zustoßen! Man mußte nicht immer voraussorgen, vorbeugen, sich mit Schutzmaßnahmen panzern. Ein Soldat hatte Vertrauen in seinen Stern, oder er durfte sich einsargen lassen, gleich beerdigen. Und eine Frau, die ihn liebte, vertraute ihm und fragte nicht lange, ob er sie auch schütze. Wo sollte er hier, auf dem Lande, in Alt-Drewitz, kaufen können, was in der Stadt jeder Friseur feilhielt? (*JF*, p. 55)

Wanton or excessive violence is an integral part of warfare, and the military training that Bertin undergoes makes him accept male domination over women. Bertin, then, is far from the ideal of the patriotic citizen soldier celebrated in the official commemorations of the German-Jewish First World War soldier discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Christa Hämmerle arrives at a similar conclusion when describing the garrison life of young recruits during the Habsburg Empire, which was marked by strict punishment of all kinds of transgression of military discipline.[79]

In *Junge Frau von 1914*, Bertin functions as the embodiment of Zweig's idea that war brutalises soldiers such as Bertin, who consider their military service as a duty to the nation state. However, the novel closely associates this national duty with a general theory of masculinity as a destructive force. This gendered perspective on military service undermines the trope of noble patriotic sacrifice that is conveyed in recent commemorations on the Jewish First World War effort. Military indoctrination is associated with sexual violence in

[79] Christa Hämmerle,'"… dort wurden wir dressiert und sekiert und geschlagen …". Vom Drill, dem Disziplinarstrafrecht und Soldatenmisshandlungen im Heer (1868 bis 1914)', in Laurence Cole, Christa Hämmerle, Martin Scheutz (eds), *Glanz, Gewalt, Gehorsam. Militär und Gesellschaft in der Habsburgermonarchie (1880 bis 1918)* (Essen: Klartext, 2011), pp. 31-54.

the way the scene is filtered through the victim's perspective: 'Da zum ersten Mal in ihrem Leben, hatte er sie wütend an den Schultern gepackt, Befehle gezischt, sie vergewaltigt. Lustlos vor Schreck und Scham hatte sie ihn gewähren lassen.' (*JF*, p. 69). Bertin's feelings of guilt after the rape remain inside his mind, as he refuses to discuss his criminal act with Lenore:

> In seinem Hirn ging ein Strudel von Gedankenstücken um: jedes durchtränkt von Schuld. […] Er hätte diese Schuld gern ausgebrochen, gewisse Muskeln seines Unterleibes zogen sich krampfhaft ein, aber er schwieg, preßte nur die Hände gegen die Augen. (*JF*, pp. 74-75)

However, Bertin's capacity to learn from bad experiences during his military service is undermined by his sense of comradeship with his brothers in arms. They suffer from dehumanised practices in the service of their country:

> Er durfte weder gehen noch kommen, wie er wollte; seine Kleidung war ihm bis in alle Einzelheiten vorgeschrieben. Er mußte sein Geschlecht anfassen lassen, wann es der Wille der Oberen verlangte, seine Nahrung mit Löffeln aus einem Blechtopf suppen, seine Notdurft zusammen mit anderen auf einer waagerechten Stange befriedigen, seinen Willen jederzeit unterordnen. Er hatte lernen müssen, alles, was in seinen Gesichtskreis geriet, nach dem Anspruch der gemeinsten Bedürfnisse des Lebens abzuschätzen […] (*JF*, p. 259)

This sense of victimhood is turned into a heroic will to defend the idea of a decent, humane Germany, which contrasts with his dehumanising treatment at the hands of some of his officers (such as the anti-Semitic Glinsky). In the following extract, situated shortly after the wedding ceremony, Bertin admits that his nationalist attitude from the beginning of the novel was wrong:

> Wo waren die Tage? Wo war das Laub vom vorigen Herbst? Wo der Mensch Bertin von damals, unbekümmert, ahnungslos, frei wie ein Wilder und nur sich selbst verantwortlich? […] Die Idee Deutschland gegen den Feldwebel Glinksy zu verteidigen, die Grundsätze menschlichen Anstands gegen Herrn Feldwebelleutnant Grassnick auszuwiegen, den Kampf für eine gerechte Sache vor dem Rabenprofil des Herrn Major Jansch zu retten – das forderte Anspannung. Diese spiegelten seine lieblosen Briefe … (*JF*, p. 373)

Bertin believes that Lenore's altruistic love for him can expiate his guilt for abandoning her during her abortion:

> Unbeirrbar folgte sie den Gesetzen, nach denen sie angetreten, entfaltete ihr Wesen, blieb sich treu, das Sanfte, welches nach chinesischer Weisheit das Allerhärteste überwindet. Sie überwand Krieg, Entfernung, selbst Abkehr, Haß, begreiflichen Groll. (*JF*, p. 373)

To sum up, Bertin is portrayed, from Lenore's perspective, paradoxically as a perpetrator who is a victim of the military training that, in the eyes of Lenore, brutalises men and accounts for his rape of her. Bertin's feelings of guilt illustrate that even if he does not openly show the empathy that Lenore expects of him, he nevertheless displays his agency when arguing that deserting the army for the sake of joining up with Lenore is made impossible because of the strict confines of military law. Bertin's behaviour has mitigating circumstances that do not excuse his rape of Leonore but nevertheless undermines his status as an entirely negative perpetrator.

Hugo Wahl's Guilt and Militarism

The second fictional German-Jewish character whose emancipatory process is portrayed ambiguously is Lenore Wahl's father, Hugo Wahl, a banker and war-profiteer who lives in Potsdam. Just as with Werner Bertin, Zweig's novel portrays him as a victim of nationalist-militarist beliefs in the superiority of Wilhelmine militarism. Nevertheless, the guilt that he eventually feels after being confronted with the anti-Semitism of the German occupation of Eastern Europe is not sufficient for him to question his overbearing status as the patriarchal head of the Wahl family.

Hugo Wahl's ultra-Prussian militarism is associated with capitalist war-profiteering. His brand of capitalist nationalism is illustrated, for example, by his belief that buying non-German war bonds is high treason: 'Wer heute fremde Staatspapiere kauft, versündigt sich

am Vaterlande.' (*JF*, p. 289). In a similar vein to Werner Bertin, the reason for Hugo's identification with Prussian militarism stems from his being discriminated against as a Jewish banker. Hugo sees Prussian militarism as free of the kind of prejudice that he encounters in his social and commercial life:

> Immer hatte er den Stachel gefühlt, schließlich und endlich doch nur ein Freigelassener zu sein, auf den die Herren des Landes herabsehen, auch wenn sie ihn brauchten, und dann erst recht […] Jetzt aber nahm die Kaste der Offiziere, vertreten durch ihren genialsten Mann, ihn unter die Mitarbeiter auf. (*JF*, pp. 286-287)

This impression is confirmed by Generalmajor Schieffenzahn, the Commander in Chief of the German-occupied Eastern territories (Oberbefehlshaber Ost), who, at the beginning of the novel, looks upon Hugo Wahl as a typical German Jew who would sell his soul to be assimilated. The following extract is taken from the first meeting between Schieffenzahn and Hugo Wahl, who tries to sell the German army a considerable amount of nitric acid, which the German army badly needs to produce gunpowder. The extract is revealing in that it demonstrates that Prussian military is aware of, and ready to exploit, the German-Jews' misguided belief that assimilation will lead to full social and political equality:

> Wenigstens war er pünktlich, dieser Herr aus Potsdam. Ein - weiß der Deibel – jüdischer Herr, wie das Stückchen Profil, der schwarze Schnurrbart, die verdickten Schultern sofort verrieten. Oberst Schieffenzahn lachte kurz auf. Willkommen der Herr! Im Krieg mit England hätte er sogar den Teufel zum Bündnis eingeladen […] um wieviel eher jene, die doch nur wünschten, endlich als gleichberechtigte Staatsbürger angenommen zu werden. (*JF*, p. 30)

By focusing on the war as a means to further his bank's financial interests, Hugo Wahl is guilty of ignoring the fact that the German army's war aims in Eastern Europe depend upon colonising their occupied Eastern territories and deporting most of the Eastern Jewish population, who are thought to be economically useless, but still have to be fed, in order to

make space for German settlers (*JF*, p. 305). Hugo Wahl is duped by the German High Command.

The chapter 'Verstand ist die beste Vaterlandsliebe' (*JF*, pp. 302-312) comes shortly after Lenore, in a reconciliation letter written to Werner Bertin, has secured her father's dowry of Swiss war bonds worth eighty thousand Marks (*JF*, p. 301). Hugo Wahl and other high-ranking members of the German-Jewish community (Obstfelder, Dr Jonas) think they have been invited by the Ober-Ost High Command led by Generalmajor Schieffenzahn to discuss the new credit bank to finance the plans the German occupiers want to implement in these occupied Eastern territories (*JF*, p. 287). When they arrive in Kovno for the talks, they are shocked to hear that the real reason the Jewish delegates have been invited is to provide their moral support and use their Jewish connections to help the army implement its plan to deport the Eastern European Jewish population to the USA on board a fleet of merchant ships. The presence and support of leading German Jews is a means of lessening the army's moral responsibility for the planned deportation: 'Uns hatten sie kommen lassen, damit wir ihnen einen Teil der Verantwortung und das ganze Odium abnähmen' (*JF*, p. 309). The German officer who presents the plan makes the anti-Semitic remark that in the US, the Jewish 'Untugenden' will no longer be visible among their fellow-Jews who have already emigrated (*JF*, p. 307). Furthermore, the sea voyage needs to take place through the Baltic Sea, which is full of enemy mines (*JF*, p. 308). Hugo Wahl suddenly notices how assimilated Jonas and Obstfelder look, as Hugo is the only of the three men who still looks 'Jewish' (*JF*, p. 308). The meeting ends with Obstfelder and Jonas rejecting the plans, simultaneously offering their help to garner funds from the Jewish community to finance the deportation (*JF*, p. 310).

Hugo now realises that his unconditional, lifelong support for Prussian militarism was irrational. In accordance with Zweig's basic principle developed in the cycle of six war novels, Hugo also possesses the ability to learn from his past mistakes:

> Fast fünfzig Jahre lang habe ich unser Preußen bewundert, den Soldatenrock für das beste Kleid der Welt gehalten, die Leute abgelehnt, die von Militarismus sprachen, dich auch, Vater. Es ist nicht zu spät, umzulernen. Verstand ist die beste Vaterlandsliebe, und Militarismus kein gutes Prinzip. Es wird Deutschland zugrunde richten, wenn man ihn nicht zwingt, die Pfähle zurückzustecken. (*JF*, p. 312)

Referring to Prussian militarism, Hugo seems to draw the logical conclusion from his experience in Kovno:

> Markus Wahl, die Hände auf dem Rücken, entgegnete bedächtig: "Wer wird ihn dazu zwingen? Es ist niemand da."
> „Wir nicht", gab der Sohn zu, „wir Fünfziger nicht mehr; die Dreißigjährigen müssen heran. Wir können ihnen bloß den Rücken steifen. Sonderbar, daß ihr Siebziger und sie die Welt richtiger beurteilten, und daß wir uns benebeln ließen." „Erfolg benebelt", versetzte Markus Wahl. (*JF*, p. 312)

Although Hugo now feels guilty for his misguided admiration of German militarism, his learning ability must be nuanced. Even if this is the only moment in the novel in which the reader can sympathise with the war-profiteer Hugo Wahl, his apparent moral insight is undermined by his words that conclude the chapter: 'Möge dereinst aus unseren Gebeinen der Rächer erstehen' (*JF*, p. 313), quoting his historical role model, the Prussian ruler Friedrich Wilhelm ('der große Kurfürst', *JF*, p. 313).[80] Even at the moment of his greatest moral insight, Hugo Wahl remains an ambiguous, vindictive character, unlike his daughter Lenore.

Lenore Wahl's Guilt and Reconciliation

[80] Hugo Wahl is referring to Friedrich Wilhelm von Brandenburg (1620-1688), known as the Great Elector (Der Große Kurfürst), who, with the help of an alliance with aristocratic landowners, collected the funds to turn the small principality of Brandenburg into a powerful, militarised state. See Jürgen Luh, *Der Grosse Kurfürst – Sein Leben neu betrachtet* (Munich: Siedler, 2020).

The third German-Jewish character in *Junge Frau von 1914* who is portrayed, like Werner Bertin and Hugo Wahl, as a victim of discrimination is its main heroine, Lenore Wahl, Hugo's daughter. She considers herself to be victim of the war in the sense that she believes it to be the continuation of the ancient battle of the sexes (*JF*, pp. 194-195). In contrast to Werner Bertin and Hugo Wahl, who compensate for their sense of victimhood by adopting a nationalist attitude, Lenore Wahl adopts an internationalist attitude of peaceful reconciliation. She hopes that the end of the war will signal the beginning of a time when old values of conciliatory love will be renewed and reestablished:

> Man würde alsbald prüfen, wo man seelisch stand, wieviel man von der eigenen Gesinnung abgekratzt hatte. […] Man würde den Schreck zu verbergen suchen und neu aufzubauen: Gefühle wieder hochzüchten, Gedanken wieder bewerten, Empfindlichkeit wieder schätzen, Geist wieder lieben. Ich muß meine Zeit abwarten. […] und wäre es auch mal erst das Reich der Liebe und des Geistes, des Friedens, einer besseren Zeit. (*JF*, p. 325)

As seen above, this is not the case for Lenore's father, Hugo, who remains trapped in his vindictive, adversarial feelings. In Lenore's eyes, the only person who is receptive to her feelings of reconciliation is Werner Bertin, even if his moral insight or guilt is yet to come. Lenore seems to give Werner Bertin a kind of moral credit for his future insight that he should not have abandoned her when she had the abortion: 'Einsicht stand ja auf seinem Wege' (*JF*, p. 376).

Lenore Wahl's belief that men are slaves to their baser, violent instincts leads her to adopt pacifism as the only alternative. In this sense, *Junge Frau von 1914* echoes the thoughts of the radical wing of the international Women's Peace Congress at the Hague in April 1915.[81] Bourgeois radical suffrage campaigners in Germany such as Lida Gustava

[81] See Ingrid Sharp, "Blaming the Women: Women's 'Responsibility' for the First World War", in Alison S. Fell and Ingrid Sharp (eds.), *The Women's Movement in Wartime. International Perspectives, 1914-19* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 67-87, p. 76.

Heymann and Anita Augspurg rejected the war enthusiasm of the mainstream women's association, the 'Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine' (BDF) and clearly blamed men and their atavistic urges for the outbreak of the war, just as Lenore Wahl considers the war to be the crystallisation of pernicious patriarchy.

However, Zweig's novel simultaneously reflects a different female perspective on the issue of who is responsible for the First World War. In this view, it is women who are blamed for either not impeding the war or for not being able to stop it. As pointed out by Ingrid Sharp, this blame is voiced, in fictional prose, for example in Claire Goll's short story 'Die Wachshand' ('The Wax Hand'), in which the wife of a soldier returning home asks herself if it is the passivity of women that has turned men like her husband into both victims and perpetrators: 'Sie, die Frauen, wußten doch, daß es da drüben Mütter gibt. Warum hatten sie sich nicht früher geeinigt, sie, die Mütter aller Menschen, zum Widerstand. Trugen sie nicht die größere Schuld an dem Zusammenbruch der Zeit? Denn sie lebten der Duldung, der Schwäche, der Passivität.'[82] Her husband has killed an unarmed enemy soldier, although he saw in him another human being: 'Du sahst durch den Ring an seinem Finger die Frau, die jede Nacht auf ihn wartet … Du bist ja ein Mörder!'.[83]

A similar question about the moral responsibility of women in tolerating the inhumanity of war is voiced in the scene in *Junge Frau von 1914* in which Lenore Wahl goes to see Werner Bertin's former landlady in Berlin, Frau Laubschrey, shortly before her wedding. Laubschrey has just been released from prison, after a neighbour denounced her for making an anti-war remark (*JF*, pp. 331-334). While imprisoned, Laubschrey meets the famous Socialist member of the Reichstag and pacifist, Rosa Luxemburg, who tells the

[82] Claire Goll, *Der gläserne Garten. Prosa von 1917-1939* (Berlin: Argon, 1989), pp. 151-158, p. 156. First published in 1918.
[83] Ibid. p. 155.

landlady that "'was Sie getan haben, das haben wir alle getan, oder wir hätten's sollen tun, verstehen Sie? Alle Frauen mit weiblicher Empfindung. Und eher geht der Krieg nicht zu Ende, bis wir nicht die Männer wachrütteln.'" (*JF*, p. 332). The function of Frau Laubschrey can therefore be seen as in line with this chapter's argument that Zweig's novel, via its nuanced juxtaposition of differing perspectives and character constellations, complicates the notion of innocent victimhood that is characteristic of official commemorations of the German-Jewish contribution to the First World War. In *Junge Frau von 1914*, two different female perspectives on the inhumanity of war are juxtaposed: first, Lenore blames the war for brutalising men, which can have disastrous effects on gender relations; second, female characters such as Rosa Luxemburg or Laubschrey voice the issue of women's moral responsibility for perpetuating the inhumanity of war. This juxtaposition adds complexity to the status of women as war victims in Zweig's novel.

A closer look at Lenore Wahl's motive for forgiving the man who raped her illustrates that her feelings of guilt are essential to explaining this decision. Lenore receives a letter from Bertin in which he appoints her as his heir, which triggers her guilt, thinking that Bertin might die during his military service: 'Schlechten Gewissens verschwieg sie sich die Antwort, die aus ihrem Innern heraufhallte.' (*JF*, pp. 235). And later on, when she is told by her teacher, Fräulein Hannes, that her husband was killed in action, Lenore eventually decides to leave behind her 'Groll' (anger) at Bertin (*JF*, pp. 252-254). Lenore now feels a sense of guilt for having thought about revenge towards Bertin's moral cowardice: 'Ihnen [Bertin] wird nichts geschenkt werden, wir sind fertig miteinander, und Sie sollen es zu schmecken kriegen.' (*JF*, 177). Lenore's dilemma is that she is caught between abandoning her initial plans to work as a teacher and choosing the security of her own family to finance her wedding. As pointed out by Magdalena Poplawska, Lenore gives in to her fate and accepts

her traditional role as a wife who supports her husband: 'Die negativen Gefühle, die ihr nur Schmerzen zufügen, müssen aus dem Herzen verdrängt werden, sonst wird sie der Chance auf ein normales Leben beraubt.'[84] Lenore's feelings of guilt towards Bertin therefore complicate the novel's portrayal of her process of emancipation. It reminds the reader that her decision to stay within the confines of her paternalistic family structure must be seen from the position of a woman whose choices in 1914-18 were severely limited by legal and cultural constraints.

Critical perspectives on the plausibility of Lenore's status as an emancipated modern woman reflect the ambivalence that is depicted in the text itself. The critics fall into two separate camps. On the one hand, Georg Lukács considers Lenore to represent 'den Typus der neuen Frau', praising her agency or active role in asking for Bertin to be given permission to get four days off military service for his wedding.[85] By contrast, Eberhard Hilscher, a literary critic from the GDR, sees Lenore's emancipatory development as only partially implemented, as it ends in a wedding.[86] Sigrid Thielking criticises Zweig's portrayal of the gendered views on war by stating that at the time of the novel's publication, this view went unnoticed.[87] Thielking is skeptical that the novel's message of reconciliation through emancipation is believable:

> Emanzipation findet, wenn überhaupt, nur rüdimentär statt; […] Ansätze kritischen weiblichen Nachdenkens über Gewalt und Krieg bleiben weitgehend auf die Empörung nach ihrer Abtreibung beschränkt […] Die laue Botschaft Zweigs reduziert sich zunächst auf: abwarten, überleben und neu aufbauen, mit noch größeren sittlichen Anstrengungen.[88]

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[84] Magdalena Poplawska, 'Sexueller Missbrauch als Wendepunkt im Leben einer sich emanzipierenden Frau anhand des Romans *Junge Frau von 1914*', in Krzystof Klosowicz (ed.), *Arnold Zweig zum fünfzigsten Todestag* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2019), pp. 113-124, p. 122.
[85] Lukács, 'Arnold Zweigs Romanzyklus über den imperialistischen Krieg 1914 bis 1918', p. 166.
[86] Eberhard Hilscher, *Arnold Zweig. Leben und Werk* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1985), p. 84.
[87] Sigrid Thielking, '"Er warb nicht mehr um mich, er kommandierte …". Zu Arnold Zweigs Roman *Junge Frau von 1914*', in *Krieg und Literatur*, III/ 5/6 (1991), 298-309 (p. 309).
[88] Ibid., p. 306.

Another scathing criticism of *Junge Frau von 1914* is made by Doerte Bischoff, who thinks that Zweig's attempt to explain the events of the First World War through a female perspective fails.[89] David Midgley also criticises the ending of the novel: 'Statt dessen wird dem Leser eine "Hochzeit in Rosen" vorgeführt […], die sich nicht anders denn als Rückfall in die Konvention auslegen läßt.'[90]

The wedding ceremony itself is an ambivalent symbol, since it represents simultaneously Lenore's imprisonment and liberation. Paradoxically, her victimhood is thus reinforced by her moral autonomy. The ceremony displays an adherence to the most patriarchal aspects of Orthodox Jewish religion, motivated by Lenore's refusal to break radically from her middle-class family, upon which she is financially dependent. During the actual ceremony, Lenore fantasises about a clean break from the forces of misogynistic repression, including Jewish Orthodox marriage rituals. However, Lenore chooses to remain silent, her thoughts stay inside her mind: 'Großartig wäre es, ein Fest, euch alles ins Gesicht zu sagen; aber wozu euch wehe tun?' (*JF*, p. 364). Moreover, Lenore chooses not to disrupt the family, in exchange for the financial benefits the family bestows upon her.

In Lenore's moral universe, female emancipation is possible only through remaining within, and not rebelling against, the moral order (in this case the structural, legal oppression of women in Wilhelmine society), by repressing one's moral convictions. Lenore Wahl chooses, ambivalently, to stay both within and outside the system that she detests. She simultaneously takes advantage of her wealthy upper-middle class lifestyle, while wanting to overcome it by becoming a pacifist teacher.

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[89] Doerte Bischoff, 'Krieger, Mütter, Cyborgs. Apokalypse und Geschlechterperformanz im Diskurs um den Ersten Weltkrieg', in Maria Moog-Grünewald, Verena Olejniczak Lobsien (eds.), *Apokalypse. Der Anfang im Ende* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2003), (203-230), p. 230.

[90] David R. Midgley, *Arnold Zweig. Eine Einführung in Leben und Werk* (Athenäum: Frankfurt/Main, 1987), p. 100.

Lenore Wahl's feelings of selfless agape, even if flawed, and her reconciliation with Werner Bertin, nevertheless display solidarity with women all over the world who were victims of the war. The conclusion to the chapter 'Hochzeit in Rosen' can even be interpreted as combining solidarity for women and forgiveness of men, as both genders are victims of the war. The following extract describes Bertin's departure from Lenore shortly after their wedding, as Bertin's four days of leave are over. Lenore has forgiven her husband's refusal to discuss his behaviour during her abortion and says goodbye, not knowing if she will ever see him again:

> "Wenn du nur heil bleibst. Um mich kümmere dich nicht; ich komme schon durch." Zur gleichen Zeit, im selben Ton sprachen Tausende von Frauen auf der ganzen Erde, in den Hauptsprachen der weißen Menschheit. (*JF*, p. 385)

To conclude, one can argue that the trope of innocent victimhood concerning the German-Jewish role in the German war effort in the First World War is undermined in Arnold Zweig's *Junge Frau von 1914*. The presence of the guilt incurred by the fictional Jewish characters illustrates, as seen above, that these protagonists possess a certain degree of moral autonomy. Lenore's moral agency cements her cultural imprisonment within the family structures that she claims are stifling her emancipation. In the fictional world of Zweig's *Junge Frau von 1914*, the subtle differentiation between different kinds of moral guilt contradicts over-simplified notions of Jewish innocent victimhood.

Blinkered Nationalism, Guilt and Eros in Avi Primor's *Süß und ehrenvoll* (2013)

Primor's *Süß und ehrenvoll* (2013) was first published in Hebrew and almost immediately translated into German.[91] Its author has acquired a certain degree of public recognition in Germany, as he was the Israeli ambassador in Berlin between 1993 and 1999. He is currently

[91] Avi Primor, *Süß und ehrenvoll*, trans. by Beate Esther von Schwarze (Berlin: Quadriga, 2013).

the Chairman of the Israeli Council on Foreign Relations, is regarded in Germany as an authority on Israeli-Palestinian relations, and often criticises the policies of the Israeli government.[92] Primor has written several non-fiction books. His First World War novel *Süß und ehrenvoll* is his only work of fiction.

The commonality with Arnold Zweig's *Junge Frau von 1914* lies in the ambivalent portrayal in *Süß und ehrenvoll* of the coming-of-age processes of its main fictional German-Jewish characters. As in Zweig's interwar text, the negative impact of the First World War is seen through the lens of its main female heroine. The difference is that Zweig's female protagonist Lenore Wahl represents an innocent victim of male sexual violence. Her victimhood is seen through the perspective of gender. By contrast, female victimhood in Primor's novel is seen through the perspective of religious and racial discrimination, as illustrated by the fact that his non-Jewish female heroine Karoline Schulzendorf becomes the victim of her own anti-Semitic parents. In Primor's novel, the main male character, Ludwig Kronheim, is characterised by his inability or unwillingness to distance himself from his initial jingoistic support for the German cause. In this sense, Ludwig is marked by his inability to feel guilt, as he lacks the necessary awareness that his belief in the German war cause is misguided. The female perspective relativises this blind support, in the figure of Ludwig's fiancée, the non-Jewish student Karoline Schulzendorf.

However, the crucial difference between *Junge Frau von 1914* and *Süß und ehrenvoll* is that the latter does not embed its gendered view of the conflict into a binary opposition between men and women. In Primor's novel, the main female character Karoline Schulzendorf is to foreground the link between being a victim of anti-Semitism, while

[92] See, for example, the radio interview with Primor by Birgit Wentzien: "Die deutsch-israelischen Beziehungen sind die besten, die wir haben können.": <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/avi-primor-beste-beziehungen-zu-deutschland-100.html.>. [Last accessed: 17 April 2023].

simultaneously continuing to believe that patriotism and Jewishness can go together. In this sense, the figure of the female protagonist in *Süß und ehrenvoll* adds greater complexity to the issue of blind nationalism in the context of anti-Semitism. In *Junge Frau von 1914*, Lenore Wahl was not a victim of anti-Semitism, but above all the male brutalisation.

The Frankfurt law student Ludwig Kronheim is portrayed as an innocent victim of state-induced anti-Semitism in the army at the same time as being a convinced patriot who considers it his duty to serve in the war, as this will eventually lead, he believes, to full political and social integration of German Jews into the Empire. His father also believes in the benefits of German-Jewish involvement in the German war effort: 'Wir [deutsche Juden] sind Deutsche! Deutsche wie alle anderen. Endlich hat die Emanzipation der deutschen Juden ihr höchstes Ziel erreicht!' (*SE*, p. 53). Despite the conflictual relationship with his overbearing father, Ludwig agrees with him on this point: 'Seinen Sohn brauchte er gar nicht zu überzeugen, Ludwig war Feuer und Flamme.' (*SE*, p. 53).

In this sense, both father and son Kronheim represent the stereotype of the patriotic German-Jewish supporter of Germany's cause in the First World War, sacrificing his life for Germany, as illustrated in the official commemorations of the Jewish war contribution discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Nevertheless, Ludwig continues to believe that final victory in a just war is possible. However, at the end of the novel, Ludwig is killed in action, which can be seen as the novel's illustration that the price for his unwavering support is death. In this sense, the novel complicates the notion of patriotic sacrifice voiced in the commemoration of Jewish involvement in the First World War. As seen in the narrative of tragic patriotic sacrifice of German-Jews during the official commemorations in Berlin, this notion can be equated with innocent victimhood. It adds a tragic note to the idea of patriotism, as Ludwig's patriotism is embedded in a narrative that allows dissenting voices,

critical of the war, to be uttered: 'Ludwigs Geschichten vom Krieg, die er ihr bei jedem Urlaub erzählte, wurden diesmal durch Karolines Berichte über das schwere Leben an der Heimatfront übertroffen: Mangel an Heizstoffen und vor allem an Grundnahrungsmitteln und ein eingeschränkter öffentlicher Verkehr.' (*SE*, p. 325). Karoline's female dissenting voice is that of the indirect war victims on the home front. In contrast to the positive view on German-Jewish patriotic sacrifice contained in the recent commemoration speech in Berlin-Weißensee, Karoline's perspective adds a negative layer to the notion of sacrificial patriotic victimhood.

The novel utilises parallel coming-of-age stories of two young Jewish men, which are deliberately so similar that they are almost interchangeable. The first involves the French soldier Louis Naquet, who, at the beginning of the novel, lives happily in Bordeaux with his assimilated Jewish family. His father is highly educated, despite working as a baker, and believes that education is the best route for French Jews to become fully-fledged members of the French Third Republic (*SE*, pp. 22-24). Shortly after graduating from secondary school, Louis is required to do his compulsory, three-year military service. Louis' German-Jewish counterpart in the novel is Ludwig Kronheim, the son of an ultra-Prussian Jewish-German medical doctor in Frankfurt am Main. Ludwig has also just graduated from secondary school and, shortly before the outbreak of the First World War, begins studying law at Heidelberg University, where he falls in love with the Gentile student Karoline Schulzendorf.

Louis and Ludwig enter the war on opposite sides and experience its harsh realities and horrors. They both share, albeit in two different countries, their shared victim status. Ludwig's love for Karoline is expressed in his letters from the front. His love keeps growing despite the hope of both sets of parents that the separation between the two lovers would automatically put an end to their relationship (*SE*, p. 129). Ludwig's French counterpart,

Louis Naquet, also becomes romantically involved, meeting during home leave in Paris the assimilated Jew Elise Lichentin, the daughter of a German-Jewish family who emigrated to Alsace (*SE*, pp. 249-250).

Ludwig is a victim of state-sanctioned anti-Semitism in the army, but he refuses to stop supporting this state. However, Ludwig Kronheim is also portrayed as possessing the autonomy necessary to reject his father's ultra-Prussian behaviour and views, which fail to show compassion or empathy: 'Selbst wenn draußen die Welt unterginge, hätte Vater kein Verständnis für die geringste Verspätung. Preußischer als die Preußen will er sein.' (*SE*, p. 10). Yet he shares his father's unconditional support for the German Kaiser and his decision to take Germany to war: 'Seinen Sohn brauchte er gar nicht zu überzeugen, Ludwig war Feuer und Flamme.' (*SE*, p. 53). Until his death in combat, Ludwig shows the same lack of empathy as his father; he is unable, for example, to show solidarity with victims of the economic hardships on the home front (*SE*, p. 326). Ludwig's inconsistent opinions are closely associated with the feelings of self-centred eros, embodied in the novel by his romantic relationship with the non-Jewish woman Karoline Schulzendorf.

Eros is a self-interested, self-centred kind of love that shares with selfless agape its potential to discuss to what extent the guilt incurred by the fictional protagonists can be redeemed. Feelings of solidarity with other victims is an essential characteristic of agape, which links it to the trope of innocent victimhood. Agape is the kind of love that was seen in my reading above of *Junge Frau von 1914*, as illustrating Lenore Wahl's empathy for all the female victims of patriarchy. Lenore's agape can be seen as containing the idea of moral redemption, as she eventually forgives her rapist-fiancé Werner Bertin in the climactic ending of the novel. As seen above, I argued that Lenore gives Werner a kind of moral credit, as she believes that some time in the future, Werner will become aware of his morally

questionable attitude towards her at the time of her abortion. This moral credit illustrates the anticipatory aspect of innocence, as seen in the Introduction. As argued above, Lenore hopes that in the future, pacifism will triumph over war and its brutalisation of men. This hope can be seen as the desire that her ambivalent forgiveness of Werner can be alleviated by regaining some kind of innocence. At the same time, Werner's guilt would also become alleviated by this anticipation of a future state of innocence. Lenore's innocent victimhood is thus set in the context of her hope for future redemption, exemplified by agape.

By contrast, the idea of redemption through love is absent from *Süß und ehrenvoll*. Ludwig is unable to display feelings of guilt for his misguided nationalism. The romantic couple Ludwig Kronheim and Karoline Schulzendorf, which I see as an example of self-centred eros, is the framework in which this blindly nationalist attitude is discussed, for example at the end of chapter 30 (*SE*, pp. 324-326). As seen above, Karoline's dissenting voice that relativises Ludwig's ongoing support for the war is not strong enough to shatter his beliefs. Their love is selfish because it is seen, by the couple, as a safe haven from the discriminations and hardships surrounding them. The moral agency which he displays at the beginning of the novel is no longer used during his service in the army due to his lack of empathy for other victims of the war: 'Begreifen sie nicht, dass wir jetzt alles für das Vaterland opfern müssen? Gerade jetzt, wo die Chancen für den Endsieg besser denn je stehen?' (*SE*, p. 326). Although Ludwig Kronheim is an innocent victim of anti-Semitic discrimination, this innocent victimhood does not endow him with moral wisdom. Ludwig refuses to recognise Germany's impending defeat during the final months of the First World War, continuing to believe that it is a just war.

The romantic pairing of Ludwig Kronheim and Karoline Schulzendorf and their feelings of self-centred love, or eros, is the framework in which this blindly nationalist

attitude is problematised, but not abandoned. Their love is selfish because it is seen, by the couple, as a safe haven from the discriminations and hardships surrounding them. Self-centred eros is also illustrated by Karoline's vow, after her fiancé Ludwig is killed in combat, to raise their twin daughters as German-Jewish patriots, which causes Karoline to break with her anti-Semitic parents.

Primor's novel poses a much greater challenge to the myth of innocent Jewish victimhood than Zweig's text. It starts with a scene that highlights the nationalist attitude of its main German-Jewish hero, Ludwig Kronheim. The origins of this attitude go back to Ludwig's secondary school days, when he experiences anti-Semitism on 'Sedantag' in September 1910.[93] As Ludwig is not tall and blond, he is not allowed to fight on the side of the pupils who play the German soldiers in this re-enactment ('Er musste wieder einmal "Franzose" sein.', *SE*, p. 6). His school celebrates the day with a re-enactment of the battle. Ludwig's love for the fatherland is likened to a quasi-religious experience:

> Auch Ludwig liebte diesen Manövertag. Sich hier draußen an der frischen Luft dem Gegner zu stellen erregte die Nerven und weckte die besten Instinkte. Das Leben war Kampf, und der Kampf fürs Vaterland war das Heiligste, was er sich vorstellen konnte. (*SE*, p. 6)

During the re-enactment, Ludwig also experiences the anti-Semitism of some of his classmates, one of whom calls him 'so ein Jude' (*SE*, p. 7). Ludwig's teacher, Dr Stegemann, a veteran of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871, humiliates this classmate by putting him in the group of the pupils who play the French soldiers, while Ludwig is allowed to change sides. When he returns home, he complains about this remark to his mother: 'Immer geht es

[93] 'Sedantag' was a semi-official holiday during the German Empire, celebrating the German victory at the Battle of Sedan on 2 September 1870 during the Franco-Prussian War. As pointed out by Gerit von Leitner in her biography of Clara Immerwahr, this celebration day was highly controversial. For example, several Wilhelmine feminist organisations wanted this day to be wiped from the collective memory of both the German and the French nation: 'Das traurige Ereignis sollte man aus dem Gedächtnis der Völker auslöschen und nicht bejubeln.' Gerit von Leitner, *Der Fall Clara Immerwahr. Leben für eine humane Wissenschaft* (Munich: Beck, 1993), p. 144.

gegen uns Juden. […] Aber sind wir nicht auch Deutsche?' (*SE*, p. 9). His mother answers that the only way for Jews to be accepted as Germans is to integrate silently into mainstream society:

> Wenn wir uns anpassen, fallen wir auch nicht mehr auf. Wir müssen nur die gesellschaftlichen Regeln befolgen, und zwar mit Geduld, Beharrlichkeit und eiserner Disziplin, da muss ich deinem Vater recht geben. (*SE*, p. 10)

Ludwig's father is a representative of ultra-Prussian Jews and embodies the wish for total integration into Wilhelmine society (*SE*, p. 10). At the end of this first chapter, Ludwig turns the anti-Semitism that he experiences into a vow to study law in order to get rid of discriminatory practices, such as not being allowed to become an army officer because one is a Jew. Working as a civil servant for the Prussian state would be, in his eyes, a liberation from injustice:

> Er würde dem Staate dienen, so viel war klar. Er würde für Gerechtigkeit sorgen wie Dr. Stegemann, nur in ganz anderem Maßstab. War es denn völlig undenkbar, dass er Minister wurde? Oder zumindest Richter oder Professor? Ans Militär brauchte er nicht zu denken, trotz seiner vaterländischen Gesinnung. […] Zwar ist es nicht vielen Juden gelungen, in den Staatsdienst aufgenommen zu werden, aber gerade deshalb wäre es ein Durchbruch auf diesem Gebiet, ja erlösender Schritt. (*SE*, pp. 12-13)

In the parallel French plot, the French Jew Louis Naquet and his father are also portrayed as characters who believe firmly that, as members of an ethnic minority, the only way to achieve social recognition in Republican France is through education and assimilation. Louis' father Lucien keeps repeating this message, especially during the opening scene when Louis receives his high school diploma from a prestigious Bordeaux lycée in the summer of 1913:

> Vergiss nie, dass du in erster Linie Franzose bist, der Sohn einer alteingesessenen französischen Familie. Aber du bist auch Jude, und der Status der Juden, einer winzigen Minderheit in unserer Gesellschaft, hängt seit jeher von ihrer Bildung ab.

> […] Unsere Stärke liegt darin begründet, dass wir das Lernen seit jeher als höchsten Wert geschätzt haben. (SE, p. 22)

When Louis is about to begin his national military service, his father warns him against the structural anti-Semitism that prevails, not only in the French army, and its high-ranking officers, but generally in society. This was demonstrated by the Dreyfus affair of 1894, which remained a traumatic experience for most French Jews on the eve of the First World War twenty years later. The following extract highlights Louis' fear about joining the French army soon after his graduation from high school:

> Du hast versucht, uns klarzumachen, wie sehr die militärische Elite von antisemitischen Urteilen beeinflusst war. Du hast oft betont, und nicht nur in diesem Zusammenhang, dass der Status, den wir Juden in Bordeaux genießen, nicht typisch für die Einstellung aller Franzosen zu den Juden sei, und ganz gewiss nicht in der Armee. Die Elite der Offiziere sei überwiegend konservativ und teilweise antisemitisch gesinnt. (*SE*, p. 25)

Nevertheless, Louis' father believes that the Dreyfus affair has improved the social recognition of French Jews:

> Wo gibt es sowas in der Geschichte? Zwar ist der Judenhass noch lange nicht aus der Welt geschafft, doch gerade die schreckliche Dreyfus-Affäre hat unser Ansehen letztlich gehoben. (*SE*, p. 26)

Dreyfus himself appears twice in the novel, first when he visits Louis' unit at the front (*SE*, pp. 254-255), and at the very end of the novel, when he is invited to the official ceremony, in December 1918, in Metz Cathedral at which the French state shows its gratitude to the Jewish soldiers who fought for France (*SE*, p. 367). The ceremony is attended by Louis and his fiancée Elise Lichentin, who considers the presence of Marshal Philippe Pétain, Commander in Chief of the French army, together with Dreyfus, to be a sign from God that French Jews have been totally integrated into the French Republic: 'So etwas wie ein göttlicher Fingerzeig. Oder die Ankunft des Messias.' (*SE*, p. 368). When Louis tries to

curb her enthusiasm, Elise repeats her comparison: 'Das ist gar nicht so übertrieben, wie es klingen mag.' (*SE*, p. 368). This episode casts a negative light on the couple because of the historical hindsight from which the modern-day reader benefits.

In my reading of this chapter, it illustrates the short-sightedness of the French-Jewish community at the time. Just as the French-Jewish characters in *Süß und ehrenvoll* trust the elites that run the French state, the German-Jewish characters enthusiastically support their political leadership at the outbreak of the First World War. In both countries, however, the political and cultural atmosphere in which these Jewish characters voice their unconditional support is characterised by structural anti-Semitism. This is illustrated, for example, by the anti-Semitic character of the German army in which Jews cannot become officers: 'es war allgemein bekannt, das sein Jude unter keinen Umständen die geringste Chance hatte, in der Armee Karriere zu machen oder auch nur Offizier des niedrigsten Ranges zu werden. Selbst der Kaiser hätte ihm da nicht helfen können.' (*SE*, p. 13).

A second example that shows the structural anti-Semitism within the Prussian army occurs in chapter 22, in which Ludwig is recovering from a combat injury in a Belgian hospital in the winter of 1916. Ludwig overhears a discussion about the 'Judenzählung' (Jewish census) (*SE*, pp. 216-229). The Prussian War Ministry carried out the 'Judenzählung', a census of Jewish soldiers serving in the German army, in October 1916. This census was the result of unfounded accusations that German-Jewish soldiers were shirking frontline military service. The intention was to compare the number of Jewish soldiers serving in combat units with those serving in support areas behind the lines.[94] In Primor's novel *Süß und ehrenvoll*, the news of the census causes an intense discussion among other German-Jewish soldiers in the corridor of the hospital. For Ludwig, the anti-Semitic character of the census is a serious

[94] See Michael Geheran, 'Judenzählung' (Jewish Census), in 1914-1918 online <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/judenzahlung_jewish_census> [Last accessed: 13 March 2023].

blow to his nationalist convictions: ‘Es ist einfach unglaublich, was hier gerade passiert. Für mich ist eine Welt zusammengebrochen. Auf einmal bin ich kein Deutscher mehr.‘ (*SE*, p. 224). A Zionist doctor tries to convince Ludwig that Theodor Herzl, the father of modern political Zionism, was right in believing that the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine is the only way for Jews to escape discrimination (*SE*, p. 225). Ludwig rejects the ideas of Zionism as ‘Fantastereien’ (*SE*, p. 225). Yet the census has cast serious doubt on his love for the fatherland:

> Würde die ganze Vaterlandsliebe der Juden nichts nutzen? War die Assimilation womöglich ein Fehler? Würde man ihnen die deutsche Heimat am Ende gar wegnehmen? (*SE*, p. 225)

The major difference between Zweig’s Jewish characters in *Junge Frau von 1914* and Primor’s German-Jewish protagonists in *Süß und ehrenvoll* is that, unlike Zweig’s male characters Hugo Wahl and Werner Bertin, Primor’s characters Ludwig Kronheim and Louis Naquet lack any insight into their morally ambivalent loyalty towards their states. However, Ludwig, unlike Bertin, is not given the opportunity to be morally redeemed by selfless agape. It is as if the author leaves his Jewish characters alone with their moral ambivalence. Instead, Ludwig’s psychological development and his absence of feelings of guilt are linked to feelings of self-centred eros, which cannot provide moral redemption, even if this promise is postponed to the future, as we saw when we analysed the wedding scene in *Junge Frau von 1914*.

Ludwig’s greatest worry is, however, that his love for Karoline will be destroyed by both their parents, who may now refuse the ‘Mischehe’ or inter-ethnic marriage between the non-Jewish Karoline and the Jewish Ludwig. This episode is a good example of how Karoline and Ludwig consider their love as a protection against discrimination: ‘Doch würde Karolines Liebe groß genug sein, um auch in dieser neuen Situation alle Hindernisse zu

überwinden? (*SE*, p. 228). In chapter 26, Ludwig is described as avoiding to mention the Jewish census and its impact on his nationalist convictions in his letters to Karoline: 'Es war, als lebten sie in einer Blase. Sie ignorierten den Krieg, der um sie tobte.' (*SE*, 273). Ludwig's reaction to the Jewish census is that he cannot believe that a handful of anti-Semitic, careerist bureaucrats will destroy the political assimilation of German Jews: 'Nein, das war unvorstellbar, es konnte nicht sein, dass diese Antisemiten, die es zu allen Zeiten gegeben hatte, und eine Handvoll karrieresüchtige Beamte über die Zukunft Deutschlands entscheiden! Nein, das war völlig ausgeschlossen. (*SE*, p. 225).

Until his death, Ludwig remains convinced that, after the war, anti-Semitism will become extinct due to his fellow-Jews' loyal pro-war stance: 'Die Gegenwart und die Zukunft gehören dem progressiven Westen, und das gilt auch für uns Juden' (*SE*, p. 320), a sentence which sums up his encounter with Eastern European Jews whom he looks upon as backward.[95] While he is on leave from the front shortly before his death, Ludwig voices the official war narrative of the Prussian state, condemning strikes on the home front and relatives asking their fighting husbands or fathers to send them food parcels from the occupied territories: 'Ludwig fand das empörend.' (*SE*, p. 325). The scene ends in a discussion between Ludwig and Karoline about their future. They think that convincing both their parents to agree to their inter-ethnic marriage is a far greater battle than the final stages of the war: 'Stattdessen machten sie Zukunftspläne. Der Krieg würde früher oder später zu Ende gehen. Und dann kam ein viel größerer Kampf – sie mussten sich gegen die Eltern durchsetzen.' (*SE*, p. 326).

Their worries about their future as a couple is a good example that their self-centred eros inhibits any kind of solidarity or identification with other victims of the war. Their

[95] See the chapter 'Ostfront-1917', *SE*, pp. 309-326.

continuing patriotic support is set within the limits of their selfish preoccupation with their own fate. A second example of this association between eros and self-centred patriotism is provided at the end of the novel, when Ludwig is killed in action, and his fiancée Karoline gives birth to their twin daughters and vows to educate them as loyal German-Jewish patriots. Karoline's perspective is limited to the confines of her love relationship with Ludwig, in contrast to Lenore Wahl's vow to educate her future students to universalist pacifist values:

> Ich werde mein Leben unseren gemeinsamen Kindern widmen und sie so erziehen, wie Ludwig es sich gewünscht hätte: als Juden, als deutsche Juden. Als deutsche Patrioten, die stolz auf ihren Vater sind, der für sein Vaterland gefallen ist. (*SE*, p. 364)

Karoline's wish to raise her twin daughters as patriotic Jews is an illustration of the Jewish characters' belief that love, even if it is self-centred, may be strong enough to be protected from their being victims of discrimination.

In Primor's novel, education remains confined to the family, in contrast to the broader aims of education in *Junge Frau von 1914*. Furthermore, it is linked to the blinkered nationalism that represents the moral guilt in Primor's novel. Karoline's wish to raise her children as patriotic German Jews may be an illustration of her moral autonomy. Her decision is, after all, taken against her parents' wishes. However, it is a good example of how Karoline uses her moral agency in the interests of German nationalism. *Süß und ehrenvoll* portrays Karoline's emancipation as ambivalent in the sense that her breaking away from her anti-Semitic father remains embedded in her belief in nationalism.

The fact that the fictional Jewish protagonists in both Arnold Zweig's *Junge Frau von 1914* (1931) and Avi Primor's *Süß und ehrenvoll* (2013) use their agency for morally questionable decisions casts an ambivalent light on Jewish involvement in the First World

War. In both novels, the literary representation of these Jewish characters' efforts to emancipate themselves from patriarchal codes of conduct or structural anti-Semitism adds complexity to the trope of innocent Jewish victimhood.

Chapter Three will explore the moral dimensions of a narrative of heroic resistance against ethnic cleansing. I will argue that the notion of innocent Armenian victimhood, which dominates Armenian commemorations of the genocide, is challenged by the guilt incurred by Armenian characters in the novels under discussion, during their active resistance against ethnic cleansing. I argue that this guilt is closely associated with the use of violence that is necessary to resist ethnic cleansing.

Chapter Three

Victimhood, Violence and Ethnic Cleansing in First World War Fictional Prose: Agape, Eros and Guilt in Novels Dealing with the Armenian Genocide[96]

Having examined in the previous chapter the ambiguities of the emancipatory struggles of the fictional German-Jewish protagonists in Arnold Zweig's and Avi Primor's First World War novels, this chapter examines the trope of innocent victimhood in the context of three novels representing the Armenian genocide of 1915: Franz Werfel's *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh* (1933), Ahmet Ümit's *Patasana* (2000), and Chris Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls* (2012).[97]

Whereas the issue of violence in Chapter Two was restricted to a gender-aware discussion of *Junge Frau von 1914*, the problem of the use of violence takes centre stage in this chapter's discussion of how the genocide is represented in the three novels by Werfel, Ümit and Bohjalian. In each of these texts, the fictional Armenian protagonists are victims of state-organised Ottoman repression, but also commit murders in the process of resisting anti-Armenian ethnic cleansing. In Franz Werfels's *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh*, murder is embedded in a portrayal of the heroic collective Armenian resistance against deportation. By contrast, in Ahmet Ümit's *Patasana* and Chris Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls*, murder takes on a more individualistic character, as the fictional Armenian protagonists commit

[96] I use the term 'Armenian genocide' here because most scholars and independent observers agree that what happened to the Ottoman Armenians in 1915-16 corresponds to the 1948 United Nations definition of 'genocide': it describes acts (killing, inflicting bodily harm, inflicting destructive conditions of life on a group, birth prevention, and forcibly transferring children of the targeted group to another group) 'committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group'. The term was coined by the lawyer Raphael Lemkin in a book on the Holocaust, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (1944). As pointed out by Thomas De Waal, the term 'genocide' has acquired overlapping meanings that include an official legal definition of the mass slaughter of a national group, a concept in social sciences, and a highly politicised term, used by politicians to accuse their enemies of evil. See Thomas De Waal, *Great Catastrophe. Armenians and Turks in the Shadow of the Genocide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 132-133.

[97] Franz Werfel, *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2015). This novel will henceforth be referred to in references as *TMD*; Ahmet Ümit, *Patasana* (Zurich: Union, 2012), translated into German by Recai Hallaç. This novel will henceforth be referred to in references as *P*; Chris Bohjalian, *The Sandcastle Girls* (New York: Vintage, 2012), henceforth referred to in references as *SG*.

murder to avenge Ottoman crimes committed against individual family members during the genocide. I argue that the central role played by the Armenian characters' ambiguous use of violence in these three First World War novels complicates the over-simplified view of innocent Armenian victimhood which is characteristic of state-led centenary commemorations of the genocide in both Turkey and Armenia.

As will be seen, recent official Turkish and Armenian commemorations of two defining moments of the Ottoman-Armenian experiences of the First World War, the Gallipoli campaign and the Armenian genocide, are based on narratives of heroism and innocence, which prevents a balanced discussion of political and moral responsibilities for the tragic events of 1915 from taking place. By contrast, the Armenian genocide was also commemorated by non-state activists and representatives of the Armenian diaspora or migrant communities. Turkish and Kurdish activists sometimes even organise commemorative events for the victims of the Armenian genocide together, some of them calling for the official history of the genocide to be recognised or rewritten.[98] A good example of this kind of memory activism is the occupation of Camp Armen by Armenian activists no later than two weeks after the centennial commemorations of the genocide.[99]

In this chapter on the literary representation of the Armenian genocide, the focus will be on transnational fictional portrayals of the events in Anatolia in 1915. The focus will be on the simplistic use of the cultural trope of innocence that prevails in state-led commemorations of the genocide. This chapter will problematise the agency of the fictional Armenian characters in the three selected novels by focusing on their ambiguous use of

[98] See Öndercan Muti, 'Border-Crossers', in Yifat Gutman and Jenny Wüstenberg (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Memory Activism* (London & New York: Routledge, 2023), pp. 112-116.

[99] The term 'memory activism' is defined by Aleida Assmann: 'Memory activism often emerges from bottom-up movements that react against repressive structures of silence and injustice, recuperating events of the past for the sake of restorative justice and social inclusion.' See also Gutman and Wüstenberg (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Memory Activism*, p. 3.

violence in the context of extreme coercion, during direct exposure to the murderous ethnic cleansing policies of the Ottoman Empire. I argue that the presence of these characters' feelings of guilt illustrates that resisting these policies raises fundamental questions on the moral justification of violence in the specific circumstances of state-organised mass murder. As will be seen when analysing the decisions made by these Armenian characters, their complex decisions add nuance to the notion that one wrong can be balanced by another wrong.

In the previous chapter, the theme of emancipation was discussed in the context of Lenore Wahl's gradual breaking away from patriarchal repression, and the limited ability of the male German-Jewish protagonists to distance themselves from their blind patriotism. In this chapter, emancipation takes the form of the fictional Armenian characters' gradual dissociation from the murderous ethnic cleansing policies of the Ottoman Turkish state. This dissociation takes the form of active armed resistance.

The three novels by Franz Werfel, Ahmet Ümit and Chris Bohjalian were chosen because, through their portrayal of their main fictional Armenian characters' use of physical violence, these texts raise the question of retribution and vengeance from the perspective of the victims of the genocide. As pointed out by the French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) in her essay 'Oeil pour oeil' ('An Eye for an Eye') (1946), personal vengeance always has a disquieting character. When an avenger sets himself up as judge, the notion of punishment or retribution becomes suspect: "But if we look into our own depths, who among us dares say: 'I am better than that man? It requires a lot of arrogance and very little imagination to judge another'".[100] Beauvoir identifies the ambiguity of the agency on display in the fight against state-orchestrated genocide in the impossibility to determine whether an

[100] Simone de Beauvoir, 'An Eye for an Eye', in *Philosophical Writings*, edited by Margaret A. Simons, translated by Kristiana Arp (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

action taken to redress a wrong may stem from a desire to restore justice, or may equally stem from a desire for mastery and power that is innate to human beings. This grey zone of the complex situations in which the fictional protagonists believe they are justified in punishing the perpetrators of genocide constitutes the background of my readings of the three novels selected for this chapter.

As pointed out in the opening chapter, and as illustrated in Chapter Two with the help of Zweig's portrayal of forgiving, selfless agape and Primor's depiction of self-interested, self-centred eros, two different kinds of love are associated with the feelings of guilt of the fictional protagonists. These two manifestations of love are also at work in the novels dealing with the Armenian genocide discussed in this chapter. The feelings of agape of Werfel's main Armenian hero in *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh* end his alienation from his ethnicity. However, this agape cannot expiate his feelings of guilt towards his son. In Ümit's *Patasana* and Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls*, the fictional characters' feelings of self-centred love, or eros, are a destructive force that casts a doubt on their self-perception as victims of circumstances. The guilt incurred in these modern novels therefore fails to be redeemed. The three novels on the Armenian genocide during the First World War offer their fictional genocide victims a great deal of moral agency, while simultaneously denying them moral redemption.

As pointed out by Martin Shaw, genocide studies have neglected the structure of conflicts leading to a particular genocide, focusing instead on the intentions of the perpetrators and on the identity of the victims. However, the victims are not a homogeneous group that remains isolated from the perpetrators of genocide:

> And yet there are many different victims, in many different political circumstances. Sometimes one group of victims – or rather people of the same identity, speaking in their name – become perpetrators of new crimes, making new victims.[101]

Seeing victims as a monolithic block neglects the complex relationships within their own group, and towards the perpetrators:

> 'Victims' are understood essentially as 'groups' targeted for 'destruction' – yet it is clear that victim populations are often socially heterogeneous and affected individually by group targeting in complex ways. In order, therefore, to arrive at a more adequate account of the structure of genocide, we need to examine further how its typical actors are identified and their relationships are understood.[102]

The commonality between the three selected novels dealing with the Armenian genocide lies in their portrayal of the ambiguities arising in the process of fighting against the perpetrators of the genocide. The focus will be on the fictional Armenian protagonists' feelings of guilt. Franz Werfel's *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh* is the most famous literary representation of the Armenian genocide. Werfel's text highlights one of the very few historical examples of organised Armenian resistance against the Ottoman deportation orders in the spring of 1915. The novel is a glorification of ethnic sacrifice and poses the question of ethnic identity. The moral awakening of Werfel's main fictional hero Gabriel Bagradian is caused by his feelings of guilt for not having stayed connected with his community.

Ahmet Ümit's *Patasana* asks the universal question whether blood revenge is an adequate means to punish the perpetrators of ethnic cleansing. Ümit is a Turkish crime fiction writer who provides a Turkish perspective on the Armenian genocide that is different from the official narrative of the Turkish government. As seen in Chapter One of this thesis,

[101] Martin Shaw, *What Is Genocide*? (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 5.
[102] Ibid., p. 96.

this official narrative represses a detailed analysis of the genocide in 1915 in favour of glorifying the Ottoman victory in the Battle of Gallipoli, which started a few months before the genocide started. This is done with the help of a kind of ethno-religious, nationalist discourse that turns the Ottoman perpetrators into Muslim martyrs.[103] His novel portrays the events of 1915 as an ahistorical revenge story that exposes the brutality of human nature as a central feature of human history.

Chris Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls* looks at the genocide from a modern-day perspective by also addressing the question of how to punish the criminals who carried out the genocide. Bohjalian is a best-selling American-Armenian writer who provides the perspective of the Armenian diaspora. The novel complicates the over-simplified glorification of religious martyrdom that characterises the official centenary commemoration ceremonies of the Armenian Republic, which are described in Chapter One.[104] Bohjalian's novel problematises reconstruction and memory work as a moral obligation on the part of the descendants of genocide survivors. The three novels selected for analysis illustrate that literary representations of the issue of innocent Armenian victimhood must be seen in relation to the complex responses of the fictional characters to the injustice of ethnic cleansing. The human agency on display in the three novels by Werfel, Ümit and Bohjalian indicates that their fictional characters have the potential to choose between different courses of action.

The most important point of commonality between the three fictional prose works is their portrayal of Armenian characters who, during their exposure to the deportations and mass killings, are forced to use violence to resist the Ottoman aggressor. The three fictional texts set their protagonists' use of violence in the context of commemoration, recognition

[103] See ibid., pp. 13-14.
[104] Ibid., p. 14-15.

and the avenging of the crimes committed against them. I argue that the novels oscillate between two seemingly contradictory feelings: on the one hand, the crimes of the Ottoman perpetrators of the genocide must be punished, in the eyes of its fictional victims; on the other hand, the novels simultaneously portray the moral ambiguity attached to the victim's methods when punishing their perpetrators.

In the case of Werfel's *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh*, punitive violence, in the shape of Armenian rebels being punished by their superior officers for disrespecting the self-imposed military discipline among the Armenian resistance army, is portrayed as a necessary part of the armed rebellion against deportation. In Ümit's *Patasana* and Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls*, vindictive violence is central to their main plots and the subplot. In both post-1990 novels, the focus is no longer on military discipline, but on individual vengeance, in the shape of portraying how individual Armenian victims of the genocide murder individual Ottoman perpetrators for the crimes committed against their family members. In Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls*, this violence occurs in connection with its main Armenian hero's self-defence against aggression. The two kinds of violence, punitive and vindictive, used in resisting the crime of ethnic cleansing, cause the fictional protagonists to feel guilty in their attempts to legitimise this use of violence. Their status as allegedly innocent victims is undermined as a result of this moral ambivalence. Furthermore, the question of a possible atonement for the Armenian characters' guilt is raised in these texts, since both the selfless agape in *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh* and the self-centred eros in *Patasana* and *The Sandcastle Girls* are destructive forces.

A brief review of the historical background of the Armenian genocide is necessary in order to understand the claims and counter-claims made by memory activists. Although it is impossible to summarise briefly or adequately an event of the magnitude and complexity of

the Armenian genocide, an explanation of what happened and why it still matters today is necessary at this stage.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a group of Muslim intellectuals in the Anatolian heartland of the Ottoman Empire despaired of the disintegrating Ottoman state and espoused a modernising nationalism based on a new pride in 'Turkishness'. The aim of this nationalist movement was to modernise the moribund Ottoman Empire and put it on an equal footing with Europe, while maintaining its distinct culture. In 1908, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), or the Ittihadists, seized power in the so-called Young Turk Revolution, led by junior Ottoman officers. These 'Young Turks' installed a multi-ethnic parliament and allowed Armenian revolutionaries from Russia to base themselves in Constantinople to organise plots against the Ottomans' arch-enemy, the Russian Empire.

In the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, the Young Turk regime lost many of its European territories. The turmoil caused by this psychological shock caused three of the most radical Young Turks, Enver, Cemal, and Talat, who were known as the "Three Pashas", to seize power in another coup d'état. On 28 October 1914, these three officers took the Ottoman Empire into the First World War, in alliance with Germany and against Russia, in a gamble to safeguard their remaining territory from the expansionist European empires, especially Russia. This proved to be the 'final fateful trigger for both the end of the empire and the destruction of the Armenians'.[105] Eastern Anatolia and the six Armenian provinces were now a front line.

At the beginning of the First World War, tens of thousands of Armenian men were fighting in the Imperial Ottoman Army, but more than 150,000 eastern Armenians were fighting in the Imperial Russian army. At the end of 1914, the Minister of War, Enver Pasha

[105] Thomas De Waal, *Great Catastrophe. Armenians and Turks in the Shadow of Genocide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 30.

led his Third Army into the Battle of Sarikamis in the Caucasus. It ended in disaster, when 90,000 men, half of his army, were wiped out in the extreme winter weather. As a reaction to this Russian victory, Enver ordered that Orthodox-Christian soldiers in the army (almost 200,000) should be disarmed and re-drafted into labour battalions. The Armenian soldiers who did not manage to desert were later killed in their thousands by Ottoman forces. In the west and in the east, the Ottoman Empire began to collapse. In April 1915, allied forces of the British Empire and France attacked the Dardanelles and landed in Gallipoli, threatening Constantinople. In the same month, Armenian revolutionaries, anticipating a Russian invasion, took control of the eastern Anatolian town of Van. Many Muslims had to flee, and the revolutionaries held the town until the end of May. The Ottoman army re-captured Van in August and retaliated savagely against the Armenian uprising, killing the remaining Armenians.[106]

The Young Turks' thinking evolved away from multicultural Ottomanism into national imperialism, foregrounding ethnic Muslim homogeneity and solidarity. The battle of Van is seen to this day by Armenians as an act of heroic resistance against a repressive regime, and by Turks as a generalised insurrection against state authority. This battle is pivotal because it radicalised the Young Turks' policies against the Armenians, leading to the arrest of 250 Armenian leaders (writers, churchmen, and members of parliament) in Constantinople on 24 April 1915. On the same day, the first orders were issued, forcing thousands of Anatolian Armenians to be deported to the Syrian desert around the town of Der Zor. The Battle of Van provided the Three Pashas with arguments that proved that the Armenians allied with the Russians to stab the empire in the back. However, despite the earlier anti-Armenian

[106] The Turkish nationalist historiography identifies the "Armenian rebellion at Van" as a betrayal that necessitated a severe crackdown. See De Waal, *Great Catastrophe*, pp. 55-57.

pogroms of 1894-1896 and 1909, most Armenians remained loyal to the regime, not anticipating the deportations to come in 1915.

Estimates of the numbers who died in the Armenian genocide vary greatly, as it is a highly politicised issue. During the First World War, the British historian Arnold J. Toynbee (*The Armenian Atrocities, The Murder of a Nation*, 1916) and the American journalist Herbert Gibbons (*The Blackest Page of Modern History*, 1916) were among the first foreign observers to describe the atrocities.[107] They estimated that one million Armenians had died. The postwar, Allied-backed Ottoman government of 1919 spoke of 800,000 victims. Armenians cite the figure of 1.5 million, but this includes Armenian deaths, from all causes (famine, disease, malnutrition) until 1923.[108]

As far as the commemoration of the Armenian genocide is concerned, the two biggest disputes concern premeditation and intent, as well as the responsibility of Armenian revolutionaries in precipitating events. Armenian lobbyists have been trying to gather evidence of the Ottomans' clear premeditation. A 'smoking gun' or archival document that proves this premeditation has so far not been found. The opposing camp - Turkish loyalists - have tried to discredit the Ottoman leaders' intent to eliminate the Anatolian Armenians. The loyalists argue that there was no intent and that if there is no intent, article 48 of the United Nations' definition is not applicable, and there can therefore have been no genocide.[109]

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[107] See Hamit Bozarslan, Vincent Duclert, Raymond H. Kévorkian, *Comprendre le génocide des Arméniens. 1915 à nos jours* (Paris : Tallandier, 2015), p. 130.

[108] The difficulties of counting the approximate total number of Armenian victims is described by De Waal, who mentions that the postwar Allied-backed Ottoman government of 1919 'put the figure at 800,000, a number that Kemal Atatürk apparently accepted.' De Waal, *Great Catastrophe*, p. 20. During the First World War, observers estimated that one million Armenians had been murdered.

[109] Bozarslan, Duclert and Kévorkian argue that the main argument used by Ottoman authorities to justify the genocide, namely the 'treason' of the Armenian population, continues to be used by the present-day Turkish governments. According to these three historians, the 'treason' argument is utilised to legitimise other genocides, for instance the Shoah or the Rwandan genocide. Bozarslan, Duclert and Kévorkian, *Comprendre le génocide des Arméniens*, p. 166.

Commemorations of the First World War in Turkey have been state-orchestrated and related to internal politics, especially the struggle between Kurdish separatists and the Turkish central government. The notion of martyrdom for the Turkish homeland, especially concerning the memory of the Battle of Sarikamis, is used to 'prepare the young prospective soldiers to sacrifice their lives to save their homeland'.[110] A central concern of the Turkish First World War centenary commemorations in 2014-2018 was to suppress and obscure the centenary of the Armenian genocide in 2015. Armenia issued a centenary declaration on 29 January 2015, asking Turkey to recognise the genocide. Pope Francis described the genocide as the 'first genocide of the 20th century', which infuriated the Turkish government.[111] The European Parliament backed a resolution on 15 April 2015 urging the Turkish government to recognise the genocide and to reconcile with the Armenians. Nevertheless, the Turkish officials used the centennial of the battles of Gallipoli in 2015, always celebrated on 18 March, to divert attention from the Armenian genocide by moving its date to 24-25 April, which coincides with the Genocide Remembrance Day.[112] The decision was an attempt to eclipse Armenian suffering by emphasising the suffering of Ottoman-Turkish soldiers at Gallipoli:

> In der Realität war das Jahr 2015 nicht vom Gedenken an geteiltes Leid geprägt, sondern von antagonistischen Leidensgeschichten, welche Kraft ihrer entgegengesetzten Authentizitätsansprüche beide Gesellschaften noch stärker in unterschiedliche Erinnerungskollektive teilen sollten. [113]

[110] See Arcan, H. Esra, 'Homeland Memory. Construction of Memory Politics and the Media in Turkey Related To World War I', in Emrah Dogan and Ercan Gecgin (eds), *Current Debates in Public Relations, Cultural and Media Studies*, Vol. 9, (London: Ijopec, 2018), pp. 481-504 (p. 499).

[111] See Author Unknown, '"Mentality of the Crusades': Turkey and Pope Francis in Row over Armenian Genocide', *The Guardian*, 26 June 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/26/ mentality-of-the-crusades-turkey-slams-pope-francis-armenian-genocide-comment.> [Last accessed: 17 March 2023].

[112] See Nazan Maksudyan, 'Centenary (Turkey)', in 1914-18 online <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/centenary_turkey>. [Last accessed 9 August 2023].

[113] David Leupold, 'Authentische Gewaltgeschichten oder verzerrte Spiegelbilder? Die türkische und armenische Geschichtsdeutung von 1915 im Lichte des Nationalmythos', in Barbara Christophe, Christoph Kohl and Heike Liebau (eds.), *Geschichte als Ressource. Politische Dimensionen historischer Authentizität* (Berlin: Klaus-Schwarz ,2017), pp. 211-240 (pp. 215-216).

In its effort to strengthen the image of Turkish martyrdom in the First World War, the Turkish government presents the battles of Gallipoli and Sarikamis as equivalents to the Armenian genocide, where Turkish losses compete with the Armenian victims in a form of 'Victim Olympics'. The centennial events organised unofficially by civil initiatives in Turkey in 2014 tried to challenge the nationalist taboos and hoped for a settlement of the interethnic tensions in the country.[114] However, in 2015, the peace process in Turkey's predominantly Kurdish south-east was brutally stopped by the state's violation of human rights and violence against civilians. The official centenary events were organised in a context of 'an Islamist re-imagination of late Ottoman history. In this sacralized recasting of history, martyrdom had a more emotive value than victory itself.'[115] A nuanced appropriation in the field of history has been rendered impossible. This study argues that literature, specifically fictional appropriations of the Armenian genocide, can add nuance to the kind of nationalist propaganda discussed above, for example by analysing the issue of moral agency, but without claiming to be historically accurate.

Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh fictionalises an historical event into a universal story of resistance against the evil side of nationalism. The consequence for the notion of victimhood is that in Werfel's novel, victimhood is externalised, or extrapolated, to the whole of mankind. As mentioned earlier on, Werfel, as an Austrian-Bohemian, offers an outsider perspective on the genocide, which may account for the more universalist perspective on the genocide. In *Patasana* and *The Sandcastle Girls*, by contrast, innocent victimhood is internalised, or restricted, to the fate of two families in the aftermath of the genocide.

[114] See Maksudyan, 'Centenary (Turkey)', pp.7-9.
[115] Ibid., p. 5.

Violence, Agape and Guilt in Franz Werfel's *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh* (1933)

By 1930, the Austrian-Bohemian poet, playwright and novelist Franz Werfel (1890-1945) was established as one the most important writers in the German language. During the First World War, he served as a telephone operator in the Austro-Hungarian army on the Russian front, and joined the Military Press Bureau in Vienna, a propaganda section, together with other writers such as Robert Musil. Werfel was known as an Expressionist poet and editor before and after the First World War. He started to write novels later on. *Verdi – Roman der Oper* (1924) established his reputation as a novelist.[116]

His most complex and famous prose work is *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh*, originally published in German in November 1933.[117] As pointed out by Hans Wagener, the prose work 'is not really a book about a historical event but rather about the inner transformation one person undergoes as a result of his exposure to the events of history.'[118] 16,500 copies of the first edition were printed and within the next two years, the novel was translated into many European languages, and even into Armenian.[119] The first English translation by Geoffrey Dunlop was published a year later in New York in 1934.[120] Dunlop left out some of the most violent parts. It immediately sold 34,000 copies. A second English translation was released the same year, and a French translation in May 1934.[121]

Werfel's novel drew worldwide attention to the historical events of the 1915 Armenian genocide. This work of prose fiction is a tribute to one episode in the deportation and killings of Christian Armenians orchestrated by the Ottoman Young Turk government,

[116] See Peter Stephan Jungk, *Franz Werfel. Eine Lebensgeschichte* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2006), pp. 151-152.
[117] Franz Werfel, *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh*, 2 vols (Berlin, Vienna and Leipzig: Paul Zsolnay).
[118] Hans Wagener, *Understanding Franz Werfel* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), pp. 115-124 (p. 123).
[119] These figures are given by Hacik Gazer, 'Die armenische Übersetzung von „Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh". Eine Spurensuche', in Roy Knocke and Werner Treß (eds), *Franz Werfel und der Genozid an den Armeniern* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), pp. 148-165, p. 148.
[120] Franz Werfel, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* (New York: Viking Press, 1934).
[121] See Hacik Gazer, 'Die armenische Übersetzung von „Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh". Eine Spurensuche', p.148.

namely, the successful heroic resistance of a group of seven Armenian villages in the area of Hatay province, near Aleppo in present-day Syria. To prepare his fictionalised account of these events, Werfel read the works of the German humanitarian Protestant Pastor Johannes Lepsius, notably *Der Todesgang des armenischen Volkes*, published in Potsdam in 1919.[122] A second work influenced the development of the novel's plot: the documents on the Turkish atrocities during the genocide collected by the Armenian priest Dikran Andreasian, first published in London by James Bryce and Arnold Toynbee.[123] Andreasian appears in the novel as the fictional Armenian priest Aram Tomasian.

In Werfel's novel, the Armenian villagers living around the Musa Dagh mountain (i.e. the Mountain of Moses) are led by Moses Der Kalousdian, a former officer in the Ottoman army, who becomes Gabriel Bagradian in Werfel's fictional appropriation. Der Kalousdian manages to resist attacks by the Turkish army for over a month (53 days), thereby avoiding deportation. Most of the villagers (4,058) are eventually saved by a French navy vessel, the *Guichen*, which had seen the two huge white linen sheets (one with a red cross, and a second one with the writing 'Christians in Emergency: Help') that the Armenian rebels had attached to the top of the Musa Dagh mountain. The Armenian survivors of the siege are taken on board and after negotiations with the British forces, released in Port Said in Egypt on 14 September 1915.[124] Ottoman military documents prove the cruelty with which the Ottoman army punished the remaining villagers around the town of Urfa, immediately after the rescue operation.[125] On 6 October 1915, 6,000 Ottoman soldiers, led by General Fahri

[122] Johannes Lepsius, *Der Todesgang des armenischen Volkes* (Potsdam: Tempelverlag, 1919).
[123] James Bryce and Arnold Toynbee (eds.), *The Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916. Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Falloden by Viscount Bryce* (London: Misc 31 Cmnd 8325 HMSO, 1916).
[124] See Lee Maria Bell, 'Defictionalising 'The Forty Days of Musa Dagh'', *The Armenian Review*, 26 (Spring 1973), 3-59.
[125] See Rolf Hosfeld, 'Völkermord und Moderne bei Franz Werfel', in Knocke and Treß (eds.), *Franz Werfel und der Genozid an den Armeniern* , pp. 76-85 (p. 81).

Pascha, who also appears in the novel as Ali Risa, executed the male population and deported the women and children, so that 15,000 Armenians became victims of the reprisal measures. It is not known if Werfel did not know this tragic outcome, or if he ignored it for the purpose of heroising the Musa Dagh rebellion.

Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh was prompted by a trip that Werfel took with his wife Alma to British-ruled Palestine, Syria and Egypt in 1929. During this visit, Werfel met the Armenian refugee community in Jerusalem. As related by Werfel himself in the novel's introduction (*TMD*, p. 9) the miserable sight of maimed young Armenians who had survived the genocide and now worked in a carpet factory in Damascus motivated Werfel to write his novel. The narrative style is characterised by the simultaneous use of biblical symbolism (for example the number forty alludes to the biblical figure of Moses, who led the Jewish people out of Egypt to freedom, and who spent forty days and nights on Mount Sinai), and of an omniscient narrator alongside the perspectives of a multitude of fictional protagonists.

The Armenian resistance fighters manage to hold out for forty days against a superior Ottoman army, thanks to the careful organisation of their food supplies and strict military discipline within the ranks of the Armenian defenders. In the novel, the military strategy is planned by the aforementioned Gabriel Bagradian, a Westernised Armenian and son of a wealthy Armenian merchant family. The family's wealth has allowed him to live an independent life as an art historian and archaeologist for the last twenty-three years in Paris. He is married to an elegant French woman, Juliette, with whom he has a teenage son, Stephan. When Gabriel's brother Awetis, who has been running the family business, dies, Gabriel is forced to return to his native village Yoghonoluk on the Musa Dagh to take care of

his brother's estate (*TMD*, p. 37). While the Bagradians are in Beirut on their way to Yoghonoluk, the First World War breaks out.

The Young Turk government decides to get rid of the Armenian ethnic minority, who have maintained a separate way of life with their own religion and customs. Armenians in Anatolia, northern Syria and Cilicia are deported to concentration camps, under the pretext of relocation (*TMD*, p. 669). Most Armenian deportees, victims of the first state-ordered genocide of the twentieth century, die of starvation or are beaten to death during the long marches to these camps. The inhabitants of Yoghonoluk and another six villages situated on the Syrian coast decide to resist deportation. In a democratic ballot, the village people decide to resist rather than die without resistance. This is a good example of how, despite the genocide, the villagers retain their political agency. They elect their two leaders, the priest Ter Haigasun, and Gabriel Bagradian, a former lieutenant in the Turkish army. Despite a series of setbacks, such as the destruction of their flour by a hailstorm, the death of Gabriel's son Stephan, and an attempted coup d'état against Ter Haigasun and Gabriel by a group of Armenian deserters from the Ottoman army, the defence of the seven villages miraculously succeeds when a fleet of French warships helps the surviving villagers by taking them on board. Gabriel's estranged wife Juliette, who has survived typhus, as well as his newly found soul mate, Iskuhi Tomasian, a young Armenian woman who has survived one of the deportation marches, are also rescued. Gabriel Bagradian half-consciously misses the last boat that can take him on board a French cruiser (*TMD*, p. 970).

Gabriel is shot dead by Turkish snipers and dies on his son Stephan's grave, holding his wooden cross in his arms (*TMD*, p. 976). At this point, an important distinction must be made between the political and the moral agency that Werfel's fictional Armenian protagonists demonstrate during their active resistance to Ottoman ethnic cleansing. The

detailed depiction of the organisation of this resistance sheds a positive light on the factual background of the Musa Dagh events. However, Werfel's literary appropriation goes beyond the political dimension of human agency by including the guilt incurred by its main protagonist, Gabriel Bagradian. As will be seen later, the organisation of the Armenian defence is depicted as a morally ambivalent endeavour in the sense that it entails the use of vindictive violence, as well as the sacrifice of Gabriel's family life. I argue that these two elements exemplify the moral dimension of human agency, which adds an important aspect to the knowledge of historical facts about the genocide. Gabriel's selfless sacrifice in the shape of his total identification with his ethnic roots fails to expiate his guilt.

Contemporary reviews of Werfel's novel show that it can be read, from an Armenian perspective, as a tale of heroism, but also as a disillusioning account of international isolation. Louis Kronenberger, one of the first reviewers of the novel in 1934, considered it to be a literary-philosophical parable, on a par with, for example, Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (1924) or James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). According to Kronenberger, Werfel's text is a 'story of men accepting the fate of heroes and the task of supermen'.[126] By contrast, William Mishell, a survivor of the Kovno (Lithuania) ghetto in 1942, describes the novel as a warning to the Jewish people in the ghetto that their fate could be similar to that of the Armenians, who were exterminated while the whole world was passively observing the ongoing crimes:

> We were attending most of the concerts and reading books in the ghetto. One of the books was *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, by Franz Werfel, which made an indelible impression on us. The bloody, ruthless massacre of over a million Armenians by the Turks in 1915, in full view of an entire world, reminded us of our fate. […] Our analysis of the book indicated that if the world did not come to the rescue of the Armenians, who were Christian after all, how could we, Jews, expect help? No doubt

[126] Louis Kronenberger, "'Franz Werfel's Heroic Novel: A Dramatic Narrative that Has Stirring Emotional Force', *New York Times Book Review*, 2 December 1934, p. 32.

> Hitler knew about all these massacres and the criminal neglect by the free world, and was convinced that he could proceed with impunity against the helpless Jews.[127]

Recently published reviews of the novel focus on its representation of human rights issues. If one separates the exceptional character of the rebellion described in *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh* from the overall tragic fate of the Armenians, one can agree with positive reviews of the novel such as Oliver Kohns'. He argues that the text not only portrays the Armenians as victims of genocide, but also as agents of active resistance against the violation of human rights.[128] According to Kohns, the fictional Armenian characters develop into subjects of a Bildungsroman, or coming-of-age story, turning them into citizens that are legitimate possessors of human rights.[129]

For Yicheng Zhang, the novel is an exemplary study of the modern use of state-orchestrated genocide.[130] To him, the novel is the first case study, long before the birth of genocide studies, that shows the difference between traditional violence and systematic, organised, state-orchestrated violence. Even during the deportations, the Ottoman state tries to construct a veneer of legal justification for the mass murder, which, according to Zhang, is well illustrated in Book One, Chapter Seven of Werfel's novel.[131] Both Kohn's and Zhang's arguments tend to use an over-simplified view on the issue of human agency seen from the perspective of those who resist ethnic cleansing. Kohn seems to believe that the

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[127] Quoted in Stefan Ihrig, 'From Musa Dagh to Masada: How Franz Werfel's Novel About the Armenian Genocide Inspired the Warsaw Ghetto Fighters and the Zionist Resistance', *Printed Matter. Centro Primo Levi Online Monthly* <https://primolevicenter.org/printed-matter/from-musa-dagh-to-masada/>. [Last accessed: 19 March 2023].

[128] Oliver Kohns, 'The Aesthetics of Human Rights in Franz Werfel's The Forty Days of Musa Dagh', in Kaul Susanne and Kim David (eds), *Imagining Human Rights* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), pp. 157-172.

[129] Ibid., p. 158.

[130] Yicheng Zhang, 'The Forty Days of Musa Dagh – Genocide, Resistance, and Revelations for Today', *The Yale Review of International Studies*, March 2020 <http://yris.yira.org/comments/3814>. [Last accessed 18 March 2023].

[131] The Turkish police captain who comes to the Armenian village of Yoghonoluk demonstrates that the law is just an empty shell with the following words shortly before the first Turkish attack: 'Wenn wir Gewehre finden, so nageln wir euch an die Kirchentürme. Wenn wir keine finden, laß ich euch über einem Feuer aufhängen' (*TMD*, p. 305).

political will of the Armenian villagers is exempt from the potential to incur guilt during the resistance fight. Zhang ignores the moral issues involved in the Armenians' resistance against the Ottomans' state-induced violence.

By contrast, I argue that the literary representation of this resistance struggle casts a more ambivalent light on the moral issues involved in the Armenian villagers' fight against their deportation. My reading of *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh*, while drawing on Kohn's insistence on the moral agency of the Armenians, argues that the use of punitive law by Gabriel Bagradian to restore military discipline, nevertheless represents a negative example of this moral agency. The notion of innocent victimhood is used by the Armenians to feel morally superior to their Ottoman aggressors. In Werfel's novel, this moral superiority is illustrated by Gabriel Bagradian's feelings of selfless agape, or solidarity with his oppressed Armenian people: the hero's sacrificial death symbolises that he is reunited with his ethnic origins. The main hero's guilt is illustrated by using punitive violence against an Armenian dissenter who, ironically, represents the epitome of Armenian victimhood. The killing of a dissenter named Kilikian illustrates that, despite the coercion in which the Armenian resistance fight is situated, the presence of Gabriel's feelings of guilt adds ambiguity to the summary execution of this dissenter.

From the beginning of Werfel's *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh*, the central issue of Gabriel Bagradian's status as both victim and rebel is associated with his feelings of guilt towards his elder brother Awetis. This guilt is connected to the novel's main philosophical message, namely, that alienation can be overcome by total identification with one's ethnic roots. In the following extract, Gabriel seems to anticipate that the price of total identification, whether with his French Western lifestyle as an intellectual living in Paris, or with his Armenian family in his native village of Yoghonoluk, must be 'Abstraktion', a kind of

spiritual, universalist communion with one's destiny. In Bagradian's case, this destiny is to lead his native villagers to freedom. He is torn between identifying as a Westerner, an Ottoman and an Armenian:

> Er ist ein Denker, ein abstrakter Mensch, ein Mensch an sich. Was gehen ihn die Türken an, was die Armenier? Er denkt daran, die französische Staatsbürgerschaft zu erwerben. […] Zuletzt hält ihn immer wieder ein Mißgefühl davon ab. Er ist freiwillig in den Krieg gegangen. Wenn er auch in seinem Vaterland nicht lebt, so kann er es doch nicht widerrufen. […] Gabriel hat nichts erlitten. Er weiß von Mord und Metzelei nur durch Erzählungen und Bücher. Ist es nicht gleichgültig, wohin ein abstrakter Mensch zuständig ist, denkt er, und bleibt ottomanischer Untertan. (*TMD*, p. 17)

This abstraction is closely linked to Gabriel's feelings of guilt towards his elder brother Awetis, a businessman who is terminally ill and has asked Gabriel to take over the family business in their native Armenian village:

> Da kommt es ihm das erstemal ganz stark zu Bewußtsein, daß es dieser kranke ältliche Awetis ist, der für ihn arbeitet, dem er sein Wohlergehen verdankt. Welch ein Widersinn, daß Brüder einander so fremd bleiben müssen. Gabriel erschrickt vor dem Hochmut, den er in sich gegen den „Geschäftsmann", gegen den „Orientalen" nicht immer unterdrückt hat. Jetzt erfaßt ihn der Wunsch, ein Unrecht gut zu machen, ehe es zu spät ist, ja eine leichte Sehnsucht. (*TMD*, p. 18)

Suffering and victimhood are portrayed in the text as a kind of moral obligation for Armenians to return to their roots. This obligation is linked to a defeatist attitude that comes from being exposed to the anti-Armenian violence of other ethnic groups, which is orchestrated by the Ottoman central power. Armenians have been hunted down and murdered by their ethnic neighbours in the Ottoman Empire: 'Die Hunde des Propheten, Türken, Kurden, Tscherkessen, sammeln sich um die grüne Fahne, um zu sengen, zu plündern und das Armeniervolk zu massakrieren.' (*TMD*, p. 24). The defeatist attitude is embodied by the mayor of Zeitun, Nazareth Tschausch, who is accused of high treason by the Ottoman governor and executed, despite being a faithful servant of the Ottoman

authorities (*TMD*, pp. 106-113). However, Gabriel rejects this traditional passive victimhood: 'Bagradian wandte den Kopf zur Tür: “Was sind wir für ein Volk, daß wir alles schweigend hinnehmen?” (*TMD*, p. 61). Foreshadowing the ending of the novel, Gabriel believes that the only way to end the sense of passive victimhood is by overcoming this state-orchestrated violence:

> Jetzt war die Stunde gekommen, den Glauben seines ganzen Lebens zu erproben, daß der Geist über den Stoff siegen müsse, auch über die gesteigerten Erscheinungsformen alles Stofflichen, über die Gewalt und den Zufall. (*TMD*, p. 254)

Gabriel associates this overcoming of violence with a strong sense of moral superiority. He believes that the resistance fight which he masterminds is ‘morally superior’ to the slave mentality displayed by Armenians such as Pastor Nokhudian during the meeting intended to decide whether the villagers want to take up arms against the Ottomans, or simply accept their fate (*TMD*, pp. 235-256): ‘Ich kann als Hirte meiner Herde keiner Widersetzlichkeit zustimmen.’ (*TMD*, p. 248). By contrast, Gabriel uses his Western sense of rational thinking and his military expertise as a veteran of the Ottoman army to fulfil what he believes to be his historical mission: ‘Die Überlegenheit systematischen Denkens, wie er es in Europa gelernt hatte, hob ihn hoch über die dumpfen und ergebenen Häftlinge des Verhängnisses’. (*TMD*, p. 245). Shortly before the meeting started Gabriel expresses a similar feeling of superiority, which he applies to his whole ethnic community:

> Wir Armenier bilden uns doch immer so viel auf unsere geistige Überlegenheit ein. Damit haben wir sie aufs Blut erbittert. Nun aber wollen wir wirklich beweisen, wie sehr wir überlegen sind! (*TMD*, p. 238)

Gabriel Bagradian’s claim to be a kind of ethnic super-human who can overcome state-orchestrated violence, is undermined by his ambivalent attitude towards punitive violence. Gabriel incurs guilt when he summarily executes one of the soldiers responsible for

defending the village from Turkish attacks. His love for his fellow Armenians, interpreted as agape in my reading, casts a shadow on Gabriel's self-perceived moral justification for taking up arms against the oppressor.

Ironically, Gabriel's use of punitive violence is directed against Sarkis Kilikian, a Russian-Armenian whose biography epitomises the Armenian history of victimhood (*TMD*, p. 286). Gabriel's attitude towards Kilikian is marked by a mixture of empathy and rejection. It is because of his status as a typical victim of anti-Armenian pogroms that Kilikian is given a leading position in the defence of the village:

> Ich habe vorgehabt, dich, Kilikian, der du Soldat gewesen bist, durch eine Führerstelle vor den anderen auszuzeichnen, weil du von den Türken mehr erduldet hast als irgendeiner hier. (*TMD*, p. 354)

Kilikian represents the typical Armenian survivor, a victim of murderous racist violence, who lost his entire family during the Hamidian pogroms (*TMD*, pp. 286-289). The third-person narrator calls his biography a truly Armenian fate ('echt armenischen Schicksal', *TMD*, p. 286). After serving in the Turkish army during the Caucasian war, Kilikian escapes the massacre of his Armenian battalion that was ordered by his Turkish commanding officers (*TMD*, pp. 293-294). Kilikian returns to his home in Anatolia, in a parallel move to Gabriel Bagradian's return to his ancestor's villa (*TMD*, p. 295). He then joins the Armenian villagers at the foot of the Musa Dagh mountain.

Gabriel reacts to this biographical account with a mixture of awe and distrust because of Kilikian's mysteriously indifferent attitude towards the military defence: 'Jene geheimnisvolle Gleichgültigkeit entstand, die Gabriel Bagradian schon an dem nächtlichen Gespenst verspürt hatte', *TMD*, p. 292). The narrator insists on Kilikian's demonic appearance: 'Wahrhaftig, nun zeigte es sich, daß Sarkis einen Teufelskörper mit

übermenschlichen Kräften besaß.‘ (*TMD*, p. 294). Gabriel is scared that the deserter’s gruesome past experiences may become dangerous:

> Der abendländische Mensch erschauerte in Ehrfurcht vor der Schicksalswucht eines solchen Lebens und vor der Kraft, die unter ihm nicht zusammenbrach. In die Ehrfurcht aber mischte sich auch Grauen und der Wunsch, diesem Opfer der Kerker und Kasernen möglichst aus dem Wege zu gehen. (*TMD*, p. 295)

Gabriel orders the small group of deserters from the Russian army to man the southern defence sector, which is the easiest to defend (*TMD*, p. 295). After successfully repelling the second Turkish onslaught thanks to Kilikian’s construction of a battering ram, Gabriel honours him by inviting him to sit on his table during a christening ceremony (*TMD*, p. 538). The following passage illustrates that for Gabriel, Kilikian is the typical Armenian victim who needs to be treated with selfless love and consideration (agape):

> War es Eigensinn? War es ein tiefes Mißtrauen in der Seele des Ewig-Verfolgten? Gabriel wußte es nicht. Er versuchte mit ebensoviel Leidenschaft wie Mißerfolg in Kilikians Wesen einzudringen. […] Er war überzeugt, daß in dem Russen etwas Besonderes stecke. Vielleicht verwechselte er nach Art mancher Leute, die im Wohlstand gelebt haben, Menschenleiden mit Menschenwert. Das Wohlverhalten des Deserteurs […] schien Gabriel recht zu geben. (*TMD*, p. 539)

Gabriel’s believes in Kilikian’s improvability, yet, the third-person omniscient narrator insists that this is an error of judgment:

> Die gemischten Gefühle aber flossen zu einer Art Liebe zusammen. Der ”Ethiker Bagradian“ wollte, so glaubte er wenigstens selbst, aus dem Deserteur einen Menschen machen, so etwa wie gewisse Männer die Einbildung hegen, Straßendirnen retten zu müssen. Es war einer der groben Fehler, die der militärische Führer auf dem Damlajik beging, daß er um Kilikian warb, anstatt ihn nach wie vor in unnahbarem Abstand und unter schärfster Aufsicht zu halten. (*TMD*, p. 540).

Kilikian persistently refuses to relate to Gabriel’s attempt to gain his trust, contradicting Carl Steiner’s optimistic conclusion that the novel illustrates the belief that ‘the noblest act of man […] is to sacrifice his life for the betterment, if not the survival, of his

fellow man'.[132] What Steiner fails to see is that this ethos seems to apply only to those Armenian victims who want to be bettered. As Kilikian refuses to be saved, or bettered, by Gabriel's feelings of agape, Steiner asks the question whether it is worth sacrificing one's life for people who do not want to be saved, a question that is, however, not explored further in the novel.

Moreover, Kilikian is turned into the scapegoat who is made responsible for the mutiny of the deserters against the leadership. Kilikian is made responsible for the fire started by the mutineers in the village (*TMD*, pp. 899-901), although he is innocent (*TMD*, p. 902). The deserters themselves deliver Kilikian to Ter Haigasun and Gabriel as the scapegoat or 'Sündenbock' (*TMD*, p. 914), knowing that he is innocent. This will guarantee their own impunity. Gabriel's moral failure is illustrated by the fact that he summarily executes Kilikian without trial:

> Auch in diesem Augenblick noch konnte er den Hauch achtungsvoller Zuneigung nicht unterdrücken, der ihn angesichts des Russen jedesmal befiel. War Kilikian, dieser gespenstische Zuschauer, der wahrhaft Schuldige? Gleichviel! Gabriel Bagradian entsicherte den Armeerevolver in seiner Tasche. Dann hob er ihn schnell gegen die Stirn des Russen. […] Bagradian aber dünkte es, als habe er den versagenden Schuß gegen sich selbst gerichtet. […] So fiel Sarkis Kilikian, nach einem unfaßbaren Leben zwischen Gefängniswänden – nachdem er als Knabe dem türkischen Massaker und als Mann der türkischen Hinrichtungs-Salve entronnen war – zuletzt durch die Kugel eines Volksgenossen. (*TMD*, p. 914)

Gabriel also knows that he himself is to blame for the Turkish army reconquering the southern flank of the Musa Dagh defence line: 'Er wußte, daß ein großer Teil der Schuld auf seiner Seite lag.' (*TMD*, p. 915). One can thus argue, complementing Ritchie Robertson's

[132] Carl Steiner, 'Religious Symbolism in Werfel's "*Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh*"', in Joseph P. Strelka and Robert Weigel (eds.), *Unser Fahrplan geht von Stern zu Stern. Zu Franz Werfels Stellung und Werk* (Berlin: Lang, 1992), pp. 271-288 (p. 286).

argument, that if 'Kilikian is his other self',[133] Gabriel also kills that part of the Armenian narrative that focuses on the collective suffering of a whole nation. In this sense, the text itself points towards the failure of Gabriel's ethos of human improvability to include elements such as Kilikian, the loner who refuses to be incorporated into the village community.

Only two literary critics, Ritchie Robertson and, to a lesser degree, Rachel Kirby, have hinted at the importance of Kilikian in the overall architecture of the novel.[134] Kirby's comments on Kilikian are limited to a general remark that he is one of the negatively portrayed Armenians in the novel. According to Kirby, Werfel has included characters such as Kilikian to avoid a one-dimensional, exclusively positive portrayal of the Musa Dagh villagers:

> Nor are the Armenians portrayed in a singularly positive light. Sarkis Kilikian, the insubordinate deserter who must finally be killed for his betrayal of the Armenian community, is only the most obvious example. In fact, his actions are almost comprehensible in light of his past, marked by terror and brutality, but other Armenian characters are also shown to be far from perfect.[135]

Robertson considers that Gabriel's shooting of the deserter Kilikian for persistent insubordination amounts to his shooting a part of his psyche of which he is afraid. According to Robertson, Kilikian represents the brutally ruthless leader that he, Gabriel, might become:

> In some sense, Kilikian is his other self; Kilikian has suffered everything that Armenians can suffer, Gabriel has suffered nothing. Kilikian seems like a man who can endure everything. Gabriel, the almost untried man of action, wishes in some way to be Kilikian. What he kills is therefore a part of himself – the ruthless man of action

[133] Ritchie Robertson, 'Leadership and Community in Werfel's "Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh"', in Strelka and Weigel (eds.), *Unser Fahrplan geht von Stern zu Stern*, pp. 249-269 (p. 257).
[134] Rachel Kirby, *The Culturally-Complex Individual. Franz Werfel's Reflections on Minority, Identity and Historical Depiction in* The Forty Days of Musa Dagh (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1999).
[135] Ibid., p. 91.

> that he might have become: it is after this that he has a quasi-religious experience of transcendence.[136]

Robertson rightly links getting rid of Kilikian to Gabriel's transcending his feelings of being alienated from his ethnic roots. Until the very last moments of Gabriel's life, overcoming this original alienation evokes feelings of guilt in him: 'Gabriel sah mit grellem Bewußtsein sein altes Leben und die Unüberbrückbarkeit zwischen sich und ihm. […] Gabriels Kehle verengte sich.' (*TMD*, p. 955). These feelings of guilt are closely associated, in the last chapters of Werfel's novel, with Gabriel's feelings of selfless agape. Robertson also suggests that, since the experience of agape or transcendence occurs after the summary execution, it can be seen as an attempt to repress all memory of the immoral use of violence.

The first problem with the depiction of ethnic victimhood in this context is that although the villagers are morally justified in resisting the Ottoman oppressor, the implementation of this resistance may entail actions that cast a shadow over their supposed moral innocence. The second element that adds nuance to their moral innocence concerns the redemptory potential of selfless agape, as illustrated by Gabriel's total identification with the history of Armenian suffering.

Two major tendencies can be discerned when it comes to interpreting the ending of Werfel's text. Oliver Kohns, Henry A. Lea and Stefan Bodo Würffel tend to see in Gabriel's feelings of redemptive agape a sign of hope for the future.[137] I argue that this view is the result of the positive connotations that, in their eyes, are attached to Gabriel Bagradian's political agency. This political agency seems to overlook the (im)moral aspect of his human

[136] Robertson, 'Leadership and Community in Werfel's "*Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh*", p. 257.
[137] Kohns, 'The Aesthetics of Human Rights in Franz Werfel's The Forty Days of Musa Dagh', pp. 157-172; Henry A. Lea, 'Prodigal Sons in Werfel's Fiction', *Germanic Review*, 40.1, 1965, 41-54; Stefan Bodo Würffel, '„Ungeheure Verantwortung hängt daran". Nationalismus, Moral und Utopie in Franz Werfels Roman *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh*', in Michel Reffet (ed.), *Le monde de Franz Werfel et la morale des nations* (Bern: Lang, 2000), pp. 253-282.

agency. According to Kohns, Werfel's novel is an aesthetic example of the importance of universal human rights: 'Werfel's account of the horrible events becomes more than a humanistic plea for empathy with the victims; it becomes a political demand for human and civil rights.'[138] Lea considers Gabriel Bagradian's psychological development from alienation from his Armenian roots towards total identification with them as a success:

> Thus it is evident in the theme, structure, and wording of the book that a man's life is being fulfilled in a cyclical form leading from a sheltered childhood in Armenia to worldly sophistication in Paris and back to Armenia where the cycle is completed in suffering, awareness and self-transcendence.[139]

Würffel also considers Werfel's novel to be an example of a successful commemoration effort in the sense that it contributes to creating a coherent and enduring Armenian national identity:

> Demgegenüber erinnert der Roman nicht nur immer wieder an die gemeinsam erlebte und erlittene Vergangenheit als Konstituens einer Nation […] der Roman schreibt seinerseits – und erneut auf exemplarische Weise – die gemeinsam gemachten Erfahrungen als eine Grundlage wirklicher Gemeinschaft fest, ist Erinnerungsarbeit als gemeinschaftsbildendes und -bewahrendes Moment.[140]

By contrast, this study agrees with a second tendency, put forward by Elke Pfitzinger and Andrea Bartl, that is more pessimistic about the potential of redemption through love.[141] Both critics foreground the moral dimension of Gabriel's political agency. Pfitzinger points out that the political model that Werfel's novel constructs as a counterexample to the Young Turks' modern yet suicidal nationalism is itself reactionary:

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[138] Kohns, 'The Aesthetics of Human Rights in Franz Werfel's The Forty Days of Musa Dagh', p. 168.
[139] Lea, 'Prodigal Sons in Werfel's Fiction', p. 48.
[140] Würffel, '„Ungeheure Verantwortung hängt daran"', p. 280.
[141] See Elke Pfitzinger, 'Das „fremde Gift aus Europa". Nationalismus, Rassenlehre und Führertum in Franz Werfels *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh*', *Zeitschrift für interkulturelle Germanistik*, 8, (2017), 41-63, and Andrea Bartl, 'Psychologie der Verfolgung. Die Figuren Gabriel, Iskuhi, Juliette und Stephan in Franz Werfels Roman Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh', *Revista de Filologia Alemana*, 20, (2012), pp. 67-82.

> Entgegengestellt wird dieser Fortschrittsorientierung nun ein Gesellschaftsmodell einer explizit reaktionären Moderne. Es ist dies eine kulturpessimistische, konservative und antidemokratische Richtung, die auf Konzepte der Volksgemeinschaft und des Blutes rekurriert, sich jedoch von Bewegungen wie dem Nationalsozialismus abgrenzt.[142]

Bartl raises the pertinent question about the novel's religiously motivated glorification of Gabriel Bagradian's self-sacrifice, illustrated by the final paragraphs in which he is shot dead by Turkish snipers:

> Gabriels Tod wird als religiös grundierte Opfer- und Erlösungsvision inszeniert; […] Insofern mag Gabriel in der Tat Glück haben – aber ist es ein Glück, mit durchschmetterter Schläfe zu sterben?[143]

Gabriel's feelings of agape are inconsistent if one looks at their ultimate consequence. Gabriel finds self-realisation and total fulfilment in the community only by sacrificing his individual life for the cause of rescuing his fellow Armenians. He realises at the end of his spiritual development that finding his true self alienates him completely from the world. The logical consequence of his devotion to the community is his physical annihilation. The fact that Gabriel is now more than an individual makes it impossible for him to live on:

> Im ersten Augenblick der allgemeinen Rettung hatte ihn sofort die Ahnung angewandelt, daß es für ihn diese Rückkehr ins Leben nicht gebe, schon deshalb, weil der wahre Gabriel Bagradian, wie er in diesen vierzig Tagen entstanden ist, wirklich gerettet werden mußte. Nach Port Said oder Alexandria? In irgend ein Barackenlager für armenische Flüchtlinge? Den Musa Dagh mit einem engeren und niedrigeren Pferch vertauschen? Von der Höhe der Entscheidung in die Sklaverei hinabsteigen, um auf neue Gnade zu warten? Warum? […] Früher hat er sich zu Unrecht als "abstrakter Mensch" als "Mensch an sich" gefühlt. Er mußte zuerst durch jenen Pferch der Gemeinschaft hindurch, um es wahrhaft zu werden. Das ist es, darum fühlt er sich so unermeßlich frei. Kosmische Einsiedlung. Die Sehnsucht dieses Morgens. Nun ist sie gefunden, wie von keinem Sterblichen noch. (*TMD*, pp. 972-973)

[142] Pfitzinger, 'Das „fremde Gift aus Europa"', p. 60.
[143] Bartl, 'Psychologie der Verfolgung', p. 72.

Gabriel's feelings of agape are now no longer directed towards his Armenian ethnic community, but are expanded to the whole of mankind. There is a correlation between this loss of individuality and the universal character of his agape. Elke Pfitzinger rightly points out that Gabriel's unique position as a national Armenian hero entails the destruction of his individuality: 'Gabriel [gerät] aufgrund seiner Sonderstellung und auf Kosten seiner Individualität zur bewussten und willensstarken Verkörperung der Gemeinschaft.'[144] Gabriel acquires agency by identifying with the Armenian cause, but he also forfeits it at the end.

To sum up, highlighting the moral ambivalences of Gabriel Bagradian's role as the military leader of the Armenian resistance, as it is portrayed in Franz Werfel's *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh*, supports my thesis that the diegetic world of fictional First World war prose adds complexity to the trope of innocent Armenian martyrdom. Given the religious symbolism with which Werfel describes Gabriel's death in the novel's final pages, one could argue that to some extent, there is a similarity between the official Armenian commemorative discourse that sanctifies every Armenian genocide victim. However, the integration of Bagradian's ambivalent relationship with the dissenter Kilikian into the novel's plot makes it possible to add the moral complexity that is absent from the Armenian centenary commemorative discourse.

Gabriel's death on his son's tomb is ambivalent in the sense that it is as much atonement for his use of violence during the armed resistance of his villagers against deportation, as it is identification with this cause. There is thus reasonable ground for placing the Armenian resistance cause itself into Levi's grey zone of culpability, which is a metaphor illustrating that even victims of inhumanities can acquire an ambivalent moral status.

[144] Pfitzinger, 'Das „fremde Gift aus Europa", p. 61.

In *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh*, the three victims of the genocide, Gabriel Bagradian, his son Stephan and Kilikian, die in the course of their resistance struggle. They can be seen as supporting the official Armenian discourse of martyrdom and heroic sacrifice, as seen at the beginning of this chapter. By contrast, the focus shifts from the dead Armenian victims to the surviving witnesses of the genocide in the two post-1990 novels under scrutiny in this chapter, Ümit's *Patasana* (2000) and Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls* (2012). Their main fictional Armenian protagonists survive their ordeals as direct or indirect victims of the genocide. Drawing on Primo Levi's metaphor used in the title of *Die Untergegangenen und die Geretteten* (1986), describing the difference between the victims who were saved ('Geretteten') and those who perished ('Untergegangenen') during the Holocaust, one can argue that *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh* foregrounds the tragic fate of three drowned Armenians, whereas Ümit's *Patasana* (2000) and Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls* (2012) focus on the portrayal of two saved Armenian witnesses in the context of the genocide. I argue that in these two post-1990 novels, the notion of innocent Armenian victimhood is an essential part of their protagonists' attempt to justify their use of violence against those who committed crimes against their families during the genocide. The fact that these surviving witnesses are simultaneously victims of ethnic cleansing and perpetrators constitutes the moral zone in which their blood revenge is discussed in the two novels. The second notion of victimhood, embodied by the surviving victims in the two post-1990 novels, allows for a discussion of the central questions raised in these prose works: the question of how the Ottoman perpetrators should be punished, and how the Armenian genocide should be remembered almost a century after its events.

The Witness as Perpetrator: Violence and Victimhood in Ahmet Ümit's *Patasana* (2000) and Chris Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls* (2013)

The use of violence in Ahmet Ümit's *Patasana* and Chris Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls* problematises the trope of innocent victimhood and martyrdom that unites the official commemorative discourses in both Armenia and Turkey, as seen above. Both plots in *Patasana*, the Patasana plot and the archaeologists' plot, contain clear parallels to the Armenian genocide. Both plots also problematise the trope of sanctified innocent Armenian victimhood foregrounded in official Armenian commemorations of the genocide. Ümit's novel *Patasana* tells the parallel stories of Patasana, the head scribe of the Hittite Palace in the vicinity of Gaziantep who lived in the late Hittite period (1200-700 BCE), and of a group of archaeologists who, in the late 1980s, are caught up in a web of conflict and murder following their ground-breaking discovery of twenty-eight tablets written by the scribe.

In the plot set in the 1980s, this use of violence is closely associated with the ambivalent status of its main Armenian/American protagonist Timothy/Armenak in the late 1980s: he is both a victim witnessing the horrors of war and a murdering avenger of the Armenian genocide during the First World War. A brief reminder of one of the central concepts of Primo Levi's *Die Untergegangenen und die Geretteten*, namely survivor guilt, may help to understand, to a certain extent, the rationale behind Ümit's fictionalised Armenian/American protagonist. Levi describes his feelings of guilt as a survivor of the death camps.[145] He feels a mixture of shame and guilt when it comes to explaining to other people why other camp inmates died whereas he survived:

> Es ist nur eine Vermutung, ja eigentlich nur der Schatten eines Verdachts: daß jeder der Kain seines Bruders ist, daß jeder von uns (und dieses Mal gebrauche ich das

[145] The chapter is called 'Die Scham' (Primo Levi, *Die Untergegangenen und die Geretteten*, pp. 70-89).

> Wort „uns“ in einem sehr umfassenden, geradezu universalen Sinn) seinen Nächsten verdrängt hat und an seiner Statt lebt.[146]

Although Levi did not do anything morally contemptible during the time he spent in Auschwitz, he still feels guilty for having taken, as a survivor, the place of somebody who had to die.

A similar feeling of guilt is voiced by *Patasana*'s main Armenian protagonist Armenak Papazyan alias Timothy Hurley, who avenges the murders committed against his Armenian ancestors by murdering the descendants of the Turkish murderers, more than seventy years after the genocide. In this passage taken from the ending of the novel, set in the late 1980s in Southern Anatolia, Armenak/Timothy tells the listeners of a press conference that he felt guilty for having survived his military service in the Vietnam war, whereas his adoptive American parents died in a plane crash. The extract establishes him as an innocent victim of war-related trauma, and also voices the same remorse about committing war crimes as Zweig's Grischa. It also contains the idea of survivor guilt. The link with the events of the genocide during First World War is indirect, as Timothy is the descendant of Armenian victims of this genocide:

> Als ich vor fünf Jahren in diese Region kam, hätte ich nicht einmal im Traum daran gedacht, ich könnte jemanden ermorden. Obwohl man mir im Vietnamkrieg die Feinheiten des Tötens sehr gut beigebracht hat. […] Ich habe immer wieder den Tod berührt […] Aber der Tod liebt Überraschungen, er hat nicht mich, sondern meine Familie an sich gerissen. Die Hurleys, meine Adoptiveltern, starben bei einem Flugzeugunglück. Der Grund für meine psychiatrische Behandlung war auch der Tod dieser guten Menschen […] Es war so, als hätte mich eine höhere Macht für all das bestraft, was ich im Krieg getan habe. (*P*, p. 420)

The difference between Levi's feelings of survivor guilt and those of Armenak/Timothy is, of course, that Levi did not commit any crimes as a victim of the

[146] Ibid., p. 83.

Holocaust. Nevertheless, the notion of survivor guilt portrayed in *Patasana* foregrounds the ambivalent status of Armenak/Timothy as a victim of war trauma, while declaring himself as an avenger of crimes committed against his Armenian ancestors during the First World War: 'mir [ist] klar geworden, dass die Zeit für die Verwirklichung meiner historischen Mission gekommen war. Und ich habe diese Personen auf die exakt gleiche Art und Weise wie vor achtundsiebzig Jahren getötet.' (*P*, p. 424). The hero of the historical plot line, set during the Hittite Empire, also contains the notion of the guilty witness-survivor. The Hittite scribe Patasana hopes that the testimony, in the form of twenty-eight clay tablets, about his ambivalent role as the main responsible for the extermination of his fellow Hittites, will help to make his reader aware of the fundamental baseness of human nature: 'Ich hoffe, mein schwarzes Schicksal wird von Ohr zu Ohr geflüstert […] auf Tafeln geschrieben […] Vielleicht werden dann die Menschen klug' (*P*, p. 20).

Ümit's text on the Armenian genocide, *Patasana* (2000), was chosen for examination in this thesis because it contributes to the contestation of dominant tropes of both Turkish and Armenian narratives of the 1915 genocide, while blurring the difference between victim and perpetrator of its main male fictional heroes.[147]

Patasana recounts two revenge stories related to the Armenian genocides of 1915 and the 1920s. Ümit's novel problematises the issue of violence itself, as his main protagonists believe that human beings have a natural tendency to use violence for revenge. The portrayal of *Patasana*'s fictional protagonists is ambivalent in the sense that it combines their victimhood with their lust for vindictive violence. As will be seen with Ümit's eponymous hero, this lust is driven by his feelings of self-centred eros.

[147] See Zeynep Tüfekcioglu, *Nation and Identity in Turkish Crime Fiction: Reading Ahmet Ümit's Novels as a Medium of Ideological Negotiation* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2021), pp. 100-111. *Patasana* is analysed in the context of the Turkish political context of the years between 2000 and 2005.

Patasana, which is set in Ümit's hometown Gaziantep, was originally published in 2000 in Turkish and translated into German in 2009, and into English in 2011. It represents a turning-point in his career as a writer of crime fiction, as it is written in a postmodern style, using a fragmented, non-linear narrative that shifts back and forth in time. *Patasana* problematises the issues of human agency and perpetration by comparing two different historical epochs. In each of these epochs, the fictional protagonists use vindictive violence to avenge crimes committed against them. The two epochs both refer to the Armenian genocide, as will be seen later on.

As mentioned above, both the Patasana plot and the archaeologists' plot contain parallels to the Armenian genocide. The extermination of the Assyrians, described in the Patasana story, is a coded reference to the extermination of the Anatolian Armenians in 1915, since both ethnic groups are described as innocent victims of death marches through the (As-)Syrian deserts. In the final chapters of the novel, Patasana notices that his betrayal of his fellow Hittites for the sake of avenging his beloved Ashmunikal has disastrous consequences. The Assyrian king Sargon has all the Hittites murdered:

> Das hatte ich nicht vorausgesehen. Ich hatte geglaubt, Sargon würde nur Pisiris bestrafen, wie er das auch in Tabal getan, es zeigte sich aber, dass er alle Hethiter zu vernichten und diese Stadt in eine assyrische zu verwandeln gedachte. […] „Tun Sie das nicht, erhabener Sargon. Sie alle trifft keine Schuld." […] Unter Aufsicht der Wächter, die wütenden Hunden glichen, begann der Fußmarsch ins Land der Assyrer'. (*P*, pp. 406-407)

Another reference that recalls the Armenian genocide can be found in chapter 23, which corresponds to Patasana's twenty-third tablet:

> Aber gab es den einen gewaltigeren Beweis ihres Zorns als die Kriege? Gipfelte die Wut der Götter nicht in diesem letzten Krieg, der den Boden des Zweistromlandes mit Blut überschwemmte? (*P*, p. 344)

A further link between the two genocides is provided by his description of the Euphrates river and Mesopotamian land between it and the river Tigris: 'Der Euphrat, an dessen Ufern ich zur Ruhe gefunden, wurde mir Feind.' (*P*, 407). The symbolic significance of this river as a link between the two historical epochs is also contained in Esra's thoughts at the very beginning of the novel:

> Esra […] ließ ihren Blick über den Euphrat schweifen, der unter ihr friedlich vor sich hinfloss. […] Und die Zivilisationen, die in diesem Grün seit wer weiβ wie viel tausend Jahren gegründet und vernichtet, vernichtet und wieder gegründet wurden … (*P*, p. 51).

Patasana presents the reader with a disillusioning picture of human nature, as illustrated by the two parallel plots. Both plots interrogate the notion of innocent victimhood by problematising the motivation behind the revenge murders perpetrated by two fictional protagonists who justify their crimes by claiming that their murders are a reminder of mankind's innate cruelty. In the very last of Patasana's tablets (chapter 28 in the novel), the eponymous hero sees himself as a victim of the whim of gods who have planted the seeds of evil in every human being:

> Das Böse ist in uns, aber dieses dunkle Gefühl haben die Götter in uns eingepflanzt. Sie waren es, die diese Katastrophen über uns brachten; auf ihren Befehl hin erklärten Könige den Krieg, auf ihren Befehl hin töteten, quälten und plünderten die Menschen. (*P*, p. 427)

Patasana's autobiographical tablets describe how he avenges the death of his beloved Aschmunikal, one of Pisiris' prostitutes. The revenge plot around Patasana, the scribe, represents the novel's first example of the misuse of moral agency. As a young scribe, he is given the opportunity to meet her. The two fall in love. When she finds out that Patasana has made her pregnant, she commits suicide, as the customs reserve the King the right to keep his temple prostitutes for his exclusive sexual pleasure (*P*, p. 370). Her suicide

protects Patasana (*P*, p. 371), but as a reaction, he vows to avenge the death of his beloved and their unborn child. Furthermore, he also wants to avenge his father Araras' murder, who was sacrificed by Pisiris on a diplomatic mission (*P*, pp. 325-325). The scribe needs to wait for the right moment for his revenge, continuing to loyally serve his brutal king, while hiding his vengeful feelings. Eventually, he decides to betray secret plans about Pisiris' political alliance against the Hittites' archenemy, the Assyrians, to the Assyrian king Sargon (*P*, pp. 388-391). As a result, Sargon invades the Hittite capital, pretending to replace his army's supplies (*P*, pp. 404-407). In a cruel move not foreseen by Patasana, Sargon orders Pisiris and his collaborators to be murdered, sparing Patasana's life as a sign of his gratitude (*P*, p. 406). Patasana problematises the figure of the witness of the atrocities against his people by the fact that he is, to some extent, partly responsible for it. At the same time, his family are also victims of the cruelty of his own king, Pisiris, who ordered Patasana's father to be murdered (*P*. p. 325). One can therefore argue that Patasana is similar to Primo Levi's category of the 'Geretteten' or the intended victim of extermination who survived. The novel's portrayal of the morally ambivalent revenge taken by the Hittite scribe against his King, however, complicates the notion of the innocent witness. Unlike Levi himself, however, Patasana's moral authority as a surviving witness is relativised by his use of revenge against those who committed crimes against his family.

In addition, Patasana's revenge is also conditioned by his feelings of self-centred eros for Aschmunikal. This also diminishes his status as a victim who survives the extermination of the whole of the Hittite population, ordered by Sargon (*P*, p. 407), which foreshadows the death marches of the Armenian genocide of 1915: 'Unter Aufsicht der Wächter, die wütenden Hunden glichen, begann der Fußmarsch ins Land der Assyrer.' The 'Massaker der Assyrer' (*P*, p. 406) lasts for seven days. The consequences of Patasana's feelings of selfish

eros for Aschmunikal go far beyond what he intended. His autobiographical story ends with his pangs of conscience, arguing that it was the thousand Hittite gods who sentenced him to live with his guilt for the rest of his life: 'Sie haben mich dazu verdammt, im Feuer der Gewissensqualen zu verbrennen.' (*P*, p. 427). In the concluding twenty-eighth tablet, Patasana uses the same excuse to blame the gods for human evil. The self-accusation ends with the reason for writing these tablets. Patasana wants to give his reader the hope that human cruelty will be overcome by love:

> Deshalb schrieb ich diese Tafeln. Vielleicht können Götter und Könige sie nicht mehr nach Gutdünken lenken. Vielleicht bestellen sie den ertragreichen Boden zwischen den zwei Flüssen mit Liebe, statt ihn mit dem Blut ihrer Brüder und Schwestern zu tränken. Vielleicht werden sie klug, verwandeln ihr Leben in ein Fest, das sie in Glück feiern. Vielleicht übergeben sie den kommenden Generationen nicht Pein, sondern Freude, nicht Tränen, sondern Lächeln, nicht Hass, sondern Liebe, nicht Tod, sondern Leben. Vielleicht. (*P*, p. 428)

Although the eponymous hero thinks that he has been tricked by the gods, the Patasana plot has demonstrated that it is Patasana's agency, in the shape of hubris, that causes, to some extent, the Hittites to be massacred by their Assyrian arch-enemies. This hubris is linked to his feelings of self-centred eros. Patasana feels guilty for the catastrophe that he causes. The Patasana plot clearly foregrounds the agency of the novel's eponymous hero. Through the indirect parallels with the Armenian genocide in 1915, one can argue that it places personal political responsibility at the heart of the debate about who is responsible for the massacres. This contrasts with the denialist narrative of the Turkish official attitudes towards the Armenian genocide, in which questions about agency and perpetration in the form of responsibilities are avoided in favour of a nationalist and religious perspective.

In the novel's modern-day plot, the figure of the Turkish police captain Esref Bey can also be seen as a survivor and witness of atrocities. During his military duty as an intelligence

officer in the conflict between the Turkish government and the Kurdish-separatist minority in the mountains of Anatolia, Esref leads a platoon ordered to capture the Kurdish military leader Cemsid (*P*, pp. 282-304). Esref's platoon is arrested and executed by Cemsid's men, but Cemsid, who has developed a certain amount of affection and respect for Esref, spares Esref. (*P*, pp. 299-300). In order to avenge the deaths of his platoon members, Esref kills one of their local informers, Hamit Aga, whom he suspects to have betrayed the whereacbouts of his platoon to Cemsid. Esref can therefore be compared with Patasana, as both men are victims of crimes committed against them, while also becoming surviving witnesses of atrocities. Both fictional protagonists help to question the notion of innocent victimhood on the side of the surviving witness of warfare between different ethnic communities.

The modern-day plot of *Patasana* revolves around a serial killer, whose relatives are the victims of Turkish murders of Armenians carried out shortly after the end of the First World War. At the end of *Patasana*, it is revealed that the serial killer is one of the members of the international team of archaeologists who discover the twenty-eight tablets written by Patasana. These are found on the exact site where Patasana had lived thousands of years before. The archaeologists believe these tablets to be the first ever document of unofficial historiography, since Patasana's story contains an entirely subjective account of the reason for the collapse of the Hittite Empire (*P*, p. 25).

During the excavation, three mysterious and brutal murders take place near the site. The head archaeologist, the young female Turkish archaeologist Esra, establishes a link between three murders seventy-eight years ago, in the troubled period between 1918 and 1922, and the three contemporary murders. These show the exact same modus operandi (*P*, p. 401). The victims were three Armenians. The main suspect, Bernd, is an Armenophile member of the archaeological team who is married to an Armenian woman (*P*, p.402). He

hates the Turks because they perpetrated the Armenian genocide (*P*, p. 339; p. 392). At the end of the novel, a fourth murder happens, when the body of Kemal, another of the team members, is found in a cave near the site (*P*, p. 395). The murder mystery is solved at the international press conference that is supposed to reveal the archaeologists' historic findings to the world (chapter twenty-eight). The murderer is Timothy Hurley, one of the team members. He considers this to be the best method to warn the whole of mankind that human nature is evil and violent (*P*, p. 423). Ironically, the archaeologist commits murder in order to put an end to all murders:

> "Ja, ich bin ein Mörder", sagte er. In seiner Stimme, in seinem Blick, in seiner ganzen Haltung lag Ironie. "Aber ein Mörder, der mordet, um das Morden zu beenden." (*P*, p. 425)

That is why Zeynep Tüfekcioglu's reading of Ümit's novel, focusing on *Patasana*'s use of violence, is relevant to my argument in this chapter. Tüfekcioglu argues that the trope of Armenian innocent martyrdom and victimhood, as used in the official centenary commemorations in Armenia, is problematised in *Patasana*, which she considers to be 'a novel against violence, which focuses on violence.'[148] She praises Ümit's choice of the genre of the crime story to denounce violence. Tüfekcioglu reads Ümit's novel as a postmodernist attempt to give the reader a multitude of varying perspectives on the Armenian genocide: '*Patasana* should be read as a hybrid novel with characteristics of both a thriller and a postmodernist historical fiction'.[149] She praises its polyphonic narrative technique, arguing that Ümit tends to condemn violence of all kinds. The foregrounding of violence in *Patasana* is in fact the foregrounding of agency, albeit in a negative context. The trope of innocent victimhood associated with the Armenian victims of the genocide is based on the absence of

[148] Zeynep Tüfekcioglu, 'Reading Ahmet Ümit's *Patasana* as a Postmodernist Historical fiction', *Journal of Turkish Literature, 10,* (2013), pp. 72-87 (p. 85).
[149] Ibid., p. 74.

any kind of agency on the part of the victims, as seen in my description of official Armenian commemorations. Ümit's choice of the Hittite plot that parallels the Armenian-Turkish present-day plot gives a certain timelessness to this violent agency. The challenge to the trope of innocent victimhood in *Patasana* relies on a portrayal of violence as an example of human agency that is not limited to just one historical epoch.

What Tüfekcioglu tends to underestimate, however, is the destructive role played by Patasana's feelings of selfish eros. The basic paradox remains: Patasana hopes that love can improve mankind, whereas his whole biographical account has demonstrated the destructive nature of his selfish kind of love-revenge. The dual narrative technique reinforces this impression, as the contemporary narrative with its bleak view of the continuity of violence amplifies and confirms Patasana's pessimism regarding human nature.

In my reading of the novel, Patasana's claim that the gods have instilled evil into human beings is similar to the serial killer Armenak/Timothy's claim that human beings are inherently violent. Patasana and Armenak/Timothy see themselves as passive victims who bear little responsibility for their acts. However, their self-centred feelings of eros undermine this self-perception. Patasana and Armenak/Timothy justify their crimes by claiming to draw the public's attention to the immutable laws of human nature, in the hope that their crimes of vengeance may cause a change for the better. This self-contradiction is expressed by Armenak/Timothy during his speech at the international press conference at which he reveals his crimes:

> Der Tod zieht die Aufmerksamkeit aller Menschen auf sich, egal ob jung oder alt. Deswegen führt der Weg, den Menschen zu überzeugen, dass sie nicht töten, leider über den Tod selbst. Wie ein türkisches Sprichwort sagt, reißt man einen Nagel am besten mit einem anderen heraus. (*P*. p. 417)

The fact that the Armenian-American archaeologist chooses personal revenge for his murdered relative to prove his claim undermines his seemingly universal philosophy on innate human violence. One of the Armenian victims, killed eighty-seven years ago, was Pastor Kirkor, Armenak/Timothy's grandfather (*P*, p. 419). His feelings of love for his murdered grandfather can be seen as an example of self-interested love, or eros. The same self-interested love feelings have caused Patasana to betray his king Pisiris in order to avenge his beloved, although the scribe claims that he was a victim of the gods: 'Ich versuchte das Schicksal zu ändern, das sie für mich vorgezeichnet.' (*P*, p. 427). Armenak/Timothy sums up his central message by referring to Patasana's similar opinion of human nature. Armenak considers the scribe to have chosen the wrong method to spread his message.

> Niemand weist darauf hin, dass wir mörderisch, erbarmungslos, egoistisch, engstirnig und todliebend sind. Als hätten all die Massaker und Kriege nie stattgefunden, als wären all die Gräueltaten nie erlitten worden, wiederholt man unermüdlich die Lüge, wir seien ach so erhabene Geschöpfe. Natürlich gab es auch solche wie Patasana, die versuchten, von dieser Brutalität zu sprechen, aber sie haben die falsche Methode gewählt. (*P*, p. 423)

Armenak/Timothy's biographical account is interspersed with his personal traumatic experiences as a US soldier in Vietnam, for which he needed psychological treatment (*P*, p. 420). This links him to the fictional French traumatised soldiers in Lemaitre and Japrisot's novels, and to the victims of shell shock in Chapter Five, portrayed in Woolf and Barker's novels. He also claims that he is not an ethnic avenger: 'Ich bin kein Rächer einer Ethnie.' (*P*, p. 424). Their self-perception as victims of fate or human nature is unmasked as a false pretence.

My readings of Franz Werfel's *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh* and Ahmet Ümit's *Patasana* have demonstrated that the trope of innocent victimhood is problematised in two

different ways which place the two First World War novels into the grey zones of culpability described by Levi. In Werfel's interwar text, the figure of the heroic Armenian resistance fighter Gabriel Bagradian, as a member of a village threatened to be deported by Ottoman troops, is portrayed as a potential victim of anti-Armenian ethnic cleansing. Nevertheless, his summary execution of an Armenian dissenter, Kilikian, casts moral ambivalence on his heroic status. In Werfel's novel, the three major victims of the potential deportation, Gabriel Bagradian, his son Stephan, and Kilikian, die and can therefore no longer bear witness to the genocide. They can be likened to Levi's metaphor of the 'Untergegangenen', the victims of racist genocidal policies who die during the genocide. By contrast, the trope of innocent victimhood in Ahmet Ümit's post-1990 text *Patasana*, focuses on the figure of the victim who witnesses atrocities and survives. Its main protagonists Patasana, Esref Bey and Armenak/Timothy are all victims of crimes committed against them. However, they also use vindictive violence to avenge these crimes. Patasana and Armenak/Timothy try to justify this violence by their self-perceived mission to uncover humanity's cruel nature. This message problematises their status as victims and turns them into morally compromised survivors of genocide, in the sense of Primo Levi's category of the surviving victim, or the 'Geretteten'. In Chris Bohjalian's novel *The Sandcastle Girls*, this shift towards the survivor-victim is also used to focus on the moral ambivalences of innocent Armenian victimhood.

Self-Defence, Eros and Guilt in Chris Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls* (2012)

The Sandcastle Girls, Bohjalian's fourteenth novel, was originally published in English in 2012. It combines the popular genre of the romance novel with elements from the epic genre, as its plotline spans a century and deals with the effect of the Armenian genocide on fictional protagonists acting in two different historical epochs. As a romantic epic, *The*

Sandcastle Girls depicts a romance set in the context of a historical conflict or a war. Bohjalian's novel intertwines a modern-day plot around Laura Petrosian, the contemporary narrator and granddaughter of an Armenian survivor of the 1915 Armenian genocide, with the historical plot set in Aleppo, Syria, in 1915, where her grandparents became lovers.

In Chris Bohjalian's novel *The Sandcastle Girls* (2012), the phrase 'starving Armenians' is described as the term by which, already at the time of the anti-Armenian massacres in 1915, those of the non-Armenian public referred to the fate of the Armenians. The novel's main heroine of its modern-day plot, the American-Armenian Laura Petrosian, also uses this phrase within her family to refer to the Armenian innocent victimhood:

> The phrase "starving Armenians" was originally coined by Clara Barton. The Slaughter You Know Next to Nothing About was actually common knowledge among some Americans and Europeans while it was occurring. […] when my brother and I were small children, my mother occasionally conjured that Clara Barton phrase, "starving Armenians" […] she would invoke the specter of starving children of a distant-Armenia – distant both chronologically and geographically. […] There was a taint of victimhood about the expression that they [Laura's grandparents] found slightly galling. (*SG*, pp. 87-89)[150]

In *The Sandcastle Girls*, the main fictional Armenian protagonists of its plot set in 1915, Armen Petrosian, Laura Petrosian's grandfather, can also be described as a surviving victim who witnessed the effects of the Armenian genocide. Armen is one of the 'Geretteten' or saved survivors. However, he also uses vindictive violence against Ottomans involved in murdering Armen's family members. In contrast to Ümit's fictional Armenian

[150] Clara Barton (1821-1912) was the founder of the American Red Cross on 21 May 1881. See author unknown, 'Clara's Story', in <https://www.redcross.org/about-us/who-we-are/history/clara-barton.html>. [Last accessed 28 April 2024]. Clara Barton organised the first International Red Cross Relief Mission to the killing fields of the Armenian provinces in Eastern Turkey in 1896, which witnessed a wave of anti-Armenian pogroms between 1895 and 1896. There is ongoing debate whether these massacres were carefully orchestrated and premeditated by the Hamidian administration, or the result of a spontaneous display of anti-Armenian hatred. As a mark of sympathy for the victims of these pogroms, Americans boycotted Thanksgiving in some cities, Minneapolis and St. Paul, to raise funds for the "starving Armenians". See Merrill D. Peterson, *"Starving Armenians": America and the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1930, And After* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004).

Armenak/Timothy, however, there is no time difference of eighty years between the Ottoman crimes and the Armenian protagonists' reaction to them. Bohjalian's Armen kills Ottoman officials to avenge the murder of his family. His acts are, however, described by Bohjalian as partly imposed upon Armen by external circumstances, in self-defence, and partly carried out in a spirit of blood revenge. Armen's killings are therefore untainted by moral concerns.

Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls* is relevant to this chapter on the literary representation of Armenian victimhood because the main Armenian fictional character, Armen Petrosian, Laura's grandfather, uses vindictive violence and self-defence when, shortly after the first wave of deportations in the spring of 1915, he tries to confront his Turkish friend Nezimi, who is responsible for his family's deportation, and kills him. In Bohjalian's novel, self-defence is closely associated with vindictive violence, as it is used by the same character, Armen Petrosian, who tries to avoid being arrested for his vengeful murder of Nezimi. Although Armen, whose family is a victim of the genocide, may have a reason to justify the use of violence against Ottoman state representatives, his feelings of guilt after the killing of these officials show that vindictive violence problematises the innocent victimhood of the Armenian survivor of the genocide. His guilt shows his awareness of his status as both victim and perpetrator, and adds complexity to the innocent victimhood associated with Armenian victims of the genocide in the official Armenian centenary commemorations. Armen Petrosian's ambivalent moral status complicates the moral innocence conventionally associated with victims of the Armenian genocide, as was the case with Gabriel Bagradian's use of punitive violence in *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh*. Whereas in Werfel's novel, the theme of blood revenge is illustrated by Gabriel Bagradian's summary execution of Kilikian, the theme of blood revenge in Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle*

Girls is closely associated with Armen's wish to avenge the death of his family. Werfel's novel uses the theme of blood revenge in the wider context of the Armenian resistance fight. By contrast, Bohjalian's text reduces the issue of how to punish the Ottoman perpetrators of the genocide to one Armenian family that is representative of the fate of all Armenian victims of the 1915 genocide. Nevertheless, despite Armen's wish to avenge the death of his wife and child, he has strong feelings of guilt after murdering Nezimi. This guilt is closely associated with his love for the US nurse Elizabeth Endicott. Armen believes that murdering Nezimi could be seen by her as an act corresponding to the stereotypical 'oriental' thirst for blood revenge (*SG*, p. 44).

Before discussing the novel's three kinds of guilt, a brief synopsis of the intertwining plots is necessary. Almost a century after the 1915 Armenian genocide, Laura Petrosian tries to find out why her grandfather Armen Petrosian, an Armenian railway engineer working for the Ottoman government, and her American grandmother Elizabeth Endicott, an American humanitarian nurse, remained silent about their experiences in Syria in 1915.

The historical narrative relates the events of the Armenian genocides in 1915 and 1916 via the love story between Laura's grandmother, Elizabeth Endicott, and the Armenian railway engineer Armen Petrosian who works on the Baghdad railway. His brother, his wife Karine, and their infant daughter are missing, believed to be dead (*SG*, pp. 79-81). Like Gabriel Bagradian, Armen was loyal to the Ottoman state's war effort, until he became personally involved in its persecution of Armenians. Armen is betrayed by his friend Nezimi, a Turkish government official who falsely promises to save Armen's family from the deportations. Nezimi tries to rape Karine and refuses to save the Petrosians (*SG*, pp. 44-46). Armen murders Nezimi in an act of self-defence (*SG*, p. 44; p. 228).

Armen decides to fight the Young Turks by joining the British army. On his way to Egypt, he jumps on a moving train, where he escapes capture by killing two Turkish men (*SG*, pp. 81-83). The historical narrative closes with Armen's return to Aleppo to see Elizabeth, who has refused marriage proposals from two suitors. He is unaware of the fact that his wife Karine Petrosian is still alive. Karine finds out about the romance between Armen and Elizabeth (*SG*, p. 248), but refuses to reveal her identity when she meets Elizabeth in the orphanage: 'She should be as cold as her daughter's bones, or her parents' or her brother's or sister's. She should have perished with everyone else […].' (*SG*, p. 269). Karine tries to commit suicide (*SG*, 275), in the belief that for the lovers Armen and Elizabeth, she is already dead (*SG*, p. 270). Elizabeth finds out that the woman who has been found at the bottom of the citadel walls must be Karine Petrosian (*SG*, p. 278). She goes to visit the dying Karine in hospital. Karine decides not to tell Armen, who has already mourned her once before. Elizabeth never reveals the secret of Karine's return to anybody.

Armen's feelings of guilt towards Elizabeth are complex and result from his wish to punish the Ottoman administrator Nezimi, a friend of Armen and Karine Petrosian. Nezimi breaks his promise to protect Karine and her infant daughter from being deported. Armen returns to Aleppo to take his revenge:

> He was the one whose wife and daughter had been sent into the desert to die by this administrative pedant who had vowed to protect them. He was the one whose wife and daughter were dead. Somehow Armen had gotten the official off of him. Had scrambled to his feet above Nezimi. Kicked him hard under his chin before the bastard could rise, perhaps severing his spine right then. Armen will never know. Because he grabbed the ceremonial scimitar that hung on the wall and cut the man's throat. (*SG*, p. 228)

His cold-bloodedness makes him feel guilty when he meets Elizabeth. The use of the scimitar, a single-edged sword associated with Middle Eastern culture, signifies that he could

be perceived by the Western humanitarian Elizabeth as the typical 'oriental' bloodthirsty avenger. He prefers to keep his murder a secret:

> Months later, he had killed that friend with the fellow's own scimitar. He had almost told a woman from Zeitun precisely that the day before yesterday, because a woman from Zeitun would understand. He had almost told Elizabeth the story earlier this evening, because she was an American and would have found the Turk's betrayal the stuff of dark fairy tales – something from that German called Grimm. But in the end what would she have thought of his cold-bloodedness? Of the Turk's? Until this spring he had never imagined he was capable of such violence: he had never supposed he'd ever kill anyone. And yet, was the murder really cold-blooded? In hindsight, he would never know for sure what his intentions had been when he had gone to Nezimi's office. (*SG*, p. 44)

Armen's interior monologue about murdering Nezimi problematises the notion of blood revenge by bringing up the idea of cold-blooded premeditation. Armen perceives himself as an innocent victim of his passion, who kills Nezimi without intention, while simultaneously evoking that he might have gone to Nezimi's office to avenge his family. Armen believes that only the crime of passion could have been forgiven by Elizabeth, whereas she would have rejected the premeditated act of revenge. Armen's feelings of guilt make him shy away from telling her the truth, as he fears that she will never be able to forgive him. Eros prevents forgiveness instead of enabling it.

As seen above in the discussion of Ümit's *Patasana*, where eros represents a destructive force in both the historic and the modern-day plots, Armen's complex feelings regarding his murder of Nezimi add nuance to his feelings of self-centred eros towards Elizabeth Endicott. In *The Sandcastle Girls*, eros is also discussed as a potential way towards moral redemption, but, as seen above, this potential remains inside Armen's mind. Armen's feelings of eros are located within the grey zone between his 'Oriental' code of honour, which demands that he avenge the murder of his family and his fear that this cultural code

of conduct will alienate him from Elizabeth Endicott. The fact that Armen's awareness that he is caught between two different cultural perspectives on blood revenge complicates his status as an indirect victim of the genocide.

The second time that Armen uses violence is in self-defence. After murdering Nezimi, he tries to escape to Damascus on a train, where two Turkish officials want to see his passport. Passports belonging to Armenians were 'confiscated by the Turks months ago, the first step in the annihilation of his people.' (*SG*, p. 82). When one of the administrators, who suspect that he is the murderer of their colleague Nezimi, is about to shoot Armen, he kills the two officials and escapes from the train (*SG*, pp. 82-83). The deadly fight with the two officials is told from an outside perspective, so that the reader does not know what Armen's thoughts are. There are no feelings of guilt resulting from his self-defence.

The second kind of guilt to be found in the historical plot is also closely related to the feelings of self-centred eros between Armen Petrosian and Elizabeth Endicott. Theresa Hupp identifies the ambivalent moral nature of selfish eros in the dénouement of *The Sandcastle Girls*. Hupp asks whether Elizabeth Endicott had the right to hide the truth about Armen's wife.[151] Hupp rightly sees that this issue is an essential part of Bohjalian's endeavour to commemorate the tragedy of the genocide. Elizabeth's decision not to tell Armen that his wife was about to contact him raises the question of Elizabeth's guilt:

> I asked myself the question whether the happiness Armen and Elizabeth achieved could be justified, when it was based on the tragic circumstances of Armen's first wife's death. […] Was she right to keep the secret or not?[152]

[151] Theresa Hupp, 'Haunting Book: *The Sandcastle Girls*, by Chris Bohjalian', 10 October 2012: <https://www.theresahuppauthor.com/blog/2012/10/10/haunting-books-the-sandcastle-girls-by-chris-bohjalian/>. [Last accessed 24 March 2024].
[152] Ibid.

Considering that Armen's Armenian family is destroyed in the Armenian genocide, Elizabeth Endicott's secret is plausible and understandable. One cannot really consider her secret as an illustration of moral guilt. She is told by Dr Akcam, one of the doctors at the Aleppo orphanage for survivors of the desert marches, that the woman who is dying in one of the beds was the same woman who saw her and Armen the night before (*SG*, p. 269). She tried to kill herself by leaping off a cliff, like 'thousands of women' who witnessed the death marches in the Syrian desert (*SG*, p. 275). Elizabeth decides that she must keep the secret from Armen, believing that her own love for him will heal his traumatic experiences during the genocide.

> Armen has shouldered Karine's loss once already. He has borne the grief, the heartbreak, and the chasm-like hole in his soul. And finally – almost miraculously – he has started to heal. Should he now have to share in the guilt that Elizabeth suspects will color her sunsets forever? Should he have to carry that cross as well? Maybe some day she will regret this moment and what she is about to do. Maybe not. (*SG*, pp. 278-279)

I argue that the figure of Karine Petrosian can be considered as an illustration of the way the novel complicates the figure of the 'Geretteten' or saved victim of the genocide. Karine is an innocent surviving victim and an eye-witness to the genocide. However, her status as an innocent victim-survivor is complicated by her feelings of eros, or love, for her husband Armen. In this sense, Karine's suicide adds nuance to the trope of the survivor-victim because it makes the reader aware of the moral complexities of life after escaping the genocide. Karine saw Armen and Elizabeth together, but because of her survivor's guilt, she chose not to go and see Armen: 'She feels not even a flicker of desire to reveal herself and confront either the man or the woman. After all, she should be dead.' (*SG*, p. 269).

Just as Elizabeth believes in the healing power of love, her granddaughter Laura Petrosian believes in the cathartic effect of commemorating the victims of the Armenian

genocide: 'I suggested that chronicling my grandparents' story might in fact be cathartic.' (*SG*, p. 272). Laura is the only one of the Petrosians in the novel who is not directly involved in the events of the 1915 genocide. In a conversation between Laura and her husband, she tells him that she intends to use all of her grandmother's private letters and her private diary to exhibit them in public, in order to draw the public's attention to the Armenian genocide. Her husband differentiates between Elizabeth's writings intended for the humanitarian association 'Friends of Armenia', and her intimate descriptions that reveal, for example, the secret about Karine's death. These intimate descriptions foreground the moral ambivalence and the grey zones of culpability in which the 1915 plot is located. In this sense, the remarks by Laura's husband express the fear that the revelation of the family secrets may shed a negative light on the family, partially interrogating the innocence associated with the family's status as survivors of the genocide:

> The fact that Armen and Elizabeth had shared so very little of their nightmare with their children and grandchildren was a clear indication that they wanted their history kept private. They had lived alone with their losses and taken to their graves the worst of the tragedies that had marked their lives. Not even Armen knew everything. My husband said he believed that whatever Elizabeth had written for the Friends of Armenia was fair game; everything else should remain privileged. (*SG*, p. 271)

Laura eventually decides to write a book on her family history. During a speech she gives about her grandparents' story in Pasadena, Laura meets the granddaughter of one of the girls, Hatoun, whom she looked after in the American compound in 1915. This reunion seems to confirm that she was right to include every detail of her grandmother's experiences during the Armenian genocide. The last paragraph of the novel is meant to be a happy ending:

> This time, however, there was a ripple of happiness amid all those tears, because among the cadavers who would be raised from the Aleppo dead was this woman's grandmother: a quiet, watchful, intense little girl named Hatoun. (*SG*, p. 293)

By making the family story known to the public, Karine Petrosian and Hatoun no longer remain anonymous victims of the genocide. Revealing their stories to the public a century after the historical events may have a cathartic effect on the modern-day narrator Laura, yet her family's story has also revealed that the moral guilt seems to be the price paid by her grandparents to start a post-genocidal life in the USA.

Human agency in the context of resisting Ottoman genocidal policies is problematised by the use of violence of the fictional Armenian protagonists. In Werfel's interwar novel, the figure of the genocide victim who dies during the tragic events of 1915 is ambivalently portrayed while being glorified, via the use of a third-person omniscient narrator, as a sacrificial martyr of Armenian resistance. The two post-1990 novels by Ümit and Bohjalian focus on the figure of the victim who survives the genocide. This victim-survivor is portrayed as morally ambivalent. The fictional Armenian characters analysed in this chapter, Gabriel Bagradian, Armenak Papazyan/Timothy Hurley, and Armen and Karine Petrosian, all use vindictive and punitive violence in their attempts to resist or avenge the Ottoman brutalities. This use of violence in the three fictional representations of Armenian victimhood adds ambiguity to the trope of innocent, quasi-religious martyrdom characteristic of official Armenian centenary commemorations. The conclusion we can draw from this ambiguity is that the literary treatments of the First World War and the Armenian genocide are more nuanced than official representations of the conflict. One can also argue that Levi's grey zones provide a more appropriate context than national commemorations for understanding the moral dilemmas faced by victims of the war-related events.

The next chapter of this thesis, Chapter Four, will examine how the notion of innocent victimhood associated with the tropes of the wounded body and the damaged psyche of First World War soldiers is represented – and challenged – in three fictional prose

works dealing with the issue of the individual soldier becoming the victim of a callous military justice system.

Chapter Four

Justice versus Revenge: Agape, Eros and Military Justice

In Chapters Two and Three, I argued that the emancipatory struggles of the fictional Jewish and Armenian protagonists were strongly conditioned by the legal restrictions and cultural demands imposed on these characters by the national and ethnic contexts in which their actions are embedded. Although these protagonists are victims of discrimination and physical violence, their identification with their nation states or ethnic roots brings them into situations in which they are forced to take morally ambivalent decisions. The overarching argument of Chapters Two and Three is that the literary representation of the German-Jewish and Armenian experience of the First World War belongs within the grey zones of conscience in which this experience is embedded in the diegetic world of the selected novels.

In this chapter, my readings of three novels dealing with the theme of military injustice, Arnold Zweig's *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* (1927), Sébastien Japrisot's *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* (1991), and Pierre Lemaitre's *Au revoir là-haut* (2013), are in line with the overarching thesis that fictional First World War prose adds complexity and nuance to the one-dimensional national commemorative narratives of innocent victimhood by providing ambivalent portrayals of specific injustices.[153] In each of these novels, First World War soldiers become the victims of the abuse of military power, as represented by a dysfunctional military justice apparatus. However, these three novels also illustrate that victims of military justice may use revenge in order to right the wrongs to which they have been exposed. In Zweig's *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* and Japrisot's *Un long*

[153] Arnold Zweig, *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2006). This novel will henceforth be referred to in references as *GRI*; Sébastien Japrisot, *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* (Paris: Folio, 1991). This novel will henceforth be referred to in references as *Uldf*; Pierre Lemaitre, *Au revoir là-haut* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2013). This novel will henceforth be referred to in references as *Alh*.

dimanche de fiançailles, two female fictional characters plan or carry out blood revenge to avenge the unjust death sentence against their beloved soldiers. Blood revenge is eventually rejected in Zweig's novel, but implemented in Japrisot's text.

I argue that two elements in these two novels problematise the notion of innocent victimhood. First, the soldiers who are sentenced to death are portrayed in such a way as to question their status as wholly innocent victims of a dysfunctional military justice apparatus. This ambivalence is achieved above all by including biographical details in their individual portrayals. Second, in these two novels, blood revenge and violence are embedded in a context in which justice is politicised due to the imperatives of war. The texts portray the impotence of the individual soldier when he is confronted with political justice and its disregard for impartiality. However, as will be seen in detailed readings of Zweig's and Japrisot's novels, the fictional victim-soldiers are portrayed as characters who take morally questionable decisions. This ambivalence adds nuance to the over-simplified view that good is wholly on the side of the wronged soldiers. In Lemaitre's *Au revoir là-haut*, which highlights the social injustices against demobilised French First World War soldiers in post-war France, revenge takes the shape of a fraudulent scheme of selling fake tombs for fallen soldiers. Here, too, human agency is embodied in the acts and thoughts of fictional characters who are driven by personal revenge to right the injustice that was committed against them or their families. However, the feelings of guilt associated with these discussions problematises the notion of revenge and complicates the status of these fictional characters as innocent victims of military justice. The characters are innocent victims, but they become guilty only in the way they react to this injustice.

The second commonality between the three selected prose texts lies in their representation of broken soldiers' bodies to symbolise the injustice committed against them.

Zweig, Japrisot and Lemaitre use the stock element of First World War soldiers as victims of physical mutilation. In *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa*, the description of the ghastly bodily details of the execution of its eponymous hero, Grischa Paprotkin, make the reader aware of the inhumanity of the death sentence. In Japrisot's *Un long dimanche de fiançailles*, physical mutilation is illustrated by the self-mutilation of French soldiers who deliberately injure their hands in order to escape being exposed to more fighting on the Western Front. In Lemaitre's *Au revoir là-haut*, the main hero Edouard Péricourt is disfigured by a grenade thrown by his commanding officer who tries to get rid of eye-witnesses to his crime.

Furthermore, the complexity of human responsibility in the fictional universes depicted in the three novels is illustrated by the link between their fictional characters' feelings of selfless agape or self-centred eros and their feelings of guilt. The selfless agape on display in Zweig's *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* is too weak to prevent the execution of the eponymous hero Grischa. The self-centred eros evident in Japrisot's *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* and Lemaitre's *Au revoir là-haut* is depicted as a destructive force that causes these novels' fictional French First World War soldiers to break civilian and military laws.

Fraternisation, Agape and Guilt in Arnold Zweig's *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* (1927)

Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa is Arnold Zweig's most successful novel. In the GDR, it was reissued 42 times between 1949 and 1985, whereas it was only reissued ten times in the Federal Republic between 1962 and 1984.[154] German editions were published in New York (1945), Vienna (1957) and Moscow (1965). In the West, translated versions were published

[154] For a detailed publishing history and critical reviews of all of Zweig's six novels from his First World War prose fiction cycle, see Stefania Sudru, *Der große Krieg der weißen Männer. Arnold Zweigs Romanwerk über den Ersten Weltkrieg (1927-1957), Leben und (Kultur-) Geschichte im Spiegel der Literatur* (Remscheid: Rediroma, 2023), p. 47.

in Great Britain and the USA between 1947 and 1969, in Denmark (1965, 1967), Italy (1961) and Spain (1985). Thirteen translations were published in the Eastern bloc countries. The Grischa novel was first published under the title *Alle gegen Einen* in serial form in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* (June - September 1927), and then in book form by Gustav Kiepenheuer in October 1927. By 1933 it had sold more than 300,000 copies in twelve different languages.[155] The novel was positively received by Lion Feuchtwanger and Kurt Tucholsky, whereas Bertolt Brecht criticised the illusion, as he saw it, contained in Zweig's novel that the ideal of justice could defeat the deadly apparatus of German militarism.[156]

The originality of the novel lies in Zweig's intention to construct a polyphonic novel that deals with controversial issues concerning the meaning and memory of the First World War at the time of its publication.[157] Zweig integrates different narratives into his novel that reflect the variety of ways in which the First World War was perceived by different social groups during the Weimar Republic. These narratives range from the mythologisation of the conflict in memoirs by nationalist ex-First World War officers, to the view of the war as an instrument illustrating capitalist class interests and the exploitation of the working class.[158] This latter, left-wing position led to negative reviews of the Grischa novel by prominent Communist intellectuals, such as the Austrian journalist Paul Friedländer, because Zweig fails to identify the historical potential of the working class to change the political future of

[155] See Marita Rost, *Bibliographie. Arnold Zweig. Band I: Primärliteratur* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1987), pp. 59-72.

[156] See Lion Feuchtwanger: 'Der Sergeant Grischa: Zu Arnold Zweigs neuem Roman',*Berliner Tageblatt*, 9 (November 1927); Kurt Tucholsky (Pseudonym Peter Panter):'Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa', in *Die Weltbühne*, 50 (13 December 1927), pp. 892-899; Bertolt Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke in acht Bänden,* Band 8 (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), pp. 52-53.

[157] Sudru, *Der große Krieg der weißen Männer*, pp. 192-213.

[158] Novels that glorify the war as a heroic experience are, for example: Ernst Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern* (Munich: Fink, 1985; first published in 1920); Rudolf Binding, *Unsterblichkeit* (Frankfurt/Main: Rütten & Loening, 1924; first published in 1924); Werner Beumelburg, *Douaumont*. *Unter Benutzung der amtlichen Quellen des Reichsarchivs, bearbeitet durch Werner Beumelburg* (Oldenburg in O.: Stalling, 1924).

Germany.[159] It is therefore no surprise that the publication of Zweig's Grischa novel sparked controversial debates in the press concerning taboos such as the question of individual versus collective responsibility for the German defeat in the war, or the fact that high-ranking German First World War officers continued to play an important part in the political life of the Weimar Republic, or remained legally unpunished by German courts for their war crimes. [160]

In line with Primo Levi's notion of the 'grey zones of conscience' described in this thesis' introductory Chapter One, *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* avoids clear-cut moral assessments on the military leadership. The novel does not only describe the ambivalence of its main fictional victim-soldier Grischa, but it also provides a balanced psychological portrayal of the man who is politically responsible for Grischa's death sentence, Generalmajor Schieffenzahn. Both the victims of military law and its masterminds are portrayed so as to avoid over-simplified moral assessments of their actions. The First World War and its causes and effects are filtered through the consciousness of low-life characters, such as Babka, the female leader of a group of partisans that Grischa joins during his escape from a German prisoner of war camp at the beginning. (*GRI*, Erstes Buch: Babka, pp. 9-82).

My reading of the novel applies Levi's concept of the grey zones to its two major characters by focusing on their differentiated portrayals, illustrated by the different levels of guilt that they feel. First, the eponymous hero Grischa Paprotkin is portrayed as the victim of

[159] Friedländer, 'Der Streit um Grischa',*Die Rote Fahne*, 10/276 (24 November 1927).

[160] Retired but influential First World War officers continued to play an important political role in the Weimar Republic. Two years before Zweig's *Grischa* novel was published, Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg was elected President of the Weimar Republic in 1925. His political opponent was his former assistant, General Erich Ludendorff, a version of whom appears in Zweig's novel as Generalmajor Schieffenzahn. Memoirs of former high-ranking officers were also popular with parts of the reading public in the Weimar Republic. See Sudru, *Der große Krieg der weißen Männer*, p. 199.

an unjustified death sentence, yet, he accepts this sentence in a martyr-like manner, feeling guilty for his past as a brutal Russian soldier who excelled at killing enemy soldiers. Second, Schieffenzahn knows that his death sentence may, one day, have negative repercussions for himself, and briefly wants to pardon Grischa. The general is portrayed as having pangs of conscience for causing the execution of a relatively unimportant Russian ex-soldier (*GRI*, p. 313). Furthermore, Zweig's psychological portrayal of Schieffenzahn, including details from his troubled childhood experience as a military cadet, further nuances his portrait. Schieffenzahn also belongs to the grey zone of conscience, but on the side of the perpetrators, and not that of the victims of military imperatives. As will be seen, analysing the function of their dreams in the novel will help to illustrate that there is sufficient ground to consider both protagonists as both victims and perpetrators: on the one hand, they are representatives of the two antagonistic forces at the core of the novel, namely the abuse of military law for the sake of the Imperial-German raison d'état; on the other hand, the concept of justice is the basis of a social order based on morality and equity. The common denominator between Grischa and Schieffenzahn is that they can both be regarded as victims, to a great extent, of the destructive forces and brutalisation caused by the First World War. In this sense, their actions and decisions prevent the reader from drawing simplistic conclusions. Whereas Grischa's death sentence illustrates the effects of this brutalisation on the lower parts of the social stratum, Schieffenzahn's portrayal demonstrates that the novel portrays the military rulers as possessing enough human agency to feel guilty despite their role as guarantors of a German war victory. Both Grischa and Schieffenzahn are portrayed as locked in the inhumanity caused by the war.

Zweig had worked on *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* (1927) since 1917, when he worked as a clerk in the propaganda department of the German army's headquarters on

the Eastern front.[161] After an unsuccessful attempt at publishing a stage version of the story, Zweig spent the next decade writing the novel about a fictional prisoner of war called Bjuschew. In 1917, an officer of the justice department in 'Ober Ost', the territory in Eastern Europe occupied by the Imperial German army (stretching from what is now Eastern Poland to the Baltic states) had told him of the real case of a Russian prisoner of war, who was executed for spying despite the intervention of the German commanding divisional general. As pointed out in 1957-58 by Zweig (when he was living and working in the GDR) in an information leaflet for a later stage version of the novel, this general defended the Russian prisoner for the sake of protecting the law from political abuse. The innocent victim was shot by a firing squad

> obwohl der kommandierende General eines Armeekorps sich dafür einsetzte, daß Recht und Gerechtigkeit im deutschen Heer keinerlei politischen Erwägungen untergeordnet würden, auch nicht der damals gerade aufkommenden Angst vor dem „Bolschewismus", der soldatischen Revolution gegen die Fortdauer des Krieges.[162]

The novel explores the dangerous interdependence of justice and politics, particularly in wartime, by illustrating how justice can be abused as a political weapon to suppress dissident or political opponents. In the novel, the administration of justice is dependent on the political and military context, which violates the principle of the independence of courts of justice. The figure of Grischa, an ordinary Russian soldier who is forced to watch the fight over his life without being able to influence his fate, exemplifies the effect of the machinery of state hierarchy, both political and military, on the individual. The non-political, helpless Grischa who just wants to be reunited with his family and therefore decides to escape from the prisoner of war camp in Poland, finds himself at the centre of a trial that is a political power struggle between the German High Command and

[161] See Georg Wenzel (ed.), *Arnold Zweig 1887-1968. Werk und Leben in Dokumenten und Bildern* (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1978), p. 88.
[162] Ibid.

the divisional headquarters of a section of German-occupied Eastern Europe (*Ober Ost*) (*GRI*, pp. 181-188).

The novel's moral message, which consists of a warning that elevating politics above justice eventually crushes individual freedom, strongly depends on Grischa's moral ambivalence. In contrast to conventional images of innocent victimhood, Grischa's awareness that it was morally wrong to have participated in the war's killing machinery prior to his being captured by the German army, is essential for the credibility of Zweig's moral message. This message relies on Grischa's reflections on his role as an ordinary soldier, which causes his moral turn towards feeling empathy with the enemy soldiers that he killed (*GRI*, pp. 351-352).

At the beginning of *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa*, its eponymous hero lacks the moral capacity to achieve a balanced assessment of his situation. A good example is provided in Book One, Chapter Seven, where the text sets up a minor character called Fedjuschka as Grischa's opposite. Whereas Grischa is convinced that he will not be arrested by German troops when he enters German-occupied territory in Eastern Europe, Fedjuschka, who is a member of the gang of outlaws that he joins after his escape from a German prisoner of war camp, believes that it is pointless for Grischa to go back to his family, as he will certainly be caught: 'Wenn du bis dahin nicht Pech hast und gefaßt bist, dachte er, aber er sagte es nicht'. (*GRI*, p. 75). Furthermore, even if Grischa succeeds, he will have to fight for the Tsarist army again: 'Dann gönnt man ihm drei Wochen Urlaub, und sobald er bei Frau und Kind sein Herz gemütlich erweicht hat, holen sie ihn wieder.' (*GRI*, p. 74). Fedjuschka thus makes clear that Grischa had the choice not to escape. Even at the level of a minor character, the novel discusses moral agency concerning its eponymous hero.

It is only after Grischa realises that his death sentence cannot be avoided that he starts to feel empathy for his enemies, which reflects his new-found feelings of agape. Grischa's moral turn expresses the same belief in the improvability of human nature that we encountered in the figure of Lenore Wahl in Zweig's *Junge Frau von 1914*. This belief is expressed in the aforementioned information leaflet published in 1957-58 in the GDR:

> Ich erkannte zunächst, daß der Mißbrauch des Menschen durch den Menschen im Kriege unbedingt bekämpft werden müsse, wenn wir unsere Epoche vom Mittelalter abgrenzten und als Neuzeit lobten. Gleichzeitig aber erkannte ich die Schwäche des Individuums solchen Gewalten gegenüber, ohne freilich zu begreifen, welch harter Schulungsarbeit es bedürfen werde, den Widerstand gegen solchen Mißbrauch durch organisiertes Zusammenstehen Hunderttausender zum Siege zu führen.[163]

The dilemma that Zweig faces in *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* is that, on the one hand, he needs to show how that the individual is crushed by political forces beyond his control. This idea is expressed by the Commander in Chief of *Ober Ost*, Generalmajor Albert Schieffenzahn, in a conversation concerning Grischa's fate with one of the officers appointed to defend Grischa, General Otto von Lychow. Lychow fails to convince Schieffenzahn to pardon Grischa. Schieffenzahn argues that 'Der Staat schafft das Recht, der einzelne ist eine Laus.' (*GRI* p. 307). On the other hand, the novel constructs Grischa as a character who is morally ambivalent, as he willingly accepts his inevitable death sentence to expiate his guilt as a former frontline soldier who has killed many enemy soldiers. This process of repentance is described in Books Four, Five and Six of the novel, as will be seen later.

The novel's events begin in spring 1917, when Grischa escapes from a German prisoner of war camp in Poland. He is eventually captured by a group of partisans who oppose the strict military rule of the German occupied territory in Eastern Europe. Grischa falls in love with their leader, Anna Kyrillowna, a young Lithuanian woman nicknamed

[163] Ibid.

'Babka'. She is physically marked by her traumatic experience during which part of her family were murdered by the German occupiers (*GRI*, pp. 53-56). Despite his love relationship with Babka, Grischa wants to continue his journey and return to his wife and child in Russia. Babka advises Grischa to take on the identity of Ilja Bjuschew (*GRI*, p. 57). Grischa thinks that if he is arrested again by the Germans under his real identity, he will be sentenced to a much longer term of imprisonment, which will ruin his hopes of being exchanged, once the war is finished, for a German prisoner of war. Grischa thinks that because of the Bolshevik Revolution and the impending collapse of Russia, the war will be over soon in the East. Being illiterate, Grischa is unable to read the multilingual signs put up in the area by the German military authorities, warning any Russian deserters that they must report to the authorities immediately, or else risk being shot as spies (*GRI*, p. 109). Grischa is arrested near the city of Mervinsk and sentenced to death. The German authorities believe him to be the Russian deserter Bjuschew (*GRI*, p. 109.). It is only when he hears of his death sentence that Grischa tells the authorities his real escape story.

The German-Jewish judge advocate Posnanski and his secretary Werner Bertin, whom we discussed in Chapter Two as one of the central characters of Zweig's *Junge Frau von 1914*, find out about the case. They help Grischa to prove his real identity. As pointed out earlier when comparing Grischa to the character of Fedjuschka, Grischa took the risk of being arrested while moving around in German-occupied territory under a false identity. Grischa had the opportunity to choose otherwise by staying with Babka's gang of outlaws. Posnanski's intention to defend Grischa is based on a religiously motivated love for ethical principles of law, as is pointed out, with a hint of casual anti-Semitism, by his superior General von Lychow: '„Dieser Posnanski. […] Überhaupt diese jüdischen Rechtsanwälte. Ich möchte schwören, sie lieben das Recht um seiner selbst willen, so wie wir unsere Güter und

Felder.“‘ (*GRI*, p. 112). Posnanski’s love for impartial justice illustrates the second example of selfless agape. Both are seen, in line with the overall thesis, as powerless in the face of the relentless and remorseless machinery of military justice that will eventually kill Grischa, who is innocent of the crime of which he is accused. This is foreshadowed by Posnanski in a discussion with his superior von Lychow very early in the novel (Book Two, chapter Three):

> Das Kriegsgericht der Division wirkt wie ein Räderwerk. Hat es den Mann einmal gegriffen, so zieht es ihn durch seine Schraubengänge und entläßt ihn als Leiche. Wenn einer mich freilich fragte, Exzellenz, ob die ganze Sache sinnvoll sei, dieses Gerichtspielen, dieses Strafgesetzbuch, dieser ganze grenzenlose Kohl von Gesetzemacherei, so bin ich bereit, Exzellenz meine Überzeugung keinen Augenblick vorzuenthalten. (*GRI*, p. 110)

The legal file is sent by the Mervinsk division to the headquarters, where Generalmajor Schieffenzahn, the Commander in Chief of the occupied Eastern territories, finds out about the case. Trying to set an example, he orders Grischa’s execution in order to deter any kind of potential rebellion by Russian deserters. As pointed out by von Lychow: ‘„Soldatenräte! Er [Schieffenzahn] will Bazillenträger ausrotten.“’ (*GRI*, p. 109). This order means that the Kommandantur of Mervinsk, headed by Rittmeister von Brettschneider, is responsible for carrying out the death sentence. Brettschneider is not interested in the identity of the sentenced Russian soldier, and is more than happy to use Schieffenzahn’s order to humiliate the old-school Prussian General von Lychow, Brettschneider’s rival, and to ingratiate himself with Schieffenzahn. A group of officers around von Lychow, his nephew and aide-de-camp, the young Oberleutnant Paul Winfried, Kriegsgerichtsrat Posnanski, the secretary Werner Bertin, as well as two young nurses, are appalled by the political arbitrariness of Grischa’s sentence.

These rescuers or ‘Retter’, both of Grischa’s life and the rule of law, try to delay the execution of the death sentence, hoping that a face-to-face meeting between Lychow and

Schieffenzahn will convince the latter that Grischa's case is so unimportant that he might as well be pardoned. After the meeting (*GRI*, pp. 310-318), Schieffenzahn does indeed want to annul Grischa's death sentence, but his phone call to the Mervinsk military authorities cannot get through as a heavy snowstorm has cut all the phone lines in the area (*GRI*, pp. 343, 411).

Grischa's Guilt And His Dream Of Heavenly Fraternisation

As was argued above, Grischa's feelings of selfless agape are a direct consequence of his realisation that, in the past, he lacked empathy with the enemy soldiers whom he killed. This regret undermines any perception that Grischa is the typical example of the innocent soldier-victim. His feelings of selfless agape are based on his lack of innocent victimhood. Zweig takes great care to construct his eponymous hero as a typical soldier who fulfils his duty. Over the last few months since his arrest, Grischa has learned to reject his former status as a war hero: 'Er war mal ein Held, ein guter Soldat!' (*GRI*, p. 340). In his condemned cell, he remembers the different brutal ways to kill enemy soldiers that he was taught, using bayonets, hand grenades or rifles (*GRI*, pp. 340-341). He has killed many enemy soldiers without pangs of conscience, hiding behind what he thinks is a sense of duty, but which is more the fear of being punished by his superior officers if he did not take part in the dehumanising killing of enemy soldiers:

> Sie hatten die Faust der Vorgesetzten im Nacken und fürchteten sich vor denen viel, viel mehr als vor solchen Taten, vor dem Hinmachen eines Menschen. […] Er hatte dem Regimentsbefehl geglaubt: Tapferkeit für den Zaren und für die Heimat, Pflicht eines Soldaten, und Christus damit ganz einverstanden; aber das Ergebnis lehrte – anderes. […] Wer Menschenblut vergießt, dessen Blut wird durch den Menschen vergossen. (*GRI*, p. 339- 341).

When he eventually realises that nobody can prevent his death sentence, Grischa is resigned to his fate. In a dream of fraternisation (*GRI*, pp. 350-352), he reconciles himself with the soldiers he has killed. This dream represents the novel's sense of selfless agape:

> Er trank Bruderschaft mit denen, die er getötet hatte. […] Sie hatten einander umgebracht, und nun prosteten sie einander zu, im Soldatenhimmel oder vielleicht auch in der Soldatenhölle; woran wollte man es unterscheiden … Das für die Vaterländer vergossene Blut, in einem einzigen großen Kessel zusammengeronnen, schmeckte süß wie Punch. (*GRI*, p. 351).

However, neither Posnanski's love for the rule of law, nor Grischa's dream of fraternisation and forgiveness manage to alleviate their guilt. Christ-like, Grischa takes on the guilt of all of humanity and thinks that his execution is justified:

> Der Fall Grischa Paprotkin stand nicht mehr als Mißgeburt vor ihm, nichts Scheußliches und Unanständiges mehr, er ging in Ordnung. […] Dies ganze Geschlecht hatte Menschenblut vergossen. Nun wurde es ausgeschüttet, das ganze Geschlecht, wannenweise, eimerweise, tropfenweise, ganz gleich wie: alles mußte seine Richtigkeit haben. (*GRI*, pp. 341-342)

Grischa therefore refuses to be freed by Winfried, who, in a last-ditch rescue attempt, tries to convince a corporal, Hermann Sacht, to release Grischa with the help of a forged written order (*GRI*, pp. 401-404). Babka, who is expecting Grischa's child, plans to poison his prison guards, but Grischa also turns down her offer (*GRI*, pp. 244-245 and p. 252). Grischa knows that if he were to be pardoned, he would have to spend the rest of his life in dirty prison cells (*GRI*, pp. 389 and 393).

It is important to understand Grischa's distinction between guilt in the legal and in a moral sense. He sees himself as legally innocent: 'Jedenfalls lief die Welt so, daß hier ein Unschuldiger erschossen wurde, und das schmeckte schon weit eher nach dem Teufel als nach Gott' (*GRI*, p. 340). However, as seen above, his moral guilt justifies his execution. This

is the key to his moral twist. According to Hans-Harald Müller, Grischa's spiritual development towards pacifist reconciliation demonstrates Zweig's conviction that inner change is possible, which is the condition for achieving a better Germany:

> […] den Kampf gegen den totalen Militarismus Schieffenzahns hat die „Retter"-Gruppe verloren, weil sie zu der inneren Einkehr und Umkehr nicht fähig war, die Grischa vorbildhaft erwiesen hat. […] Deutschland kann nur durch einen Prozeß der Einkehr und Umkehr gerettet werden, dessen Möglichkeit Grischa angesichts des Todes bewiesen hat.[164]

Müller rightly identifies the contrast between Grischa's moral courage to pay for his guilt with his life, and the moral cowardice of the group of his would-be rescuers, who are unable to draw the necessary conclusions from their moral opposition to Schieffenzahn's death sentence against Grischa:

> Zweigs Darstellung der Schuld der „Retter"-Gruppe beinhaltet eine Kritik an deren mangelnder Bereitschaft, die notwendigen praktischen Konsequenzen aus ihrer geistigen und moralischen Opposition gegen den totalen Militarismus Schieffenzahns im allgemeinen und gegen die Vollstreckung des Todesurteils an Grischa im besonderen zu ziehen.[165]

Babka as Female Victim of German War Crimes and Thwarted Avenger

The same ambivalence regarding the complex issue of how injustice should be punished is embodied in the fictional character of Babka in *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa*. Babka becomes Grischa's lover after he joins her group of partisans at the beginning of the novel. She herself is a victim of the war crimes committed by the German occupying army and their local helpers, who murdered her family for illegal possession of firearms (*GRI*, pp. 53-56). However, Babka also embodies the idea of blood revenge for the crimes committed against humanity, which remain unpunished because the German military authorities rule the

[164] Hans-Harald Müller, *Der Krieg und die Schriftsteller. Der Kriegsroman der Weimarer Republik* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1987), p. 184.
[165] Ibid., p. 181.

Eastern occupied territories with the collaboration of landed owners. One of these, a Polish man, betrays Babka's family to the local police force. In an act of blood revenge, Babka kills the Polish landowner From now on, she lives the life of an outlaw in the Lithuanian forests (*GRI*, p. 55). Just like Grischa, and to a certain extent, Schieffenzahn, Babka is a victim of the dehumanisation of the war. Moreover, in a similar vein to Grischa and Schieffenzahn, she is also responsible for morally questionable decisions which involve the death of human beings. Babka visits the imprisoned Grischa in his death cell, suggesting to Grischa that in retaliation for the unjust death sentence, she could poison the whole army battalion that is about to carry out Grischa's execution (*GRI*, p. 173). Shortly before the execution, Babka tells Grischa that he should try everything to fight back or escape from prison (*GRI*, pp. 243-246). However, Grischa refuses to escape because he has accepted his fate, as discussed above. Babka thus serves as a contrast to Grischa's principled stance and illustrates how the notion of innocent victimhood is complicated by questionable moral decisions taken by victims.

Grischa's execution represents an extreme form of the destruction of humanity caused by the war. Together with the precise details describing Lenore Wahl's abortion in *Junge Frau von 1914*, Zweig uses the image of a broken body and physical suffering to illustrate his idea that the circumstances of war cause physical and mental suffering. In different ways, Grischa and Lenore are both victims of militarism: Lenore was raped because of her fiancé's excessive masculinity that resulted in part from his military training; Grischa is shot by a firing squad composed of young soldiers hardened by their combat experience: 'Vorläufig verkörpern sie den Geist der Mannszucht, wie sie im Gleichschritt und locker hinziehen.' (*GRI*, p. 449). The gruesome details of the effects of the bullets fired by the execution squad are described with anatomical precision. Grischa's execution is anything but sentimentalised *(GRI,* pp. 453-459).

The theme of Grischa's innocence is discussed by the two soldiers who are Grischa's gravediggers: 'Er soll ja wohl unschuldig gewesen sein', sagte der eine Hamburger im singenden Tonfall seines heimatlichen Hafens.' 'Tja', antwortete der andere, 'was soll das helfen, unschuldig sind wir ja woll alle.' (*GRI*, p. 458). Immediately after Grischa's burial, Babka gives birth to her and Grischa's daughter. The smile on her face when she sees her child for the very first time is set in the context of the third-person narrator's remark that in these times of war, even giving birth to a child cannot make one happy: 'Wenn man es Glück nenne, in dieser Zeit geboren zu werden' (*GRI*, p. 459). Babka's smile is linked to the apparent smile on Grischa's corpse ('Gut gestorben. Hippokratisches Lächeln', *GRI*, p. 455). Both smiles are ambivalent. In *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa*, there are no clear-cut differences between moral innocence and guilt. Human agency is set within the imperatives of war.

Schieffenzahn's Guilt and his Dream of Earthly Retribution

In addition to Grischa's dream of fraternisation with the enemy, illustrating his feelings of guilt as a former frontline soldier, Generalmajor Schieffenzahn's dream, after discussing Grischa's case with Lychow, illustrates the military ruler's complex conscience (*GRI*, pp. 313-317). Just as Grischa's dream can be seen as originating from his sense of guilt for killing enemy soldiers, Schieffenzahn's dream is caused by a complex emotional relationship towards the lower social classes, from which he originates. During the discussion with Lychow (in the chapter 'Eine Niederlage', *GRI* pp. 310-318), Schieffenzahn has imposed his wish that Grischa, although he is innocent, is to be executed to deter those soldiers in the Imperial German army who may sympathise with the ongoing Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. Yet Schieffenzahn is afraid of some kind of earthly retribution, in the form of some

future kind of punishment for sentencing an innocent to death. The idea was instilled in his mind by Lychow, who argued that it is morally wrong to abuse law for political purposes: 'Vielleicht hatte ihn der Alte (Lychow) gar mit Höllenfurcht verpestet! Angst vor Vergeltungen! Alles verschwor sich gegen ihn.' (*GRI*, p. 312). The cigars he smokes are ironically also called 'Vergeltung', making Schieffenzahn think that there could have been better names for a cigar coming from Germany in times of war: 'Vergeltung! Eine Zigarre hatte Kamerun zu heißen, Kronprinz Wilhelm oder meinethalben Gartenlaube. Der überschwängliche Blödsinn der Heimkrieger nahm beängstigende Formen an' (*GRI*, p. 312). The name of the cigars triggers in Schieffenzahn a certain fear of possible future punishment or retribution for his present-day decisions as the military ruler deciding to punish a rather unimportant alleged Russian spy:

> An manchen Stellen irdischer Systeme sollte freilich ein übermenschliches Vorwegsehen eingeschaltet werden können, denn was "groß" und "klein" hieß, Folgen hatte oder keine, entschied sich immer nur hintendrein. […] Die richtigen Entscheidungen dieses seines kurz geschorenen Schädels wurden in Jahrhunderten noch mitgetan von Geschlechtern. Ihr Wohl und Wehe zuckte schon jetzt in seinen Ganglien elektrisch mit. […] Einen Mann mit der Rechtsmaschine umbringen, sehenden Auges, - wozu denn? […] Man war frei, zum Glück und Beispiel, Herr seiner Entschlüsse; man winkte und der Russe fiel, winkte und er blieb leben. Und leben lassen war gleichviel mit Ruhe haben. (*GRI*, pp. 312-313)

Schieffenzahn's decision to pardon Grischa is thus embedded in his free will, or agency, that allows him to stand above the law that he himself decreed. Simultaneously, this agency allows him to feel guilt and fear about the alternative option he has, which is not to pardon Grischa. Schieffenzahn's pangs of conscience cause him to try and reach the battalion responsible for Grischa by telephone, asking them to stop the execution. The Generalmajor falls asleep and dreams about his childhood and his training at the officers' academy. Schieffenzahn was a victim of constant discrimination from his aristocratic fellow-

students, as he himself was of lower middle-class origin. His dream illustrates that Schieffenzahn's complex psychological portrayal complicates the idea that he is a callous military leader without any empathy for Grischa's individual tragedy. Schieffenzahn is torn between the demands of his official function as a military ruler, his personal social ambitions, and his sympathies for low-born victims such as Grischa:

> Und so zerreißt sein Ich; eine heimliche Hälfte wird vergewaltigt von den Wünschen der Großen und dem Ehrgeiz des Kleinen. Und alles, was man erlitt, kam von niederer Geburt. Man war am Fuße der Treppe geboren. Da saß man auf den untersten Stufen. Sie hatten eine gelehrt, anbetend in die Höhe zu blicken; infolgedessen mußte man verachtend hinunterblicken, - und wehe denjenigen, die von da unten her das Ehrwürdige der Treppe und des Steigens anzweifelten! Dann wäre ja die Qual ohne Sinn und Grund gewesen! (*GRI*, 315-316)

Schieffenzahn's pangs of conscience in this dream can be seen as mitigating his guilt for his political abuse of justice. Grischa and Schieffenzahn can be seen as victims of external pressures, Grischa as the military hero killing enemies, Schieffenzahn as the commander in chief whose task it is to rule the German-occupied territories in Ober-Ost.

Posnanski's Guilt and the Defeat of Justice and Humanitarianism

The term 'Retter' (rescuers) is used in a section of the novel (Sechstes Buch) to describe the group of left-leaning friends who, although continuing to serve the German war effort loyally, try to save Grischa from being executed by using legal and illegal means (*GRI,* pp. 357-359). They consider the death sentence as an injustice and believe that disrespecting the rule of law in times of war will have negative repercussions for post-war Germany. The third-person narrator describes this group with a sense of irony, especially in chapter two of Book Six, where they discuss whether Grischa should be freed from his condemned cell by force. This group consists of General Lychow, Oberleutnant Winfried (Lychow's nephew),

Kriegsgerichtsrat Posnanski (a German-Jewish military prosecutor), Werner Bertin, who is Zweig's main fictional hero throughout his First World War prose cycle, his girlfriend, nurse Sophie von Gorse, and her friend, nurse Bärbe Osann. Posnanski wants to use legal arguments to help Grischa (*GRI*, p. 368).

This group of 'Retter' are portrayed ambivalently, despite their attempt to save Grischa's life. The 'Retter' display a cowardly attitude shortly before the execution takes place. Apart from Winfried, the other rescuers are too cowardly to become more deeply involved in their attempts to save Grischa's life, not wanting to accept any personal disadvantage or risk in the effort to defend Grischa. A good example of this cowardice occurs when Bertin fails to hand over Grischa's legal file to Kriegsgerichtsrat Wilhelmi, during a visit to the army's highest-ranking legal department in Bialystok. Bertin was told by Posnanski to hand over the file to Wilhelmi personally to increase the chances of Grischa's pardon. Bertin does not want to wait for Wilhelmi over the weekend, preferring to rush to his wife Lenore for a brief visit (*GR*, pp. 180-181). Another good example of the rescuers' cowardice can be seen when Posnanski and Bertin discuss whether they should attend Grischa's execution:

> „Ich", spricht Kriegsgerichtsrat Posnanski auf und ab gehend und saugt mit seinen wulstigen Lippen heftig an der Zigarre, „ich gehe nicht mit; ich bin zu feige, Ansehn, wie unser Russe niedergelegt wird, steht nicht auf meinem Programm." (*GRI*, p. 438).

A third demonstration of the rescuers' moral cowardice can be found towards the end of the novel, when the rescuers are waiting for the telephone call that would tell them that Lychow was able to convince Schieffenzahn to pardon Grischa. Oberleutnant Winfried thinks that he himself could have done more to save the innocent Russian deserter, but every effort was destined to fail in the face of the all-powerful Schieffenzahn. The following extract illustrates that the 'Retter' retain a degree of moral agency which is even greater than Grischa's. The number of ways in which Grischa could have been rescued or freed by

the would-be rescuers outnumbers the limited choices that Grischa had. He could only choose between remaining with Babka's gang of outlaws or entering the German territory in Ober-Ost under a false identity:

> Was konnte man noch tun? Wohl gab es fünfzehn verschiedene Arten, einen kleinen zur Exekution marschierenden Zug aufzuhalten, zu überfallen, mit einem Befehl festzunageln, mit einer gefälschten Depesche in Verwirrung zu bringen. Nur daß er von all diesen Möglichkeiten keinen Gebrauch machen würde, das gab es auch. Und selbst wenn Exzellenz am Orte gesessen und nicht auf Urlaub gefahren wäre, hätte sich wahrscheinlich bei Schieffenzahns Gebiß und der allgemeinen Angst vor dem Geiste der Widerspenstigkeit und des Aufruhrs nichts weiter tun lassen. Armer Bursche, dachte er erblassend, armes Vaterland – und er ließ sich von Herrn Wodrig die Kognakflasche bringen und ein Gläschen. (*GRI*, p. 425)

Jost Hermand blames the system of fear installed by the German military occupiers in Eastern Europe for missed opportunities to save Grischa's life. The noble endeavours of the individual rescuers are helpless against the judicial apparatus of the military:

> In einem solchen System, lautet das anspruchsvolle Fazit des Romans, werden sogar die Gutwilligen, falls sie sich nicht resolut auflehnen, zu Mitschuldigen. Ja, Zweig versäumte keineswegs, in der Figur des Bertin auch sich selbst unter diese schuldlos Schuldigen einzureihen.[166]

Hermand's paradoxical view concerning the guilty without guilt can be challenged to some extent. Hermand sets a high moral standard in equating moral courage with rebellion against a powerful military power apparatus. In the diegetic world of the novel, however, at least two of the 'Retter' have shown courage in their fight against this apparatus. The problem is that this courage remains insufficient for various reasons. First, Oberleutnant Winfried unsuccessfully tries to free Grischa from his condemned cell by using a forged release order. As seen above, Grischa would not have followed Winfried because of his wish to accept the sentence. Second, Posnanski tells the officer responsible for Grischa's execution, Rittmeister

[166] Jost Hermand, 'Arnold Zweig: *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* (1927). Eine "systemkritische" Analyse', in Thomas F. Schneider and Hans Wagener (eds.), *Von Richthofen bis Remarque. Deutschsprachige Prosa zum 1. Weltkrieg* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2003), pp. 195-206 (p. 199).

Brettschneider, to wait for the outcome of the discussion between Lychow and Schieffenzahn about Grischa's pardon. Brettschneider tells Posnanski that he will follow Schieffenzahn's orders – even if the Generalmajor decides to pardon Grischa (*GRI*, pp. 367-372). In the end, Grischa's tragic fate is decided by the snowstorm that cuts all telephone communication in Ober-Ost. The rescuers' guilt must therefore be relativised by the complex situation in which Grischa himself, and contingency, places the 'Retter'. An assessment of their moral cowardice must also take into account that their endeavours to save Grischa are those of a small minority within the military apparatus of Ober-Ost.

By contrast, in the case of Japrisot's *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* (1991) and Lemaitre's *Au revoir là-haut* (2013), innocent victimhood is complicated not by agape, but by self-centred eros. Their feelings of eros help to foreground their moral ambivalence.

Commemorative Hypocrisy, Eros and Guilt in Sébastien Japrisot's *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* (1991)

Sébastien Japrisot's *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* (1991) is the second fictional prose text in this chapter on military injustice that uses the image of the broken body to introduce its portrayal of military injustice. The text describes how five French First World War soldiers on the Western Front attempt to escape frontline duty by mutilating their hands. As pointed out by Christine Bénévent, the novel's heroine, Mathilde Donnay, can be seen as a representative of thousands of bereaved women, children and parents who became indirect victims – or collateral damage – of the war because the corpses of their fallen family members were too mutilated to be identified.[167] It is because Mathilde cannot mourn her fiancé Manech Etchevery that she starts a six-year-long search for his whereabouts.

[167] Christine Bénévent, 'Le texte en perspective', in Sébastien Japrisot, *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004), pp. 325-387 (p. 364).

Although they have been told by the authorities that Manech is buried in a military cemetery in Herdelin in the Somme, Manech's family have not actually seen the corpse.

Japrisot's text uses the link between self-mutilation and madness to illustrate the futility of the First World War, seen throughout the novel as a crime against the youth of France.[168] Manech decides to expose his hand to the bullet of a German sniper, believing that this injury will be seen as a normal wound inflicted by the enemy. This wound, he believes, will send him back to his beloved fiancée Mathilde. However, the reasons why these five soldiers choose self-mutilation are varied, and their personal backgrounds prevent the reader from considering the five soldiers as innocent victims of the brutality of war. This ambivalent portrayal adds complexity to the portrayal of victimhood in the novel.

Sébastien Japrisot's *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* (1991) recounts the story of Mathilde Donnay, a young, disabled, middle-class woman from Cap-Breton, in her long quest to find her missing fiancé Jean Etchevery, who in the war had been a young conscript known as Manech. In the style of a police detective, Mathilde tries to find out, with the help of a mixture of eyewitness accounts, letters and official documents, what exactly happened to a group of five French soldiers who, in January 1917, were thrown into no man's land as a punishment, bound and unarmed, in front of a trench called 'Bingo Crépuscule' near Bouchavesnes on the Somme (*Uldf*, p. 47). The five soldiers, among them the nineteen-year-old Manech, had been sentenced to death along with ten other soldiers for self-mutilation several weeks before the events in Bingo Crépuscule took place (*Uldf*, p. 92). As conventional

[168] Emmanuel Saint-Fuscien points out that the association between self-mutilation and insanity was not discussed by French military medical authorities during the course of the war. There were no individual psychological examinations of self-mutilating soldiers. The aim was to avoid any public discussion about the mental and physical hardship that may have caused these self-inflicted wounds. It was only after the war that French psychiatrists started to consider the soldiers' environment as a mitigating circumstance. See Emmanuel Saint-Fuscien, 'Les mutilations volontaires au cours de la Grande Guerre : un geste impensable ?', in Stéphane Tison, Laurence Guignard, Hervé Guillemain, *Expériences de la folie: criminels, soldats, patients en psychiatrie. XIXe-XXe siècle* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013), pp. 195-206.

execution by firing squads had become too frequent to deter brutalised and demoralised French infantrymen, the French High Command chose this inhumane method of execution for men convicted of self-mutilation.

As in Arnold Zweig's *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa*, Sébastien Japrisot's *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* needs the guilt incurred by two of its female heroines, Tina Lombardi, and Juliette Desrochelles to a lesser extent, to complicate the view of the innocence of the self-mutilating soldiers who just want to put an end to their exposure to the war atrocities. This guilt challenges the official narrative of military heroism that governs official French First World War commemorations. Furthermore, Japrisot's novel uses the feelings of self-centred eros on the part of its two female heroines, the first-person-narrator Mathilde Donnay, and her alter ego, the Marseilles prostitute Tina Lombardi, both as a destructive force that offers no moral redemption, and as a means to unmask the hypocrisy of the official glorification of the French soldiers of the First World War as national heroes.

As pointed out by Benjamin Gilles, the centenary commemorations in France were marked by a keen interest in the history of the 'poilu', the archetypal ordinary French soldier of the First World War, as an illustration of history from below. Three examples show that this history is marked by the trope of innocent victimhood, set in a nationalist context. The first is that of the battles of the Chemin des Dames (1914, 1917 and 1918). These battles were the subject of scientific work and a major museum development begun in 2007.[169] The pedagogical purpose of this project is to offer students the opportunity to focus on the combat experience and the universal figure of the French First World War soldier, the 'poilu', who died for France after enduring much suffering. The second example is the official

[169] The Chemin des Dames Memorial in the French Aisne Département includes the Caverne du Dragon (an underground quarry used as a bunker) and a virtual memorial. From 2007 until 2018, this memorial offered various pedagogical projects for adolescent students. See <https://www.chemindesdames.fr/fr/activites-pedagogiques/nos-ateliers-pedagogiques> [Last accessed 12 April 2024.]

database of those executed during the First World War. From November 2014 to June 2019, 550,000 searches were carried out using this database. The creation of this database followed the recommendation by historian Antoine Prost, an adviser to President Hollande in 2014, to recognise the executed French soldiers officially as examples of patriotism.[170] Gilles underlines that

> entering this history through the prism of the individual confronted with the arbitrariness of the military authorities of the time or that of the victimization of the men mobilized – two contemporary approaches to the historiography of the Great War – gives us an understanding of the war as it was. In this respect, the choice of the Army Museum as the venue for this history appears highly symbolic.[171]

A third example of this history from below, which cannot be accused of nationalistic connotations, but is relevant to Japrisot's novel, is the *Grande Collecte* (Great Raising), a nationwide operation that asked the French population to donate their personal or family memories to the event's partner institutions.[172] Between 2013 and 2014, more than 20,000 documents, letters from soldiers, diaries, photos and notebooks were collected, and 325,000 documents were digitised.[173] In Japrisot's *Un long dimanche de fiançailles*, the form of the letter plays a crucial part in criticising the official version of what happened to the five fictional First World War soldiers.

The beginning of the novel offers the reader the detailed biographies of the five soldiers sentenced to death in no man's land. The second of the five, a socialist former welder nicknamed 'Six-Sous', deliberately shoots his left hand, erroneously believing that his act expresses solidarity with the other twenty-seven soldiers accused of self-mutilation in the sector (*Uldf*, p. 17). The third soldier in Manech's group is a farmer from the Dordogne,

[170] See Benjamin Gilles, 'Centenary France)', in 1914-1918 online <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/centenary_france> [Last accessed 10 August 2023].
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid.

nicknamed ‘Cet Homme’, who has already strangled to death an officer in his battalion. The reader is told, via an omniscient third-person-narrator, that because this murder happened during an attack in the Woëvre region, his crime went unnoticed (*Uldf*, p. 18). The fourth of the five men is a renowned Marseilles criminal called Ange Bassignano, who is Tina Lombardi’s lover. Ange had the choice between joining a decimated frontline battalion and spending decades in prison (*Uldf*, pp. 21-22). The fifth soldier is Manech Etchevery, Mathilde’s fiancé, who has also previously been court-martialled for having pretended to suffer from jaundice to avoid frontline service (*Uldf*, p. 28). Four of the five men are thus presented with biographical details from their past lives, which individualises these men, in contrast to the figure of the anonymous Unknown Soldier characteristic of the French state-level commemorations of the conflict. It also provides mitigating circumstances for Manech, as he is portrayed as struggling against coercion imposed upon him by the imperatives of war. Taken together, the biographical details question the myth of the French soldier who accepts to sacrifice his life for the defence of the nation.

As Mathilde finds out, the injustice in *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* consists in the fact that the five soldiers sentenced to death were not informed that they had been pardoned by French President Poincaré on 2 January 1917, four days before they were thrown into no man’s land and left to die (*Uldf*, pp. 135-140). The commanding officer, Colonel Lavrouye, withheld the pardon order for twenty-four hours, so that the executions could be carried out anyway (*Uldf*, pp. 275, 306). The presidential pardon would not have erased the sentence for self-mutilation, but the death penalty would have been commuted to life imprisonment (*Uldf*, p. 168).

As pointed out by Martin Hurcombe, the fictional characters in this novel are extremely sceptical of the official interpretation of the First World War, which glorifies

sacrifice and military heroism in the service of the nation. Mathilde's reconstruction of what happened to Manech and his four comrades in arms constitutes a kind of counter-memory to the official commemoration narrative:

> In *Un long dimanche*, however, this meta-narrative of redemptive sacrifice is greeted with at best indifference, at worst derision. The war's survivors in Japrisot's novel reject the iconic status imposed upon them by post-war society. […] This inadequacy of redemptive sacrifice as a way of understanding personal loss is further explored in the characters' rejection of official forms of remembrance. For Mathilde and Cet Homme, the other condemned soldier to survive that night in January 1917, the official remembrance of the dead through the war memorials, mass military graves, and Armistice Day parades fails to subsume the ongoing suffering of the individual into a reassuring narrative.[174]

Hurcombe nevertheless sees a faint sign of hope in this potential for a fresh start:

> Yet, while such a realization reveals the alterity of the past, the novel's conclusion is not necessarily a pessimistic one. […] The novel's conclusion clearly turns from a project grounded in the impossible retrieval of the past, an illusory quest for essence and totality of being, to a project predicated upon future possibilities, but one which is born of an acknowledgment of the past rather than the enslavement of the self towards the past. Mathilde, like Cet Homme, is preparing at the end of the novel to cast off any lingering belief in a relationship founded in the immutable and eternal essence of the past to one that will be forged patiently through future time.[175]

Hurcombe's positive interpretation of the end of the novel is only partially correct. Although Mathilde seems to be prepared to start a new relationship with Manech, this possibility must be seen in the context of the impending prison sentence that awaits Manech in case his real identity is revealed. Mathilde's unwavering love cannot erase this legal fact. In another essay on Japrisot's crime novels, Hurcombe defines the author's conception of

[174] Martin Hurcombe, 'The Passing of Things Remembered: Sébastien Japrisot's *Un long dimanche de fiançailles*', *Romance Studies*, 25.2 (2013), 85-94 (p. 87).
[175] Hurcombe, 'The Passing of Things Remembered', p. 93.

love as a 'struggle against authority'.[176] This definition does not apply to Mathilde's eros-love for Manech, which does not lead her to openly confront any state authorities. In fact, confronting these authorities after finding out about Manech's predicament would send him to prison. Hurcombe's definition of love therefore only applies to the retribution theme embodied by Tina Lombardi's love for Ange. The fact that she murders all the officers involved in the failure to pass on the presidential pardon in time is described in the letter that she writes to Mathilde before she gets guillotined (*Uldf*, pp. 305-314). Tina Lombardi represents a vindictive kind of love. It is the reader's task to assess if Tina's love revenge was justified, as her story remains uncommented by any authorial comment or by any of the other characters. Retribution is not openly rejected, as was the case in Zweig's *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa*.

Mathilde's motivation is purely self-interested, as pointed out by Hurcombe:

> Mathilde and Manech's love affair therefore serves to develop the novelist's concept of the loving couple amidst the challenges posed by (military) authority and time itself for Manech's predicament pushes the problem of instability of the self within the couple to new extremes. It is, however, the memory of their love more than any need for public justice which drives Mathilde on.[177]

Hurcombe does not take sufficient account of the ambivalence of the feelings of love-eros of its two main female protagonists, the middle-class Mathilde Donnay, and her working-class alter ego, Tina Lombardi. The feelings of eros are the driving-force behind her year-long search for the whereabouts of her fiancé Jean 'Manech' Etcheverry, as well as, in the subplot involving Nina Lombardi and Ange Bassignano, a destructive force that kills some of the officers responsible for not saving the five condemned soldiers in time. At the end of

[176] Martin Hurcombe, 'Japrisot and the Joy of Specs', in Susan Harrow and Timothy A. Unwin (eds.), *'Joie de vivre' in French Literature and Culture. Essays in Honour of Michael Freeman* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), pp. 269-282 (p. 279).
[177] Ibid.

the novel, Mathilde finds Manech, who is now forced to live under a false identity, and who is unable to recognise Mathilde because he is suffering from amnesia. In Mathilde's case, love fails to offer the moral redemption or reward for the endurance and resilience displayed by Mathilde in her quest to be reunited with her fiancé Manech. It is because of Manech's predicament that a reunion with Mathilde remains impossible: his death sentence may have been overturned, but it was commuted to a life-long prison sentence of hard labour in a penal colony, or 'bagne' (*Uldf*, p. 168).

Having discovered the gruesome details of the execution in no man's land, Mathilde rejects as a lie the French state's official narrative concerning the heroism of its fallen soldiers. This rejection is illustrated by her visits to Herdelin cemetery, where Manech is buried. Mathilde is disgusted at the official narrative of heroism constructed by the French state. The aesthetic presentation of the war cemetery can be seen as symbolic of the narrative of innocent victimhood and national sacrifice which embellishes the death of the fallen soldier:

> L'année dernière, sous le soleil de l'été, à travers les branches des saules fraîchement plantés, la rectitude des allées, les pelouses impeccablement tondues, les cocardes tricolores accrochées aux croix, les fleurs pimpantes de la nation dans les vasques simili-antique, tout semblait à Mathilde hypocrisie et lui donnait envie de crier son dégoût. La pluie, le vent glacé qui souffle des Flandres, l'espèce de torpeur sans espoir qui écrase tout le pays vont mieux au teint des Pauvres Couillons du Front. Combien ils sont là, qui lui donneraient tort ? (*Uldf*, p. 238)
>
> Last year, in the summer sunshine glimmering through the branches of the recently planted willows, the impeccably mowed lawns, the tricolour rosettes hanging on the crosses, the gay flowers from a grateful nation in the imitation-antique bowls, all this had seemed like such pretence to Mathilde that she'd felt like screaming in disgust. Today's rain, the glacial wind blowing in from Flanders, the hopeless torpor that seems to weigh upon the entire countryside – such things seem more appropriate for these Poor Bastards at the Front. And how many of them, lying there, would disagree with her on that?[178]

[178] Sébastien Japrisot, *A Very Long Engagement*, trans. by Linda Coverdale (London: Vintage, 2003), p. 201.

At the end of the novel, Mathilde discovers that Manech survived the execution attempt by swapping identities with a dead soldier named Jean Desrochelles, who really did die, in combat, in January 1917. After being thrown from the trench into no man's land, Manech managed to hide in a cave, unconscious and suffering from pneumonia. Cet Homme, another of the five soldiers sentenced to death who also survives the execution attempt, finds the cave and sees a unique opportunity to avoid further punishment. Cet Homme first exchanges his own identity with that of a dead soldier called Gordes, then also swaps Manech's identity tag with that of the dead Desrochelles (*Uldf*, pp. 345-348). Manech suffers from amnesia and now lives under the identity of Desrochelles, whose mother, Juliette, feeling pity for Manech, agrees to play the game. If Manech's real identity were to be revealed, she would lose him as an adoptive son, and Manech would have to spend the rest of his life in prison (*Uldf*, pp. 362-363).

The final reunion between Manech and Mathilde demonstrates that *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* places her feelings of selfish, self-centred love for Manech in an ironic situation. When Mathilde goes to visit Manech alias Jean Desrochelles, she becomes aware that she needs to keep the truth about what happened in Bingo Crépuscule in January 1917 to herself (*Uldf*, p. 366-367). The novel ends with Mathilde's faint hope that she has been given the opportunity to restart her romance with Manech, alias Desrochelles, although his ammesia has destroyed their common past. Mathilde's love for Manech can serve as an example of the desire to regain a lost innocence, identified in the Introduction to this thesis as one of two key ingredients of the notion of innocence. Manech's amnesia prevents Mathilde to return to the state of innocence that is associated with their pre-war romance. Hurcombe focuses on the narrative polyphony and the ironic twists in the plot,

which are used by Japrisot to drive forward his main female character's quest for truth. The multiple perspectives of different eyewitnesses on the same event, namely, the callous execution of five French frontline soldiers sentenced to death for self-mutilation, help to establish a counter-narrative to the French state's narrative of redemptive suffering, as Hurcombe points out: 'The details of Manech's execution, denied by official memory, attain the apparent value of an objective truth through the material body that is given to them in the form of written and transcribed memories.'[179] In fact, the 'objective truth' identified by Hurcombe goes beyond the memories of the novels' fictional protagonists. Japrisot's First World War text highlights the morally ambivalent status of its two main female protagonists, Mathilde Donnay and Tina Lombardi, by displaying varying degrees of moral ambivalence. Mathilde is forced to keep her fiancé's true identity a secret, whereas Tina chooses self-justice to punish the officers responsible for her fiancé's death. Both women benefit from mitigating circumstances, as represented by the cruel circumstances of war. I have shown that the interest of reading *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* does not lie in its final message of hope, but in its portrayal of fictional protagonists whose actions are situated in Levi's grey zones of human agency.

Social Satire, Eros and Guilt in Pierre Lemaitre's *Au revoir là-haut* (2013)

Pierre Lemaitre's *Au revoir là-haut* (2013) is the third novel in this chapter on military injustice to use the image of the broken body to introduce its satirical perspective on post-war France. Lemaitre uses the figure of the disfigured soldier or 'gueule cassée' (broken face) to illustrate the tragic post-war biography of his main anti-hero, Edouard Péricourt, who dies in the novels' tragi-comic ending. However, the originality of Lemaitre's use of the

[179] Hurcombe, 'The Passing of Things Remembered', p. 90.

disfigured First World War soldier lies in its ambivalence. Edouard's facial disfigurement is an outward symbol of the injustice of the war, turning him into an innocent victim of frontline service. Lemaitre uses the agency of Edouard to complicate the trope of the facially disfigured First World War soldier. The disfigured soldier is conventionally associated with passive endurance of physical and mental suffering. However, as will be seen, Edouard's agency is of a criminal nature, which adds complexity to the trope of innocent victimhood. As in Zweig's *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* and Japrisot's *Un long dimanche de fiançailles*, the notion of retribution for the injustices committed against the fictional First World War soldier is discussed in Lemaitre's *Au revoir là-haut*. Although the theme of retribution occupies more than half of the novel, in the shape of a massive fraud scheme masterminded by Edouard Péricourt, the novel does not present the fraud scheme as an appropriate response to injustice. The reason for this distrust in Edouard's scheme is its satirical treatment, as will be seen later. The ultimate failure of the fraud scheme and Edouard's tragicomic death complicate the notion of innocent victimhood and loss that is traditionally associated with the disfigured soldiers in literature. One can argue that this tragicomic ending is intended to prevent the reader from indulging in automatic feelings of pity for the war-wounded.

An example of a novel which uses the trope of the French facially disfigured soldier in a romanticised way is Marc Dugain's *La chambre des officiers* (1998).[180] The first-person narrator, Adrien, tells the reader about his experience as a patient in the Val-de-Grâce hospital in Paris, in which he has to stay for five years. Adrien was hit by a shell on the first day of his duty. Mirrors are banned from the hospital, which emphasises the novel's focus on how other people perceive Adrien. Although he finds his first love, Clémence, again, he

[180] Marc Dugain, *La chambre des officiers* (Paris: JC Lattès, 1998).

eventually marries another woman. The novel also describes Adrien's encounters with other disfigured soldiers during his hospital stay. In the novel, the figure of the female disfigured nurse, Marguerite, who was hit by a shell while on duty, is portrayed as an almost sanctified icon of suffering and human dignity. This novel differs from Lemaitre's satirical attitude towards the victimhood of the facially disfigured soldier because it exemplifies a sentimental attitude towards victimhood.

Joanna Bourke has described the sentimentalisation of the war-wounded during the war and in its aftermath by looking at the way in which wounds were described as a source of pride, with stories of women falling in love with mutilated ex-servicemen.[181] The literary representation of the social reintegration of facially disfigured soldiers after the war, especially in France, Germany and Britain, has been examined by Marjorie Gehrhardt.[182] In Evelyn Everett-Green's *The Son Who Came Back* (1922), for example, the reintegration of the wounded is depicted as a moral duty for the whole of society, including the families of the wounded soldiers.[183] The victim of facial disfigurement acquires the status of a hero whose sacrifice must be honoured. Muriel Hine's *The Flight* (1922) takes the idea of sacrifice further by framing the disfigured man, Nigel Weir, as a Christian martyr.[184] In contrast to Lemaitre's fictional disfigured soldier Edouard Péricourt, Nigel Weir is reintegrated into society. In Everett-Green's and Hine's novels, women appear to have the power to heal the disfigured men by becoming agents of their reintegration into society.[185] This female power also contrasts with Lemaitre's novel, in which female characters play an insignificant role.

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[181] See Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 56.
[182] See Marjorie Gehrhardt, *The Men With Broken Faces. Gueules Cassées of the First World War* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2015).
[183] Evelyn Everett-Green, *The Son Who Came Back* (London: Stanley Paul & Co, 1922).
[184] Muriel Hine, *The Flight* (London: The Bodley Head, 1922).
[185] See Marjorie Gehrhardt, 'Losing Face, Finding Love? The Fate of Facially Disfigured Soldiers in Narratives of the First World War', *Literaria Copernicana*, 3/27 (2018), 75-89 (p. 85).

Au revoir là-haut ironises the theme of loss of identity traditionally associated with the representation of facially disfigured First World War soldiers, as illustrated, for example, in Morley Roberts' short story 'The Man Who Lost His Likeness' (1928), which presents the facially disfigured as objects of sympathy.[186] A good example of Edouard Péricourt's identity crisis can be seen in chapter thirteen, where the reader has access to his inner thoughts on the social implications of his disfigurement:

> Dans un monde sans visage, à quoi bon s'accrocher, contre qui se battre? Ce n'était plus pour lui, qu'un univers de silhouettes décapitées où, par un effet de compensation, les proportions des corps étaient décuplées comme celles, massives, de son père. (*Alh*, p. 217)
>
> In a faceless world, what was there to cling to, who was there to fight against? To Edouard the world now was a place of shadowy figures whose heads had been lopped off and whose bodies, as if to compensate, seemed ten times larger, like the hulking form of his father.[187]

In this sense, Lemaitre adds a new layer to the image of the disfigured soldier as a victim, by turning the Oedipal conflict between the homosexual Edouard and his homophobic father into a cornerstone of Lemaitre's narrative. In contrast to Everett-Green's and Hine's novels, the reintegration into society, within a traditional romantic relationship, is absent in *Au revoir là-haut*. Instead, Edouard's father, Marcel Péricourt, and his posthumous self-centred love for his estranged son, are the focus of my reading of Lemaitre. Marcel's guilt for neglecting his son after his apparent death in combat allows Lemaitre to portray both Edouard and his father as victims. Marcel is one of the victims of his son's fraud scheme, which originates in his son's self-perception as a victim of facial disfigurement, which he sees as isolating him completely from society. The interrelation between these two

[186] Morley Roberts, 'The Man Who Lost His Likeness', in Morley Roberts, *Short Stories of Today and Yesterday* (London: Harrap & Co, 1928), pp. 174-218, first published in *The Strand Magazine* (December 1916).
[187] This translation is by Frank Wynne and taken from the English version of Lemaitre's *Au revoir là-haut*, *The Great Swindle*, trans. by Frank Wynne (London: MacLehose, 2015), p. 173. This translation will be used throughout this chapter.

examples of victimhood complicates the traditional view that disfigured First World war soldiers are innocent victims of their wounds and deserving of unconditional sympathy.

The principal aim of Lemaitre's novel is to turn on its head the heroic image of the French First World War soldier as an allegedly innocent victim, in such a way as to turn it into an ingredient of his social comedy.[188] *Au revoir là-haut* can indeed be read as a social satire on the commercial aspect of commemorating the French involvement in the First World War.[189] The novel's two First World War veterans, Albert Maillard and Edouard Péricourt, are innocent victims of war, but their subsequent actions are not guilt-free.

Whereas *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* focuses on the hypocrisies of the official commemoration narratives, *Au revoir là-haut* centres on its economic abuses. However, it portrays two fictional First World War French soldiers, the facially disfigured Edouard Péricourt, and his friend, the bank clerk Albert Maillard, first as victims and then as perpetrators, as victims who then become guilty of crimes. Just as Japrisot's five frontline soldiers are guilty of breaking military law by mutilating their hands, or committing crimes such as murder (Ange Bassignano, *Cet Homme*), Lemaitre's two main fictional protagonists want to avenge what they consider to be the unjust treatment of demobilised war veterans

[188] In the epilogue to *Au revoir là-haut*, Lemaitre acknowledges his literary debt to a host of writers from various countries, including Carson McCullers, Kazuo Ishiguro, Henri Barbusse, Maurice Genevoix, and Honoré de Balzac. The French title of the novel also echoes the importance of the image of the French 'poilu', as it is a quote from Jean Blanchard, a French First World War soldier shot for treason on 4 December 1914, but rehabilitated on 29 January 1921. The title is taken from his goodbye letter to his wife. (*Alh*, p. 567).

[189] In the same epilogue, Lemaitre claims that his research for the novel included Bruno Cabanes' *La Victoire endeuillée. La sortie de guerre des soldats français (1918-1920)* (Paris: Seuil, 2004), which describes the problems that the French army encountered during the demobilisation of five million First World War soldiers. The other source that emphasises misappropriations of public funds and the corruption during the 1922 scandal of exhumations is a series of studies by Béatrix Pau-Heyriès, 'Le marché des cercueils' (1918-1924), in *Mélanges*, *Revue historique des armées*, 2001. See also Béatrix Pau, 'La violation des sépultures militaires, 1919-1920', in *Revue historique des armées*, 259/2010, pp. 33-34 <https://journals.openedition.org/rha/6980> [Last accessed 11 August 2023]. Pau describes that families who could afford it went to military cemeteries located near the former battlefields to exhume the corpse of their fallen family member in order to bury him in a private grave. As this was illegal, the local officials very often accepted large bribes to turn a blind eye to the clandestine transfer of corpses. In *Au revoir là-haut*, this repatriation is illustrated by Edouard Péricourt's sister, who, believing her brother to be buried in a military cemetery, bribes some local politicians to allow her to bring his corpse back to Paris.

in the aftermath of the First World War. This view of the state's ingratitude ties in with Mathilde Donnay's attack on the official commemoration's hypocrisy towards its veteran soldiers. The following extract is taken from a conversation between veterans at one of the Demobilisation Centres:

> On a un ennemi qu'on ne voit jamais, mais qui pèse sur nous de tout son poids. On est dépendant de lui. L'ennemi, la guerre, l'administration, l'armée, tout ça, c'est un peu pareil […] Les journaux nous avaient promis des arcs de triomphe, on nous entasse dans des salles ouvertes aux quatre vents. L' « affectueux merci de la France reconnaissante » […] s'est transformé en tracasseries permanentes […] (*Alh*, pp. 123-124)
>
> There is an enemy we cannot see, but one that weighs on us. We're dependent on that. They're much the same enemy, the war, the bureaucracy, the army […] The newspapers promised us triumphal arches, instead we're crowded into barns open to the four winds. The "sincere thanks of a grateful France" […] has turned into endless wrangling.[190]

At this stage of the novel, the reader might think that Albert and Edouard are indeed innocent victims of the hypocrisy of the official post-war commemorations. Their moral superiority as victorious war veterans is, however, turned by Lemaitre into its opposite. In the second half of the novel, the two veterans become morally compromised by resorting to serious crime.

The lack of innocence of the apparent victim is above all embodied by Edouard Péricourt, who is the son of Marcel Péricourt, a wealthy Parisian businessman. During the last days of the war, Edouard saved Albert Maillard's life, but Edouard's face was disfigured by a shell in the process. Albert feels guilty towards Edouard, and helps him to swap identities with a dead French soldier. In chapter 13, Albert is looking forward to the war

[190] Pierre Lemaitre, *The Great Swindle*, trans. by Frank Wynne (London: MacLehose, 2015), p. 99.

pension that Edouard will get as a 'gueule cassée', or facially disfigured war veteran.[191] However, Edouard categorically refuses to go back to his estranged, homophobic father, and emotionally blackmails Albert into helping him swap identities with a dead French soldier. This move puts an end to Albert's hope of receiving money from the state:

> Un soldat qui avait sacrifié sa vie pour la patrie et serait à tout jamais incapable de reprendre une activité normale, un de ceux qui avait gagné la guerre, qui avaient mis l'Allemagne à genoux …, c'était un sujet sur quoi Albert ne tarissait pas, il additionnait la prime de démobilisation, le pécule, la prime d'invalidité, la rente de mutilé … . Edouard fit non de la tête. (*Alh*, p. 218)

> A soldier who had given his all for his country and would never be able to live a normal life, one of the heroes who had won the war and brought Germany to its knees: it was a topic of which Albert never tired. He sat, calculating Edouard's demobilisation bonus, the pécule, the invalidity bonus, his pension as mutilé de guerre … . Edouard shook his head. [192]

The reasons for Edouard's conscious decision not to benefit from the financial assistance are, however, entirely selfish, and thereby compromise his moral innocence. He designs a fraud scheme in which he uses his artistic talents, under the fictitious pen name Jules d'Epremont, to draw up plans for customised war memorials for rich families who have lost a son during the war. He tricks these families by means of well-designed brochures depicting patriotic combat scenes, into making advance payments for the promised construction of these personalised tombs. (*Alh*, pp. 408). Albert grudgingly agrees to help Edouard by embezzling money in Edouard's father's bank, where he now works. However, Edouard's real reason for his fraudulent scheme is entirely selfish, as he wants to take revenge on his estranged father. Near the end of the novel, shortly before the tragic

[191] In the French army, 500,000 soldiers were facially wounded during the conflict. The term 'gueule cassée' was coined by Colonel Yves Picot, first chairman of the union of soldiers with facial and head wounds ('Union des blessés de la face et de la tête'), founded in 1921. Facial injuries, although not always fatal, meant social isolation and psychological trauma for those who suffered from them. See Sophie Delaporte, *Gueules cassées de la Grande Guerre* (Paris : Agnès Vienot, 2004).

[192] Lemaitre, *The Great Swindle*, p. 174.

accident in which he is run over by his own father, Edouard feels guilty for not having found another way to get back in contact with his father:

> Edouard se détailla. Il n'était plus bouleversé, on s'habitue à tout, mais sa tristesse, elle, restait intacte, la faille qui s'était ouverte en lui n'avait fait, au fil du temps, que s'agrandir, s'agrandir encore et toujours. […] Pourquoi l'image de son père continuait-elle à le hanter ? […] Même tragique, même insupportable, même dérisoire, il faut une fin à tout, et avec son père, il n'y en avait pas eu, tous deux s'étaient quittés ennemis déclarés, ne s'étaient jamais revus, l'un était mort, l'autre non, mais personne n'avait prononcé le mot de la fin. (*Alh*, p. 464)
>
> Edouard studied himself. He no longer felt distraught, one becomes accustomed to anything, but the sadness was the same; as time passed, the flaw that had opened up in him had grown and still it continued to grow. […] Why was he still haunted by the image of his father? […] Be it tragic, unbearable, even ridiculous, there should be an end to everything, and with his father there had been none, they had parted as sworn enemies, had never seen each other again, one was dead, the other still alive, but no-one had had the last word. [193]

Edouard refuses to return to his homophobic father, a wealthy upper middle-class Parisian banker. Marcel has never accepted his son's homosexuality or his artistic talents (*Alh*, p. 92 and p. 110). Edouard's Oedipal relationship with his father, together with his disfigurement, make him want to break any connection with his family. In contrast to Septimus Smith in *Mrs Dalloway*, Edouard's isolation from society is self-imposed. It is this difficult relationship with his father that underlies Edouard's fraud scheme. In this sense, the deliberate decision to live a life under a false identity may be seen as a mitigating circumstance for his self-imposed isolation. Edouard is, after all, a victim of the homophobic attitude of his father Marcel. Nevertheless, Edouard's fraudulent scheme also compromises him morally, as it is designed as revenge on what he and Albert consider to be the ingratitude towards war veterans of the post-war French state. There is sufficient ground to locate Edouard, the soldier victim of facial disfigurement, in Primo Levi's grey zones of

[193] Ibid., p. 372.

conscience. Edouard certainly is a victim of homophobia and the atrocities of war, yet, he is also a perpetrator whose agency is of a criminal nature. Edouard can be seen as a morally compromised survivor. In my reading of *Au revoir-là-haut*, the presence of Edouard's sense of guilt illustrates that he is fully aware of the moral implications of his actions.

The element of social comedy in *Au revoir là-haut* lies in the fact that one of the most prominent victims of his successful fraud scheme is his own estranged father, Marcel Péricourt. Marcel slowly begins to feel the absence of his son, who he believes was killed on the battlefield. It is at this moment that Edouard's fraud scheme coincides with Marcel's mourning for his son. Marcel's wish to buy a memorial statue for Edouard's grave is a good example of self-interested eros. Marcel feels guilty about his past as a homophobic father. His feelings of guilt, triggered by his newly-discovered fatherly love, provide the psychological background for his wish to buy a customised tombstone. This is why he falls for Edouard's fraud scheme, not knowing that it is his own son who has designed it. His feelings of guilt seem to be atoned by his feelings of selfish eros. As for Edouard, he does not know that one of his victims is his own father. The following passage illustrates how Marcel Péricourt becomes a victim of the fraud scheme because he believes that buying a war memorial for his son Edouard will expiate his guilt as an intolerant father:

> Il y eut alors comme un transfert. Maintenant qu'il ne se reprochait plus autant d'avoir été un père aveugle, insensible, qu'il admettait son fils, sa vie, il souffrait davantage de sa mort. […] M. Péricourt s'attacha de plus en plus […] au soldat mort allongé à droite sur la fresque et au regard inconsolable de la Victoire posé sur lui. […] L'artiste avait saisi quelque chose de simple et profond. Et M. Péricourt sentit monter des larmes lorsqu'il comprit que son émotion venait de ce que les rôles s'étaient inversés : aujourd'hui le mort, c'était lui. (*Alh*, pp. 445-446)

> And he experienced a sort of transference. Now that he no longer rebuked himself for having been a thoughtless, insensitive father, now that he accepted his son, his son's life, he suffered all the more greatly from his death. […] The more he studied this work in progress, the more M. Péricourt felt himself drawn […] to the dead

> soldier in the right-hand panel and the inconsolable gaze turned on him by "Victory". […] The artist had managed to capture something uncomplicated and profound. M. Péricourt felt tears start as he realised that his emotion came from the fact their roles had been reversed: he was now the dead soldier. [194]

Marcel Péricourt's feelings of fatherly guilt towards Edouard fail to be expiated because father and son will not be given the opportunity to discuss their relationship. The scandal is eventually discovered by the press on the eve of the 14 July celebrations in 1920. On his way to the Hotel Lutetia in Paris, where Edouard has checked in with the huge amount of cash sent by his naïve customers, Marcel accidentally kills his son, who is dressed up in a colonial suit with wings attached to his bag, which reflects the extravagant character that his father has always hated about his son. Marcel only recognises his son when he hits his car. Edouard is catapulted into the air and opens his arms, giving the impression that he is an angel falling from the sky (*Alh*, pp. 556-557). The third-person narrator unmasks the illusion Marcel has about being reunited in a posthumous loving relationship with his dead son. The love Marcel feels for his son is purely self-interested, as its function is to cover up his own lasting sense of guilt. Marcel's selfish feelings of eros do not prevent the grotesque finale of the novel:

> L'expiation espérée tournait au grotesque. […] Il ne pensait qu'à lui, à son malheur à lui, à son fils à lui, à son histoire à lui. Ce dont il souffrait, c'était d'abord que le père qu'il n'avait pas été, jamais il ne parviendrait à le devenir. […] lui, avec sa commande d'un monument sur mesure, se sentait l'objet d'une extorsion individuelle. Cette défaite blessait intensément son orgueil. (*Alh*, pp. 496-497)

> What he had hoped might be an atonement had become a farce. [….] He thought only of himself, of his pain, his son, *his* story. He was sorry that, having failed to be a good father, he would never become one now. […] while he, in commissioning a unique monument, felt like a victim of extortion. His pride was sorely wounded. [195]

[194] Ibid., pp. 358-359.
[195] Ibid., pp. 398-399.

Nevertheless, after paying back the victims of the fraud scheme with his own money, Marcel falsely believes that he has eventually been reunited with his son:

> Tout le reste de sa vie, il revit le regard d'Edouard, face à lui, à l'instant où la voiture l'envoyait au ciel. Il chercha longuement à le qualifier. S'y lisait de la joie, oui, du soulagement aussi, mais encore autre chose. Et un jour, le mot lui vint enfin : gratitude. C'était pure imagination, certainement, mais quand vous avez une pareille idée en tête, pour vous en défaire … (*Alh*, p. 561)
>
> For the remainder of his days he would see Edouard's face in that moment when the car hurled him into the air. He spent a long time attempting to interpret his expression. There had been a joy there, and a relief too, but there had been something else, something he could not name. One day, the word came to him: gratitude. It was idle fancy, of course, but when it comes, such an idea is impossible to dispel.[196]

In an interview, Pierre Lemaitre states that the novel's main theme is the ingratitude of French society towards the broken First World War soldiers who fought for France.[197] He foregrounds Edouard Péricourt's agency in consciously avenging not only the state's ingratitude, but also his father's rejection. This reading highlights that Edouard is a victim of social injustice. However, my reading of the trope of innocent victimhood in *Au revoir là-haut* has demonstrated that Edouard's agency places him in the grey zones of culpability. He simultaneously is portrayed as victim and perpetrator. Lemaitre's view on Edouard as simply a victim of social injustice underestimates his ambivalent agency.

The main finding of this chapter is that the fictional characters in the First World War novels by Arnold Zweig, Sébastien Japrisot and Pierre Lemaitre complicate the notion of innocent victimhood. In *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa*, Grischa's change of attitude

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[196] Ibid., p. 453.

[197] Brigitte Bontour, "Pierre Lemaitre, 'Je m'identifiais à ces jeunes morts dans les tranchées'", in *Nouvel Observateur*, 18 September 2013 : <https://bibliobs.nouvelobs.com/rentree-litteraire-2013/20130918.OBS7388/pierre-lemaitre-je-m-identifiais-a-ces-jeunes-gens-morts-dans-les-tranchees.html?_staled_>. [Last accessed : 2 May 2024].

and sense of guilt is necessary to construct his attitude of selfless agape. This agape makes him recognise his self-perceived moral guilt as a murdering soldier. In the same vein, the defeat of the rescuers in their attempt to save Grischa is necessary to raise the question of moral agency regarding the political future of postwar Germany.

In Japrisot's *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* and Pierre Lemaitre's *Au revoir là-haut*, the ambivalent portrayal of the First World War soldiers complicates the notion of sacrifice for the nation, visible in recent official French centenary commemorations. Although the death sentence for self-mutilation is cruel as such, the detailed description in the novel of the five soldiers' pre-war biographies leaves the reader with the impression that they do not correspond to the stereotypical innocent 'poilu' that is characteristic of the centenary commemorations in France. Two of them are murderers, and their self-mutilation can be seen as evidence of a lack of solidarity with their comrades-in-arms. The novel portrays the self-centred love, or eros, of its two main female characters as an ambivalent force: it helps Mathilde Donnay to uncover the truth of what happened to the five soldiers in no man's land, and it simultaneously represents a morally objectionable force in the shape of Tina Lombardi's blood revenge. In Lemaitre's *Au revoir là-haut*, the social satire on the commemoration industry is exemplified by two French First World War veterans who think that they can right a perceived wrong with another wrong. In the three novels examined in this chapter, the notion of innocent victimhood is problematised by the portrayal of the fictional characters' ambivalent human agency and desires for revenge. The revenge theme is rejected in Zweig's text, and satirised in Lemaitre's novel. In Japrisot's fictional prose work, Tina Lombardi's blood revenge remains uncommented, but it is in line with Japrisot's traditional female characters and reinforces the theme of war as force that destroys love.

The selfless agape on which Zweig's hero Grischa bases his moral change of heart cannot prevent his execution. The self-centred eros in Japrisot's text, in the shape of the romantic relationship between Mathilde and Manech, and in Lemaitre's, exemplified by the absence of fatherly love, are portrayed as destructive forces. In all three texts, agape or eros complicate naïve understandings of wholly innocent victimhood.

In the next chapter on the inhumane psychiatric treatment of shell-shocked First World War soldiers, the trope of innocent victimhood is set in the context of the theme of patriarchal power structures. Although the fictional shell-shocked First World War soldiers are depicted as victims of authoritarian power structures, they retain a considerable amount of individual agency or freedom that is used to complicate the trope of shell shock as an archetype of innocent victimhood.

Chapter Five

Selfhood, Patriarchy, Agape and Eros in the Portrayal of Shell-Shock in First World War Prose Fiction

Having analysed the literary representation of First World War-induced physical suffering and victimhood in the context of military justice in the previous chapter, this chapter explores fictional representations of mental suffering in the context of the First World War and its aftermath. It looks in detail at soldier-victims suffering from war-related trauma and its treatment in the context of patriarchal power structures.

In this chapter, I argue that although the main fictional protagonists in Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy (1991-1995) and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) are portrayed as victims of the traumatic impact of war on their personal development, they are simultaneously depicted as participating in the patriarchal power structures that are necessary to sustain the war and the social order that perpetuates it.[198] Both works add significant nuance to the trope of the shell-shocked First World War soldier characteristic of official centenary commemorations and some literary stereotypes such as the shell-shocked soldiers returning home to an alienated family.[199] In line with my overarching thesis that First World War fictional prose adds nuance and complexity to the trope of innocent victimhood, I argue that, by placing shell shock in the wider context of two different notions of selfhood, the diegetic world of Woolf's and Barker's novels complicates the notion of innocent victimhood associated with war-related mental suffering. Both texts represent the

[198] Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (Ware: Wordsworth, 2003). This novel will henceforth be referred to in references as *MD*. Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy consists of: *Regeneration* (London: Penguin, 2008); *The Eye In The Door* (London: Penguin, 2008); *The Ghost Road* (London: Penguin, 2008). These novels will henceforth be referred to in references as *R*, *ED* and *GR*, respectively.

[199] This is the case, for example, of Rebecca West's shell-shocked soldier Chris Baldry in her novel *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), who is healed from amnesia when confronted with the death of young son. In Woolf's and Barker's portrayal of the returning shell-shocked officers, the healing is much more ambivalent. See Rebecca West, *The Return of the Soldier* (New York: Warbler Press, 2022).

individual's fear of losing their autonomous identity in the context of patriarchal power structures, as represented by medical psychiatry. These texts use the moral ambivalences of their fictional protagonists as an opportunity to discuss different models of selfhood which try to overcome the victimhood of these characters. The two models of selfhood that I identify in Woolf and Barker foreground agency instead of passive endurance and suffering. Selfhood can be seen as a counter-narrative to the image of the traditional image of the shell-shocked victim-soldier that focuses on the loss of personal autonomy.

The notion of the victim of shell shock in the two novels goes beyond the representation of the traumatised First World War soldier. My definition of shell shock is based on extraneous studies and text-based elements taken from the selected novels. These text-based elements are useful to illustrate the novels' presentation of their protagonists' emancipatory struggle against a system of male domination from which both men and women suffer. I will focus on the ambivalences that these characters display during their attempt to emancipate themselves from the external imposition of an identity that goes against their personal integrity. The trope of innocent victimhood is challenged by the portrayal of the figure of the shell-shocked victim as a morally-compromised victim of his psychological condition.

The two shell-shocked victim-soldiers are portrayed as moving in the grey zone in which their resistance to authority is discussed in relation to their partial collaboration with these authorities. Both novels raise the question as to what degree this rebellion compromises their moral integrity. In *Mrs Dalloway*, this question is portrayed in the relation between Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith, whereas in Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy, the issue is embodied in one single protagonist, Billy Prior.

The reason for choosing two British novels representing the transnational trope of 'shell shock' lies in the fact that the shell-shocked First World War soldier is perceived, especially by the British public, as an iconic figure symbolising the innocent victimhood associated with the First World War. As pointed out by Fiona Reid, gas, shell shock and facial injury are part of the legacy of the First World War.[200] There are, however, national variations, as already indicated in Chapter Four above:

> Facial wounds have become tremendously important in the French social and political history of the First World War, while shell shock occupies a similar position in British understandings of the war. In both cases, the wounded soldier exemplifies the 'pity of war' rather than the progress of medicine.[201]

Jay Winter draws a similar conclusion. Although national variations of this trope exist, it is in British culture above all that

> most British men and women have encoded their narratives about psychological trauma among ex-soldiers in a distinctive set of representations, amplified in poetry, prose, plays, and later on in films, in school curricula, on radio and television. It is a varied body of images, but within them, the notion of 'shell-shocked' soldier is iconic.[202]

Nevertheless, the reality of postwar Britain was that the ex-servicemen disabled by the war faced particular problems in reintegrating. Jessica Meyer describes how their wounds had the potential to alienate loved ones.[203] As the British government did not sufficiently fund retraining programmes, the disabled were stigmatised as recipients of charity, often forced to become dependent on voluntary organisations, instead of being economically independent, which was perceived as a sign of masculine strength. The

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[200] Fiona Reid, *Medicine in First World War Europe* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 19.
[201] Ibid.
[202] Jay Winter, 'Shell-Shock and the Cultural History of the Great War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 35.1 (2000), 7-11 (p. 11). The reason for the importance of the metaphor 'shell-shock' in British culture, according to Winter, is the fact that its emotional power compensated for the relative political insignificance of veterans' movements in British political history (see p. 8).
[203] Jessica Meyer, *Men of War. Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 98-99.

situation was even worse for ex-servicemen suffering from the numerous symptoms associated with the condition known as shell shock. Although the term 'shell shock' was now in common usage, 'the men who continued to suffer symptoms after several years of treatment were not cast as sufferers of wartime traumas but rather as lazy indigents attempting to rely on state support.'[204]

I set the notion of victimhood associated with shell shock in the context of discrimination and loss of autonomy. In stark contrast to the image of heroic sacrifice for the nation conveyed by the centenary commemorations in Britain, the reality described by Meyer sheds a negative light on the responsibility of the British postwar state in relation to the ex-servicemen who became victims of physical and psychological disabilities in the service of their nation. The British state failed to provide sufficient resources for the retraining of the disabled servicemen, forcing them to rely on a network of voluntary associations.[205]By examining the letters of disabled ex-soldiers entitled to receive war pensions, Meyer is able to describe how they struggled to come to terms with their new identities as war-damaged men.[206]

Patriarchy and Shell Shock

Before analysing Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy, it is necessary to define the two concepts of patriarchy and shell shock within the wider context of innocent victimhood. Virginia Woolf's essay *Three Guineas* (1938) sheds important light on what she means by patriarchy. Virginia Woolf repeats two theses that she had already developed in her previous essay *A Room of One's Own* (1928).[207] First, she demonstrates that - at the time

[204] Ibid.
[205] Jessica Meyer, *Men of War*, p. 98.
[206] Ibid., p. 99.
[207] Virginia Woolf, *A Room Of One's Own and Three Guineas* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2019).

Three Guineas was published – educated middle-class women were excluded from decision-making about war and peace. Women had little influence in economic and political affairs, and no access to leading positions within the churches, the army or the press. Concerning education, although middle-class women had access to university education, they were in danger of adapting to the masculine mentality of competitive thinking and lust for power that pervades education. By contrast, Woolf argues in favour of an education system that teaches the values of peaceful personal development, which would have positive repercussions on the whole of society.

The dilemma of the situation of women at the time *Three Guineas* was published was, in part, the need to find ways to further the cause of peace while remaining independent, which in practice meant not actively collaborating in mass organisations dominated by masculine thinking. Woolf wrote her essay in the form of a fictitious letter in reply to the treasurer of a Peace Society, who asked her what women could do to prevent war. Woolf concludes her letter by stating that 'we can best help to prevent war […] by remaining outside your society but in cooperation with its aim.'[208] She also claims that feminists were

> in fact the advance guard of your own movement. They were fighting the same enemy that you are fighting and for the same reasons. They were fighting the tyranny of the patriarchal state as you are fighting the tyranny of the Fascist state.[209]

Tyranny in the world of politics is equated with the tyranny in the domestic realm because 'the public and the private worlds are inseparably connected; […] the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other'. In Woolf's novel *Mrs Dalloway*, published thirteen years earlier, this idea is embodied by the impact of patriarchal power structures, such as psychiatry, on the family life of its two main protagonists, Clarissa

[208] Ibid., p. 272.
[209] Ibid., pp. 227-228.

Dalloway and Septimus Smith. This chapter will therefore include a gender-aware perspective on the literary representation of 'shell shock' by looking at its impact on Septimus Smith's wife Lucrezia.

In Woolf's novel, human agency is discussed within the limits to personal freedom set by the 'tyranny of the patriarchal state'. As will be seen, although Clarissa and Septimus are victims of patriarchy, they retain sufficient human agency to confront it by refusing inhumane medical treatment (Septimus) or to create the conditions to bring people from diverse backgrounds together (Clarissa). Both protagonists are forced, however, to take ambivalent decisions in their emancipatory development, such that they can be said to move within Primo Levi's 'grey zone of conscience'. The texts move within the characters' desire to resist authority and their awareness that this cannot be achieved without compromising, to a certain degree, their personal integrity.

The second concept that needs to be defined in more detail is that of 'shell shock'. At the beginning of the twentieth century, many of the social, political and medical elites in France and in Germany believed that modern civilization was so enervating that it had turned modern men into feeble, degenerate human beings.[210] Many German and French doctors believed that war would have an energising effect and regenerate weakened masculinity. However, the First World War did not produce the hoped-for regeneration, but led instead in many cases to the mental collapse of soldiers who displayed a whole range of symptoms, from stammering, nervous tics, muteness, deafness to hysterical blindness.

As pointed out by Paul Lerner in his study of the history of shell shock in Germany, debates over psychological trauma in the late nineteenth century turned on the difference

[210] Fiona Reid, *Medicine in First World War Europe* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 83.

between hysteria and trauma.[211] The doctors who argued in favour of hysteria believed that the symptoms described above were based not in the body, but in the mind, illustrating a patient's predisposition to become the victim of emotional shock. Hysteria was considered to be a female problem.[212] Doctors on the trauma side argued that the nervous and mental symptoms were caused by an external traumatic event. In Germany, hysteria began to take on class-based associations together with gendered dimensions, so that 'by the beginning of World War I, a cultural space for male hysteria had been well established.'[213] This allowed German psychiatrists to pathologise working-class Germans. What had been a general suspicion that working men feigned nervous breakdowns to be entitled to a pension during peacetime, turned into a view that during the war, shell shock was a sign that German masculinity had failed. The idea of traumatic neuroses was firmly rejected by the majority of doctors and in many quarters combat-related nervous breakdown, whether real or feigned, was now considered a threat to the 'Volk'.[214]

In Britain, this debate was carried out most visibly in the medical journal the *Lancet*, between Dr Charles Myers (1873-1946), who had first used the term 'shell shock' in the same journal in 1915, and Frederick Walker Mott (1853-1926), who stressed the importance of physical or chemical change in the soldier who broke down mentally.[215] Regarding the wartime treatment of shell shock, in the British army, rest and persuasion were advocated by Myers. Yet, as pointed out by Reid, 'the doctor-patient power relationship is always asymmetrical and this power was especially potent in the army, where the doctor's class and

[211] See Paul Lerner, *Hysterical Men. War, Psychiatry, And the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890-1930* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 1-2.
[212] 'As such, psychiatrists chose a diagnosis with a powerful negative stigma and enduring feminine associations. The male hysteria diagnosis, once a taboo, was not only acceptable by the middle of the war but was turned into a rallying cry, a patriotic crusade inflected with nationalists and military language.' See Paul Lerner, *Hysterical Men,* p. 62.
[213] Ibid., p. 2.
[214] Ibid., p. 63.
[215] See Reid, *Medicine in First World War Europe*, p. 84.

professional status was boosted by military rank.'[216] This ambivalence is illustrated by the fact that the persuasion advocated by Myers could be assisted by light hypnotism, anaesthetics, chloroform hypnosis, or even the controversial electrotherapy, which was reinvigorated in France, Germany and Britain during the war because of the importance attributed to physical shock.[217]

The relevance of these debates for my argument about innocent victimhood in this chapter is twofold. First, the definitions of shell shock and of its causes described in the studies by Meyer, Lerner and Reid highlight the element of class and gender discrimination on which these definitions are based. Both class and gender are also important in my discussions of the trope of shell shock and innocent victimhood as they appear in the diegetic worlds of Woolf and Barker. In *Mrs Dalloway*, the work of Jessica Meyer in particular will be used to highlight that women also can be considered as victims of shell shock. Second, the medical debates mentioned above convey the image of a traumatised soldier in the position of the passive victim, who, given his socially inferior status, has no say in the way he is treated by his medical officers. The idea of persuasion and forced rest is mirrored in the advice given to Septimus Smith by his psychiatrists to cure his mental breakdown. In Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy, the father-son relationship between the fictional shell-shocked officer Billy Prior and his psychiatrist Dr Rivers, although being asymmetrical, leaves enough space for Prior to discuss his agency and its moral ambivalences with Rivers. The notion of innocent victimhood and coercion is prominent in the studies on views of shell shock that were prominent during and shortly after the First World War, such as for example the general consensus, in the British and German medical profession that shell shock, or 'war

[216] Ibid., p. 89.
[217] Ibid., p. 93.

neurosis', was a new disease.[218] They considered it as evidence that modern urban life caused an epidemic of weak nerves, long before the outbreak of the war. By contrast, the literary representations of the fictional victims of shell shock in Woolf's and Barker's novels complicate this one-dimensional perspective by portraying the grey zone between coercion and personal freedom that characterises the emancipatory struggles of these protagonists.

Two more recent debates among historians on the importance of shell shock are also relevant to my argument on innocent victimhood, for two reasons. First, the focus on issues of masculinity in Elaine Showalter's theory on the origins of shell shock is mirrored to a large extent in Barker's trilogy. Showalter sees shell shock in terms of gender expectations: shell shock is seen as a 'body language of masculine complaint' against the Victorian and Edwardian codes and expectations of manliness, heroism and stoicism.[219] Showalter's definition is used by Barker in the *Regeneration* trilogy through the theories developed by the fictionalised war trauma expert, psychiatrist Dr Rivers. Showalter's theory has recently been criticised by Mark Micale, Laurinda Stryker, and Tracy Loughran, who argue for a more nuanced approach to the medical and social history of both the diagnosis and experience of psychological wounds.[220] Nevertheless, Showalter's theories and their fictionalised representation in the *Regeneration* trilogy help to illustrate the notion of coercion, in the shape of society's expectations that men must repress their emotions as a mark of masculinity. This cultural coercion exerts extreme pressure on the soldiers to fit into a narrow ideal of masculinity. In this sense, Billy Prior in Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy is an innocent victim. As will be seen later, his split personality simultaneously moves him into a situation where he becomes a potentially violent character. Prior gathers information, as an

[218] Ibid., p. 83.
[219] Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980* (London: Virago, 1987).
[220] See Tracy Loughran, 'A Crisis of Masculinity? Re-writing the History of Shellshock and Gender in First World War Britain', *History Compass*, 11/9 (2013), 727-738.

intelligence officer, on his pacifist childhood friends. Prior could be held partially responsible for his collaboration with the military authorities. Yet, the psychological condition from which he suffers lessens his degree of responsibility. Prior can be seen as a compromised victim of circumstances.

The second more recent debate among historians around shell shock that is of particular interest for this thesis is the work of Gabriel Koureas, who argues that state-sponsored constructions of memorials rendered the memory of war in terms of heroic sacrifice.[221] Issues of trauma and disability were thereby avoided. Furthermore, this heroicisation of sacrifice reflected fears of post-war civil unrest. Koureas' argument is mirrored in *Mrs Dalloway*, set in 1923, but written in 1925, in the context of post-war Britain. In Woolf's novel, this wish to avoid the issue of trauma is illustrated by the shell-shocked war veteran Septimus Smith's wife Lucrezia. She can be seen as one of the invisible collateral victims of shell shock, as her husband's mental health issues have a negative impact on her marriage and on her own mental health. Part of her suffering is her denial that Septimus is suffering from trauma, preferring to continue to see him as a war hero: 'Septimus had fought; he was brave; he was not Septimus now […] He was selfish. So men are. For he was not ill.' (*MD*, p. 17). Lucrezia's perception of Septimus' shell shock not only mirrors Koureas' argument, it also helps to understand that shell-shocked soldiers also created an atmosphere of denial, in addition to being accused of not conforming to masculine ideals of emotional repression. The depiction of shell shock in Woolf and Barker based on Showalter and Koureas helps to complicate the trope of innocent victimhood by adding to the conventional view of the innocent shell-shocked soldier notions of societal coercion through expectations of masculinity and denial of the existence of shell shock.

[221] Gabriel Koureas, *Memory, Masculinity and National Identity in British Visual Culture: A Study of "Unconquerable Manhood", 1914-1930* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2007).

In addition, my definition of shell shock is also based on text-based elements. In *Mrs Dalloway*, the mental breakdown experienced by Septimus Smith is portrayed as simultaneously delusional and visionary:

> The supreme secret must be told to the Cabinet; first, that trees are alive; next, there is no crime; next, love, universal love, he muttered, gasping, trembling, painfully drawing out these profound truths which needed, so deep were they, so difficult, an immense effort to speak out, but the world was entirely changed by them for ever. (*MD*, p. 51).

This vision can be seen as a reaction against the experience of death, chaos and hatred to which Septimus was exposed during the war. This experience of suffering gives his vision a considerable amount of honesty and credibility. However, the physical symptoms from which Septimus suffers when voicing his vision, are also associated by Woolf with mental disorder: immediately after this extract, Septimus sees a Skye terrier that sniffs his trousers. He believes that the dog turns into a man. Even though Woolf satirises Septimus' utopian vision of universal love, I argue that her portrayal of Septimus' shell shock contains a considerable amount of utopian force and can be seen as a counter-narrative to the emotional self-control demanded by patriarchal power structures.

Septimus' intense emotional life is rendered by Woolf with the technique of the interior monologue, without any authorial comments that might encourage the reader to feel sympathy or antipathy for Septimus. His tragic suicide evokes sympathy from the reader, as it turns him into a 'victim not only of the War, but of the peace', as noted by Alex Zwerdling.[222] This ambivalent portrayal contrasts with the one-dimensional heroicisation of the shell-shocked soldier that conveys the notion of innocent victimhood, at the expense of moral complexity. Focusing on Woolf's use of interior monologue in her portrayal of shell

[222] Alex Zwerdling, '*Mrs Dalloway* and the Social System', *PMLA*, , 92/1 (January 1977), 69-82 (p. 76).

shock is an example of how text-based elements also support my overall thesis in this chapter that fictional representations of shell shock contribute to a more complex depiction of victimhood.

In Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy, the notion of shell shock is embedded in more recent theories of trauma. The trilogy can be seen as an example of trauma fiction, defined as a kind of fiction that aims to expand its reader's awareness and understanding of trauma by immersing them in the victim's painful dilemmas. Trauma fiction warns them about the impact of unresolved traumatic issues.[223] The shell shock from which the fictional shell-shocked officer Billy Prior suffers is portrayed as an element of Barker's philosophy of history, which states that present-day society will be haunted by the horrors of the First World War as long as they are not recognised and accepted as an integral part of British history. In the *Regeneration* trilogy, this theory is exemplified by Prior, who can only be healed if he is willing to recognise and accept his new, violent personality as part of himself. In line with my overall thesis, Barker's depiction of a violent side to the personality of a soldier who is the victim of shell-shock complicates the notion of the moral innocence associated with the victim-soldier. This supposed moral innocence is a major reason for the popularity of the trope of shell shock as the iconic symbol of human suffering in the First World War.

This use of shell shock as a cultural signifier of the trauma of history seems to me to be the best way to characterise literary treatments of shell shock. In this sense, both Woolf's and Barker's use of the trope of shell shock to illustrate universal notions of autonomy and selfhood go beyond the purely British context in which the two novels under examination are set. In line with the trans-cultural approach of this thesis, I define shell shock, as it

[223] See Laurie Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2002), pp. 2-3.

appears in *Mrs Dalloway* and the *Regeneration* trilogy, as a complex trans-national literary trope that has two interrelated functions: first, it is used as a means to challenge recurring myths of heroic sacrifice and innocent victimhood in various national contexts; second, it is also a vehicle to propose an alternative vision of selfhood and autonomy, in contrast to the negative vision of suffering and dependency normally associated with shell shock.

Over the last century, the term shell shock has acquired a wide range of meanings and cannot be defined in simple terms. Peter Leese rightly observes that it has become

> synonymous with the most destructive images of industrial battle: bombardment in the trenches of the Western Front, the supposed passive suffering and obliteration of soldiers in the line, the long-term damage to the psyche and the spirit that the war inflicted on its participants.[224]

Between 1989 and 1995, the topic of shell shock in general witnessed a revival of interest in 'both popular memory and literature'.[225] The reason for this revival of interest lies to a large extent in a six-year cycle of remembrance, beginning in September 1989 and ending in August 1995, which encompassed the fiftieth anniversary of the Second World War, the 100th anniversary of Wilfred Owen's birth in 1993 and the eightieth anniversary in August 1994 of the start of the First World War. Leese believes that the reason for this renewed interest is that these events created a new sense of 'temporal coherence' in the British collective memory, as a kind of compensation for the decreasing importance of the nation-state in public memory.[226] Shell shock was considered as one of many repeated ritual

[224] Peter Leese, *Shell Shock. Traumatic Neuroses and the British Soldiers of the First World War* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 159. See also Edgar Jones, 'Shell shocked', *Monitor on Psychology (American Psychological Association)*, 43.6 (June 2012) <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/06/shell-shocked>. [Last accessed: 26 August 2023].
[225] Leese, *Shell Shock*, p. 173.
[226] Ibid., p. 172.

themes that provided a sense of national unity, as well as a kind of bridge between the past and the present.[227]

As Leese has pointed out, in Britain and France 'shell shock' has become a 'mirror on the past reflecting back issues of contemporary concern: gender roles, class relations and human rights'.[228] Furthermore, in the 1990s, the issue of shell shock came to be seen as a universal disorder that connects several historical epochs. A good example is Anthony Babington's book *Shell-Shock* (1990).[229] In the world of literature and fiction, Leese identifies the new popularity of shell shock with reference to Pat Barker's arguably over-simplified distinction between the techniques used by the British First World War psychiatrists Dr Yealland and Dr Rivers in her *Regeneration* trilogy. Leese argues that these popularised representations of shell shock 'give a restricted view and in some ways skewed picture, a view based on powerful communal memories of the Great War.'[230] which foreground the alleged injustices done to the innocent shell-shocked soldiers. This popular view of the condition symbolised a wider rejection of the horrors of war and everything associated with it.

As pointed out by Martin Löschnigg, the reading public was presented with an explanation for the origins of shell shock that differed from the opinion held by the medical authorities during and shortly after the war. Medical and military circles during the First World War were convinced that war neuroses could be explained by the individual soldiers' mental and moral defects. By contrast, the war poets and novelists viewed shell shock as

> an expression of the monstrosity of a war which caused such breakdowns. Shellshock victims eventually assumed the status of exemplary war victims and attracted much

[227] Ibid., p. 173.
[228] Ibid., p. 161.
[229] Anthony Babington, *Shell-Shock. A History of the Changing Attitudes to War Neurosis* (London: Pen and Sword, 1990).
[230] Leese, *Shell Shock*, p. 173.

> sympathy. Their breakdown was seen as betraying a refined sensitivity which made them susceptible to severe harm under the conditions of the Western Front.[231]

The impact of cultural representations of the trope of the innocent shell-shocked soldier on political decision-makers responsible for official commemorations of the First World War reached its peak around the time of the centenary of its outbreak. British Prime Minister David Cameron appointed the historian Professor Hew Strachan and also novelist Sebastian Faulks, who wrote the First World War family saga *Birdsong* (1993), to the advisory board that organised the centenary events. As pointed out by Fiona Reid, by the late twentieth century

> the shell-shock story […] had become emblematic of the horrors and injustices of the First World War in Britain, and shell-shocked men had become the war's essential hero-victims, the antithesis of the battle-hardened warrior. […] As a result, no First World war drama series would be complete without a shell-shocked character and Pat Barker's *Regeneration* [232]

In view of the appointment of a novelist, together with a historian, to the advisory board directing the British centenary commemorations of the war, Reid rightly concludes that 'the history and the story sit side by side'.[233] The world of fiction seems to be of equal importance to the world of historical facts. In the case of the cultural trope of shell shock, my readings of Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy add nuance to the conventional representation of the shell-shocked soldier as an innocent, suffering hero-victim. Applying the category of the grey zone of culpability to this victim-soldier, adds complexity to the figure of the soldier who is loses his moral autonomy due to shell shock.

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[231] Martin Löschnigg, '"… the novelist's responsibility to the past"': History, Myth, and the Narratives of Crisis in Pat Barker's *Regeneration* Trilogy (1991-1995)', *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, 47.3 (1999), 214-228 (pp. 222-223).

[232] See Fiona Reid: '"His nerves gave way"': Shell Shock, History and the Memory of the First World War in Britain", *Endeavour* (2014), 38.2, 91-100 (p. 91).

[233] Ibid.

To sum up the relevance of this brief summary of theories on shell shock to my reading of Woolf's and Barker's novels, it is helpful to differentiate between two different epochs in which these theories are set. First, the perspectives on shell shock circulating at the time of the publication of *Mrs Dalloway* help us to understand that the medicalised view of the soldier victim of trauma was marked by skepticism and not heroicisation. This was the case in various national contexts. Second, the more recent gender-aware theories on shell shock (Showalter and Meyer), in addition to the analysis of the omission of the mental suffering in the construction of state-sponsored war memorials (Koureas) helps to illustrate that the four novels mirror these theories in their literary representation of the trope of shell shock. One can argue that the four novels translate, to a considerable degree, these debates into the complex diegetic universes of Woolf's and Barker's novels. Taken together, the theories and the novels provide a more complex picture of how the figure of the shell-shocked soldier is forced to live both with his mental health problems, and the complex ways in which he is perceived by the public. Furthermore, the notion of the victim of shell-shock is also applied to women, such as Lucrezia Smith, which complicates the picture even more. Victimhood, as portrayed in *Mrs Dalloway*, is applied to both sexes. The inclusion of female figures as indirect victims of shell shock widens the horizon of cultural perspectives on the figure of the vulnerable victim-soldier, who is usually male.

The influence of literary representations on the public perception of shell shock can be seen almost immediately after the end of the war. *Mrs Dalloway* describes the long-term negative impact of shell shock on Septimus and Lucrezia Smith, ending in Septimus' failure to be reintegrated into society. By contrast, another novel using Modernist narrative techniques such as limited viewpoint and non-linear narration, Rebecca West's debut novel *The Return of the Solider* (1918), describes the successful healing of Chris Baldry, a

traumatised British First World War soldier. The novel suggests that war trauma is curable.[234] By contrast, the shell-shocked First World War veteran, Captain George Fentiman, in Dorothy L. Sayers' mystery novel *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* (1928) cannot be cured or reintegrated into post-war British society.[235] Fentiman faces a difficult return to civilian life, suffering from the debilitating effects of gas and neurasthenia. These come to the fore when Fentiman discovers his grandfather's dead body in the reading room of the Bellona club, a fictional London club for war veterans. However, as pointed out by Jessica Meyer, George Fentiman does not represent the experiences of all returning British ex-servicemen.[236] There are other fictional war veterans in the book, including his brother Robert. However, Sayers has created in George's wife Sheila a character as symbolic of the suffering of women as Woolf's Lucrezia Smith. Both women suffer from the pressures put on them by their shell-shocked husbands. Yet, Sayers' novel highlights the economic and emotional dependency of the man on his wife, giving 'such women a voice as well as serving as a symbol of post-war suffering'.[237]

Victimhood and Guilt in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925)

Virginia Woolf first created *Mrs Dalloway* as a short story called 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' in August 1922. Clarissa Dalloway and her husband Richard had also been minor characters in *The Voyage Out* (1915), Woolf's first novel.[238] The narrative had developed into a book by October 1922, although Woolf still used the short story, publishing it in the American journal *The Dial* in July 1923. By June 1923, she referred to the book as *The Hours*.

[234] Rebecca West, *The Return of the Soldier* (New York: Warbler Press, 2022).
[235] Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2023).
[236] Jessica Meyer, "'Not Septimus Now': Wives of Disabled Veterans and Cultural memory of the First World War in Britain', *Women's History Review*, 13/1 (2006), 117-138 (p. 129).
[237] Ibid., p. 133.
[238] Michael H. Whitworth: *Virginia Woolf: Mrs Dalloway* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 1-2.

Woolf wrote six more stories about Mrs Dalloway between March and May 1925, which remained unpublished in her lifetime. *Mrs Dalloway*, the novel, was published in Britain by Leonard and Virginia Woolf's own firm, The Hogarth Press, on 14 May 1925, and in the USA on the same day. *Mrs Dalloway* has triggered an enormous range of responses and interpretations by critics. Concerning its eponymous fictional protagonist Clarissa Dalloway, Lucio Ruotolo, for example, celebrates her as a heroine, whereas Trudi Tate argues that the novel satirises her.[239]

There were probably three main influences that helped to shape the novel. Firstly, as pointed out by Leese, Virginia Woolf wrote *Mrs Dalloway* in the context of the public debates surrounding the issue of shell shock in the early 1920s.[240] The British Parliament debated the *Report of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into 'Shell Shock'* in August 1922, shortly before Woolf created the fictional character of Septimus Smith in October 1922. *Mrs Dalloway* was written after four years of public debate on how to commemorate the First World War, when certain defining features of the public conception of shell shock were beginning to establish themselves. Shell shock was primarily associated with officers, not with ordinary soldiers. More importantly, *Mrs Dalloway* marks a 'strengthening of the association between shell shock and poetic sensibility, the officer ranks, postwar disillusion and the feminist debate on masculine identity.'[241]

A second influence was doubtless Siegfried Sassoon's wartime collections of poetry *The Old Huntsman* (1917) and *Counter-attack* (1918), which Woolf reviewed. Woolf met Sassoon in 1924. The character of Septimus Smith, who shares the initials 'SS' with the war poet, has repeated visions of dead bodies in the streets of London which he believes are

[239] Lucio Ruotolo, *Six Existential Heroes: The Politics of Faith* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973); Trudi Tate, '*Mrs Dalloway* and the Armenian Question', in Trudi Tate, *Modernism, History and the First World* War (Penrith CA: HEB Humanities E-books, 2013), pp. 160-182.
[240] Leese, *Shell Shock,* p. 166.
[241] Ibid.*,* p. 161.

talking to him. One of them is his former superior officer, Captain Evans, who died in combat: 'A man in grey was actually walking towards them. It was Evans. But no mud was on him; no wounds; he was not changed. […] and with legions of men prostrate behind him, he, the giant mourner, receives for one moment on his face the whole -' (*MD*, pp. 52-53). This echoes, for example, Sassoon's poem 'To His Dead Body', in which the speaker mourns the death of a fallen comrade and friend, and has a dream about how this comrade is going to heaven.[242] A third influence that helped to shape *Mrs Dalloway* may well have been Woolf's own psychiatric treatment that she received from Dr George Savage and Sir Maurice Craig for her traumatic neurosis and symptoms of bipolar disorder. Both doctors had been involved in the treatment of war neurosis during the First World War. In the novel *Mrs Dalloway*, these two psychiatrists are represented by the fictional doctors Holmes and Bradshaw.

Mrs Dalloway is best interpreted as an anti-heroic novel that aims to break the plot conventions of the classic realist family novel, which often ends with a family reunion and redemption or forgiveness for past guilt, and with transgressors who are punished for their wrongdoings. Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1861) is a good example of a novel in which the forces of love and forgiveness triumph and the two main protagonists are eventually reunited. By contrast, all the characters in *Mrs Dalloway* are haunted by their past failures, which shape their consciousness and their sanity. However, I argue that Woolf uses the tragic effects that the First World War still has on the individual four years after its end in an original way, by using the trope of the innocent traumatised victim of shell shock, as embodied by her fictional ex-serviceman Septimus Smith, in order to discuss the possibility to retain autonomy or agency in the face of enormous societal pressures. In *Mrs Dalloway*,

[242] Siegfried Sassoon, *The War Poems* (London: Portable Poetry, 2020).

these pressures are illustrated by the restrictive medical treatment that Septimus is about to undergo. The nature of sanity and consciousness, and how society views them, is Woolf's main preoccupation in this novel. In a diary entry of 14th October 1922, she wrote that her novel in progress is a 'study of insanity and suicide: the world seen by the sane & the insane side by side – something like that'.[243]

The novel is set on one day, 13th June 1923, in the life of an upper middle-class woman, Clarissa Dalloway, the wife of a middle-ranking Conservative Member of Parliament, who has never quite made it into the Cabinet. Clarissa is recovering from a serious illness, as well as depression. She was treated by eminent Harley Street therapists. That evening, Clarissa is hosting a party for London's upper-class society, and the unconventional plot turns around the preparations for this party. Clarissa walks through the streets of West London to buy and collect flowers for her party. When she returns home, she finds that her old suitor, Peter Walsh, has come to visit her. Peter almost married Clarissa some thirty years before, when they regularly visited a country house called 'Bourton', seen by Clarissa as an antithesis to the emotionally stifling atmosphere of London (*MD*, p. 5). Peter is about to get married in India, where he went after Clarissa declined his marriage proposal. Clarissa preferred to become the wife of a wealthy Conservative MP, fearing that Peter's obsessive love for her would reduce her emotional freedom: 'she had been right […] not to marry him. For in marriage a little licence, a little independence there must be […]. But with Peter, everything had to be shared; everything gone into. And it was intolerable' (*MD*, p. 6).

After an unsatisfactory discussion about the past with Clarissa, Peter goes off to ruminate in Regent's Park, thinking that he has given his emotional life away. In the park he observes a couple he has never seen before (*MD*, p. 53). The reader is introduced to the

[243] A.O. Bell (ed.), *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, 5 vols (London: Hogarth, 1977-1984), ii, p. 248.

couple, Lucrezia and Septimus Smith, by means of a change of narrator (from Peter's inner monologue to that of the couple). Septimus is a First World War veteran who suffers from shell shock and is seriously disturbed: in the park, he thinks that two sparrows are singing in 'piercing Greek words, from trees in the meadow of life beyond a river where the dead walk, how there is no death.' (*MD*, p. 18). Before the war, Septimus was a sensitive, promising poet. During the war, he had a friendly relationship with his commanding officer, Captain Evans, to whom he was also physically attracted: 'It was a case of two dogs playing on a hearth-rug' (*MD*, p. 64). Septimus is waiting for a consultation with Clarissa's Harley Street psychiatrist, Sir William Bradshaw. The physician's advice is platitudinous: 'It was merely a question of rest, said Sir William; of rest, rest, rest; a long rest in bed.' (*MD*, p. 71). Moreover, Bradshaw advises that Septimus must be confined to an asylum.

In their home, Lucrezia and Septimus wait for Septimus to be taken to the asylum. Septimus is so terrorised by the thought of an asylum that he throws himself out of the window and impales himself fatally on the spiked iron railings below. Peter Walsh hears the ambulance taking away the deceased Septimus on the way to Clarissa's party, where one of the guests is Sir William Bradshaw, Septimus' psychiatrist. Sally Seton, with whom Clarissa fell in love during her teenage days in Bourton, is also present at the party. Sally is now a wealthy woman who conforms to the norms of the society she operates in, and no longer the independent teenager whom Clarissa loved. When news of Septimus' death arrives, Clarissa feels a strong bond with the deceased First World War veteran, glorifying his suicide as a heroic act of self-determination. The bond she feels is stronger than that with her daughter Elizabeth, who is about to convert to evangelical Christianity. The novel ends with Clarissa retreating to her attic to think about Septimus. She eventually returns to her guests, who continue their party.

For the purpose of my argument on the ways in which *Mrs Dalloway* adds nuance and complicates the trope of innocent victimhood, I would like to begin by analysing the novel's three victims: first, Lucrezia Smith, who represents the victim-wife of the ex-serviceman Septimus Smith; second, Septimus Smith, who suffers from hallucinations triggered by the 'deferred effects of shell shock' (*MD*, p. 133); third, Clarissa Dalloway, whose status as a victim is ambivalent, given her upper middle-class status and as a member of the ruling class. The second step in the section on Woolf's novel is an exploration of Clarissa Dalloway's sense of selfhood, located between making compromises with the male-dominated society in which she herself lives, and the preservation of her personal integrity, away from actively collaborating with the forces of repression of individuality. Clarissa's selfhood will be seen as an illustration that, of the three victims, she possesses the greatest amount of agency, even if this agency is set against the background of male dominance over women in 1923.

Lucrezia Smith, the Collateral Victim of Shell Shock

As discussed above, Jessica Meyer identifies the figure of Septimus' wife Lucrezia as a literary representation of all the wives and female partners of shell-shocked ex-servicemen.[244] However, I only partly agree with this statement. Its merit is certainly to highlight the deferred effect of shell-shock on the families of disabled war veterans. Seen in relation to Septimus' ambivalent self-perception of his guilt, however, Lucrezia's status as a collateral victim of shell shock becomes more problematic. Septimus feels particularly guilty for having married his wife Lucrezia 'without loving her; had lied to her, seduced her' (*MD*, p. 67), which is a betrayal of his ideal of 'universal love' (*MD*, p. 51). At the very beginning,

[244] Meyer, "'Not Septimus Now'", p. 131.

Lucrezia (Rezia) rejects the status of victim with which her husband Septimus seems to be obsessed. The following extract is the first time the reader meets the couple in Regent's Park:

> But Lucrezia Warren Smith was saying to herself, It's wicked; why should I suffer? She was asking, as she walked down the broad path. No, I can't stand it any longer, she was saying, having left Septimus, who wasn't Septimus any longer, to say hard, cruel, wicked things, to talk to himself; to talk to a dead man, on the seat over there […] (*MD*, p. 49)

Lucrezia is a victim of the alienation between Septimus and herself, which is an effect of his mental suffering caused by shell shock: 'His wife was crying, he felt nothing; only each time she sobbed in this profound, this silent, this hopeless way, he descended another step into the pit.' (*MD*, p. 67). The third-person-narrator then tells us that 'with a melodramatic gesture which he assumed mechanically and with complete consciousness of its insincerity, he dropped his head on his hands. Now he had surrendered; now other people must help him. People must be sent for. He gave in.' (*MD*, p. 67).

One can therefore argue that Lucrezia has two simultaneous functions in the portrayal of victimhood in *Mrs Dalloway*: first, she must be seen as a literary representation of female victimhood of shell shock; second, her victimhood also draws attention to Septimus' distorted perception of his alleged guilt. As mentioned above, Septimus' hypersensitivity is the extreme counter-narrative to the social self-control or 'stoical bearing' (*MD*, p. 7) demonstrated by Lady Bexborough at the beginning of the novel. Second, although Lucrezia is a victim of her husband's psychological disturbance, the psychological weight placed on her by Septimus' openly voiced wish that she should commit suicide with him, in an act of solidarity ('He would argue with her about killing themselves', *MD*, p. 50), triggers her sense of independence: 'She must go back and tell him' (*MD*, p. 50). I argue that Lucrezia's reaction to Septimus' specific symptoms of shell shock complicates the perception of her as a passive

collateral victim of shell shock. It adds a female perspective to that of the male victim. She can also be seen as an example of female self-determination, albeit to a limited extent, given the magnitude of Septimus' mental health problems. Lucrezia is an innocent victim, but not without agency. The difference between Septimus' and Lucrezia's victimhood is that Lucrezia is given the potential to function as a mediator between her husband and his psychiatrist, even if this mediating role fails in the end.

Septimus Smith and Suicide

As noted by Josephine O'Brien Schaefer, the figure of Septimus Smith 'encapsulates life and death of the returned soldiers' as he no longer 'feels himself attached to the world of his fellows'.[245] Five years after the end of the war, Septimus notices the brutality at the heart of the civilisation into which he has come: men are trapped in mines, 'lunatics' are out in the streets of London for airing (*MD*, p. 53). Instead of assimilating the war years, post-war society is seen in the novel as incapable of coming to terms with the invisible, psychological wounds of war, such as those manifested by Septimus. Elaine Showalter has identified Septimus as a representative victim of the patriarchal medical structures that treated shell shock sufferers in psychiatric wards and rest homes after the war.[246] Septimus was so well trained in the ideals of masculine self-control and emotional repression that he suppressed his mourning for his commanding officer Evans' death in combat. Now, however, in 1923, Septimus thinks that he has committed a crime against humanity for not feeling anything (*MD*, p. 66). He absorbs the reality around him in hypersensitive impressions, a phenomenon that is commented upon negatively by another male protagonist in the novel, Peter Walsh

[245] Josephine O'Brien Schaefer, 'The Great War and "'This Late Age of World's Experience'" in Cather and Woolf', in Mark Hussey (ed.), *Virginia Woolf and War. Fiction, Reality, and Myth* (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 1992), pp. 134-150, p. 143.
[246] Showalter, *The Female Malady*, p. 172.

(talking about his own changes of mood): 'This susceptibility to impressions had been his undoing, no doubt.' (*MD*, p. 53).

Septimus Smith is more of a victim than of a perpetrator. Alex Zwerdling is right to see Septimus as a victim of the war and of the peace, with its insistence that all could be forgotten and the old order re-established.[247] Septimus sees himself as a 'sacrificial victim or scapegoat who takes upon himself the sins of omission rather than commission.'[248] Zwerdling interprets Septimus' exaggerated sense of awareness as a surrender to the

> force of feeling in all its variety and intensity – guilt, ecstasy, loathing, rage, bliss. His emotions are chaotic because they are entirely self-generated and self-sustained; he becomes a pariah. […] It is no wonder that the resultant vision of the world is as distorted as the governing-class view. […] All this is an obvious projection of his own guilt …[…] [249]

Nevertheless, apart from this subjective side of Septimus' guilt, there is also sufficient ground, through his treatment of his wife Lucrezia, to look at more objective factors in Septimus' guilt. The focus on Lucrezia highlights the pressures that shell shock puts on affected families.

Septimus' victimhood can also be viewed as a further illustration of Primo Levi's categorisation of the victims of the Holocaust into the 'Geretteten' (Saved) and the 'Untergegangenen' (Drowned). In Chapter Three above on the Armenian genocide, it was argued that the fictional Armenian protagonists can be seen as either belonging to the Saved or the Drowned. Although Septimus is not a survivor of an event of the magnitude of ethnic cleansing, he can still be considered as a surviving eye-witness to the atrocities of warfare, or one of the 'Gerettete'. His guilt can be seen as a kind of deferred survivor-guilt, as he only experiences guilt for not mourning the death of his commanding officer Evans five years

[247] Alex Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* (London: University of California Press, 1986), p. 133.
[248] Ibid., p. 131.
[249] Ibid., p. 132.

after the end of the war (*MD*, p. 67). However, his suicide also turns him into one of the 'Untergegangenen', one of the post-war casualties of the war. In this context, the generality of his surname 'Smith' in combination with the individuality of his tragedy gives him a status similar to that of the 'Unknown Soldier', as pointed out by Jean Thomson.[250] In this sense, Septimus' violent death at home and not on the battlefield, five years after the end of the war, extends the geographical and temporal frame in which the official commemorative heroicisation of the Unknown Soldier is normally set.[251] This conventional, cross-cultural narrative sets the Unknown Soldier in the context of national sacrifice, the original idea being that an anonymous grave represents all those fallen servicemen whose corpses could not be found or identified. By making Septimus a war victim who dies five years after its end, Woolf adds nuance to the notion of innocent victimhood of the figure of the Unknown Soldier. Septimus is a compromised innocent victim, given the magnitude of his mental disorder.

There is a similarity between Septimus' suicide in the novel, and the idea of vicariousness that is essential to the figure of the anonymous Unknown Soldier. Elizabeth Abel describes this idea as follows:

> [Septimus' suicide] enables Clarissa to resolve the developmental impasse that seems to be one cause for her weakened heart, her constricted vitality […] Woolf's revision of developmental plots, her decision to transfer to Septimus the death she originally imagined for Clarissa, to sacrifice male to female development, to preserve her heroine from fictional tradition by substituting a hero for a heroine in the plot of violently thwarted development.[252]

[250] See Jean Thomson, 'Virginia Woolf and the Case of Septimus Smith', *The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal*, August 2004, 23/3, pp. 55-71 (55).
[251] See author unknown, 'Armistice Day: Centenary of Unknown Warrior Burial Marked, *BBC*, 11 November 2020: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-54897427>. [Last accessed 30 April 2024].
[252] Elizabeth Abel, 'Narrative Structure(s) and Female Development: the Case of *Mrs Dalloway*', in Rachel Bowlby (ed.), *Virginia Woolf* (London: Longman, 1992), pp. 77-101 (pp. 90-91). Reprinted from Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch and Elizabeth Langland (eds.), *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development* (Hanover: University of New England Press, 1983), pp. 161-185.

Virginia Woolf wrote in the 'Introduction' to the Modern Library edition of *Mrs Dalloway* (1928) that in 'the first version […] Mrs Dalloway was originally to kill herself or perhaps merely to die at the end of the party'.[253] One of the main ideas contained in the symbolism of the Unknown Soldier is that the unknown soldiers' death vicariously represents not only the unidentified fallen soldiers, but more generally the heroic national sacrifice of all fallen soldiers: 'the Grave of the Unknown Warrior was created as a collective memorial for the millions of Britons grieving the loss of loved ones after the First World War'.[254]

Abel's foregrounding of the idea of vicariousness supports my reading of the link between Clarissa Dalloway's personal development and Septimus' suicide. In addition to Abel's interpretation, I focus on the ambivalence with which Septimus' suicide is portrayed in the novel. In both Abel's reading and my own, Septimus' suicide complicates the notion of conventional innocent sacrificial martyrdom characteristic of the official commemorative discourse on the Unknown Warrior. In contrast to the absence of choice of the soldier who succumbs to shell shock, suicide highlights the idea of a choice, albeit a controversial one. Abel points out that 'Septimus' choice of a violent, early death elicits in Clarissa the notion of a central self preserved'.[255] However, Clarissa herself is not sure whether Septimus' suicide is meaningful communication or simply signalling total isolation and defeat. On the surface, Clarissa's reaction upon hearing of Septimus' suicide seems to confirm her 'theory' of connectedness between strangers after death:

> A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had

[253] Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (New York: Modern Library, 1928), p. vi.
[254] See the website of the exhibition 'Buried Among Kings. The Story of the Unknown Warrior', *National Army Museum*, 20 October 2020 until 14 February 2021: <https://www.nam.ac.uk/press/buried-among-kings-story-unknown-warrior>. [Last accessed 30 April 2024].
[255] Abel, 'Narrative Structure(s) and Female Development: the Case of *Mrs Dalloway*',p. 92.

> preserved. Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded; one was alone. There was an embrace in death. But this young man who had killed himself – had he plunged holding his treasure? (*MD*, pp. 133-34)

Mrs Dalloway suggests that there are only two ways out of what Clarissa identifies as repressive society, the 'corruption, lies, chatter' that 'make life intolerable' (*MD*, p. 134): first, suicide ('there was an embrace in death', *MD*, p. 134); second, selfless agape ('Odd affinities she had with people she had never spoken to', *MD*, p. 111). Just seconds before he jumps to his death, Septimus refuses suicide: 'He did not want to die: Life was good.' (*MD*, p. 108). Simultaneously, his last words seem to suggest that he jumped out of defiance: 'I'll give it you!' (*MD*, p. 108). This is immediately followed by Dr Holmes' comment: "'The coward!' cried Dr Holmes" (*MD*, p. 108). There are thus contradictory views on Septimus' suicide, one of them that of Septimus' hesitation before his fatal jump.

I argue that both perspectives on his suicide – Clarissa's positive response and Dr Holmes' critical reaction – help to question the trope of innocent victimhood of the shell-shocked soldier. From Clarissa's point of view, and taking into consideration the similarity between Septimus Smith and the figure of the Unknown soldier, the combination between his individual tragic story and the generality of his surname, turns Septimus into the opposite of an anonymous, sacrificial Unknown Soldier. The reader gets to know his very idiosyncratic hallucinations, triggered by his shell shock (*MD*, pp. 51-53). This individuality is at odds with the anonymity on which the concept of the Unknown Soldier relies for its popularity. From Septimus' own point of view, his sense of guilt for failing to mourn the death of his friend Captain Evans provides him with a certain amount of agency that is at odds with the traditional image of the shell-shocked victim-soldier who is a passive sufferer of all kinds of

psychological and physical symptoms. I therefore interpret Septimus Smith's suicide as adding complexity to the notion of innocent victimhood concerning the trope of shell shock in First World War fictional prose.

As will be seen later, Clarissa's awareness that she no longer needs to be afraid of life itself is also the result of distancing herself from Septimus' suicide: 'Fear no more the heat of the sun. She must go back to them' (*MD*, p. 135). It is the first step in finding her identity in organising parties that facilitate the social contact between people from various social backgrounds. Clarissa's role as a mediator between people is based on her dissatisfaction about 'not knowing people; not being known. For how could they know each other? […] It was unsatisfactory how little one knew people.' (*MD*, p. 111). Clarissa uses her role in society positively, by allowing people to meet at her parties so that they can overcome their sense of isolation. The selfless aspect of this role is that this role in not in her own personal interest. She facilitates these contacts from a feeling of empathy, considering herself to be 'one woman who sat in her drawing-room and made a meeting-point, a radiancy no doubt in some dull lives, a refuge for the lonely to come to, perhaps' (*MD*, p. 28). However, she also moves in a kind of grey zone, as she is in constant danger to be absorbed by her social status as an upper middle-class woman who in a sense collaborates with the oppressive system. This dual function of her parties illustrates the ambivalence of her feelings of agape or empathy.

Clarissa Dalloway's Sense of Private Selfhood and Agape

In line with my overarching thesis, I argue that Clarissa Dalloway is one of the 'Geretteten' (Saved) victims of the patriarchal power structures of the Britain of 1923, in which the novel is set. As a brief reminder, my analysis derives in part from Woolf's essay *Three Guineas*, in

which Woolf's female narrator argues that female moral integrity can be preserved by refusing to collaborate with male-dominated political organisations, even if their aims are pacifist. As a result of this refusal, group solidarity between victims of all kinds of repression becomes a matter of individual attitude. I argue that Clarissa's solidarity with Septimus Smith can be seen as an example of selfless agape, but that this agape is set in the grey zone between social isolation and political activism. Despite being confined to the private realm, Clarissa's agape still represents an illustration of agency, and therefore adds nuance to her sense of guilt that she is collaborating with the forces of patriarchy.

Of the three victims analysed in this chapter, Clarissa Dalloway can be regarded as the one who is the most morally compromised. Clarissa herself describes her guilt as the attitude of tacitly condoning, through her wealthy lifestyle and her upper-class circle of friends, the psychological violence exerted by psychiatrists such as Sir William Bradshaw, whom she accuses of being 'capable of some indescribable outrage – forcing your soul' (*MD*, p. 134):

> Somehow it was her disaster – her disgrace. It was her punishment to see sink and disappear here a man, there a woman, in this profound darkness, and she forced to stand here in her evening dress. She had schemed, she had pilfered. She was never wholly admirable. She had wanted success […]. (*MD*, p. 134)

A more nuanced view is given by the critic Herbert Marder, who claims that contradictions have been consciously woven into the construction of the novel:

> The novelist's purpose is neither to celebrate nor to satirize, but rather to portray a paradoxical condition, and incidentally to explore a conflict between rebellious and conformist impulses in her own life. The characterization of Clarissa reflects Woolf's general ambivalence toward the English ruling classes, her intense loyalty to the system and her contempt for patriarchal representatives. […] The novel's power and

> clarity result from the skill with which the narrator incorporates visionary and realistic pictures of the world.[256]

A good example of such a contradiction is provided by Clarissa's lack of empathy for the victims of the Armenian genocide that is discussed at length in Chapter Three above. After her husband Richard Dalloway, a Conservative MP, returns from a House of Commons committee meeting on 'his Armenians, his Albanians' (*MD*, p. 88), offering his wife roses, the narrator focuses on Clarissa's callous attitude towards the fate of the Armenian survivors:

> She cared much more for her roses than for the Armenians. Hunted out of existence, maimed, frozen, the victims of cruelty and injustice (she had heard Richard say so over and over again) – no, she could feel nothing for the Albanians, or was it the Armenians? But she loved her roses (didn't that help the Armenians?) – the only flowers she could bear to see cut. (*MD*, p. 88).

The question of whether her feelings of agape or interconnectedness with victims such as Septimus Smith are capable of alleviating her guilt of being ignorant of the Armenian suffering is left unanswered by Marder. In his eyes, Septimus' suicide in particular, and death in general, are glamourised by Clarissa, while simultaneously repressing the finality of his death:

> It is a last mute protest against tyranny, a substitute for other forms of rebellion. For psychological reasons having to do with her own dependence on the system, Clarissa can see Septimus' triumph, but is blind to his defeat. Moved by Woolf's narrative art, many readers have taken Clarissa's equation of suicide and personal integrity at face value. But it is hard to see how this attitude can be justified.[257]

It is hard to disagree with Marder's conclusion that neither Clarissa's feelings of mystical connectedness, nor Septimus' suicide offer compensation, or redemption, for her

[256] Herbert Marder, Split Perspective: Types of Incongruity in *Mrs Dalloway*',*Papers on Language and Literature*, 22.1 (1986), 51-69 (pp. 53-54).
[257] Ibid., p. 64.

ambivalence towards patriarchy. Instead, she consciously isolates herself from the context of ugly social reality, as illustrated by her lack of empathy for the Armenian question:

> The concept that Septimus's suicide offers a solution, that his death is life, is the final and most disturbing correlative of Clarissa's divided state. The split between the moral irresponsibility of such an attitude and its rhetorical power mirrors the split between Mrs. Dalloway's class consciousness and Clarissa's universalism.[258]

Nevertheless, it would be erroneous to condemn Clarissa Dalloway morally by focusing solely on Woolf's satirical presentation of her main heroine. There is an element of exaggerated moral condemnation in critical assessments that see in Clarissa an upper-class coward. This is the case, for example, in Trudi Tate's essay '*Mrs Dalloway* and the Armenian Question'.[259] Tate sees Clarissa as complicit in supporting the cultural and political power system embodied by men such as her husband, the Conservative MP Richard Dalloway. Without ignoring the complex attitudes the reader can have towards Clarissa, Tate in particular criticises Clarissa's self-dramatising tendencies, as for example when she welcomes the Prime Minister as a guest to her party: 'And now Clarissa escorted the Prime Minister down the room, prancing, sparkling, with the stateliness of her grey hair.' (*MD*, p. 126). By contrast, Ruotolo suggests that Clarissa accepts the notion of 'dread' or existential fear of living by returning to the party after hearing about Septimus' suicide: 'But she must go back. She must assemble.' *MD*, p. 135).[260] Clarissa 'had a perpetual sense, as she watched the taxi cabs, of being out, out, far out to sea and alone; she always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day.' (*MD*, p. 6).

Mrs Dalloway raises the important question concerning what alternative there can be, in the cultural and political context of the novel's setting in 1923, to social conformity.

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[258] Ibid.
[259] Trudi Tate, '*Mrs Dalloway* and the Armenian Question', in Trudi Tate, *Modernism, History and the First World War*, pp. 160-182.
[260] Lucio Ruotolo, *Six Existential Heroes: The Politics of Faith*, p. 32.

Social conformity relates to the question of innocent victimhood in the sense that it represents, in the grey zone of conscience, the part of coercion, whereas the issue of how to resists to this coercion without becoming morally compromised represents the part of agency. The first alternative that is fictionalised in Woolf's novel is defiant individualism in the shape of Clarissa's interpretation of Septimus' suicide. In Clarissa's eyes, Septimus escapes patriarchal oppression by preserving a 'treasure' that she defines as 'a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter' (*MD*, p. 133-134). The price for this is his tragic suicide.

A second alternative consists of establishing a kind of interpersonal connection with others, even people that one has never met, at a deeper level, through a kind of network of shared thoughts and feelings, transcending class and economic differences. This sense of solidarity between victims of the social conformism in post-war British society can be seen in the passage in which Clarissa decides to return from her temporary isolation in a little room she withdrew to upon hearing about Septimus' suicide (*MD*, p. 133). Clarissa feels 'somehow very like him – the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it' (*MD*, p. 135). Whitworth notes that this reflects Woolf's interest in a kind of group solidarity with other people who 'experience a sense of intimacy that does not necessarily depend on the usual mechanisms of language or physical proximity'.[261]

One is reminded of Woolf's essay *Three Guineas*, as mentioned above, in which the fictional writer of the letter to the Peace Organisation distances herself from becoming an active member of a political organization. This agape can also be seen as an example of human agency, which contrasts with the notion of passivity associated with the conventional view of victims of war trauma. Clarissa's 'treasure' can be interpreted as the attempt to

[261] Whitworth, *Virginia Woolf*, p. 144.

preserve one's personal integrity. Her partial rejection of isolation, preferring not to be influenced by formal institutions such as political organisations, can be overcome by a deeper sense of union. Like Peter Walsh and Sally Seton, Clarissa is part-conformist and part-rebel. In this sense, the private self protects the public self. The barrier of class that divides Clarissa and Septimus can only be crossed in her imagination, yet Clarissa's awareness of her degree of complicity as a member of the ruling class is counterbalanced, albeit to a very limited extent, by a sense of selfhood based on moral integrity.

Clarissa's moral integrity is intact as she is not directly involved in any decision-making process. She is not a member of the political establishment in June 1923. This contrasts with her husband, the Conservative MP Richard Dalloway, who is a member of the parliamentary committee that tries to settle the Armenian question in Britain's interest.[262] This committee is preparing the Lausanne Treaty that was finally signed on 24 July 1923, a few weeks after *Mrs Dalloway* is set. This Treaty betrayed the Armenians, failing to support their hopes of an independent Armenian national state in the Anatolian region.[263] One can therefore also consider the fact that Clarissa knows nothing about Richard's work on this committee (*MD*, p. 88) as an illustration that she is not corrupted by the political power play in which Richard takes part. Paradoxically, the satirical portrayal of Clarissa's ignorance about the Armenian question, as illustrated by her buying flowers for the suffering Armenians, can also be seen as evidence that her integrity remains intact.

Yet, as seen above in Woolf's essay *Three Guineas*, this non-involvement in political decision-making processes was a result of the lack of political power of women in a patriarchal world. Trudi Tate rightly observes that, although Clarissa, even as a member of

[262] 'Mrs Dalloway and the Armenian Question', in Trudi Tate, *Modernism, History and the First World War*, pp. 160-182.
[263] Ibid., p. 171.

the ruling class, does not possess political power, the power system is 'held in place by women such as Clarissa and Lady Bruton. Without the domestic and social base provided by women, the political system could not function in the same way.'[264] I argue that Clarissa is both a victim of these male-dominated power structures, yet she also bears a certain degree of responsibility for its workings. Clarissa's role within this system lies in the grey zone of moral responsibility, which is situated between assuming a political power position and indirectly guaranteeing its continuance. Clarissa is a morally compromised victim.

In Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy, the selfhood portrayed in the figure of the fictional working-class officer Billy Prior is also based on Barker's extended use of the victimhood associated with the trope of shell shock. Her gendered view on the origins of shell shock is enhanced by the fact that her main fictional soldier-victim, Billy Prior, is the victim of a split personality. Billy's innocent victimhood is embodied in his mental blackouts, in which the violent half of his personality, seen by his psychiatrist Dr Rivers as Billy's Other, takes over control over his personality. In this sense, Barker's model of selfhood integrates otherness into one single fictional protagonist, the shell-shocked officer Billy Prior.

Billy Prior's Split Personality, Selfhood and Otherness in Pat Barker's *Regeneration* Trilogy (1991-1995)

Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy undermines the trope of the innocent victim by illustrating that its main fictional First World War soldier Billy Prior, a twenty-two-year-old working-class man from Salford, elevated into the officer ranks as a 'temporary gentleman', participates in the subjugation of the social class from which he originates.

[264] Ibid., p. 166.

The relationship between class, gender and trauma can be identified as a major recurring theme in Pat Barker's oeuvre. With her first three novels, Barker (1943–) established her reputation as a novelist of working-class realism with a feminist bent: *Union Street* (1982) is about the everyday lives of a poor community in the northeast of England; *Blow Your House Down* (1984) is the story of a group of prostitutes who are stalked by a serial killer; *The Century's Daughter* (now published under the title *Liza's England*) (1986) focuses on the reminiscences of an old woman who has experienced both world wars and most of the twentieth century.[265] Barker has written thirteen novels to date. One of her latest, *The Silence of the Girls* (2018), recounts Homer's *Iliad* from Brisei's perspective, focusing on female war trauma.

Her fifth work of fiction, the *Regeneration* trilogy (1991-1995), is a product of its time, as it to some extent mirrors the renewed interest of the British public in the First World War in the early 1990s. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the trope of the innocent shell-shocked victim of the First World War has served as a link to connect different historical periods, as it has come to be seen as an ahistorical, universal condition. This capacity to bridge different epochs is one of the central preoccupations in Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy, as exemplified by means of the trope of the palimpsest in the trilogy's second volume, *The Eye in the Door*: 'The past is a palimpsest, Prior thought. Earlier memories are always obscured by accumulations of later knowledge.' (*ED*, p. 55). More importantly, it reflects the interest of a modern audience, in the 1990s, in 'shell shock treatment and military justice as human rights issues, women's involvement in the pacifist movement during the war, and the temporary shifts in gender and class relations within

[265] Pat Barker, *Union Street* (London: Virago, 1982); Pat Barker, *Blow Your House Down* (London: Virago, 1984); Pat Barker, *Liza's England* (London: Virago, 1986).

Home Front society between 1914 and 1918.'[266] Barker's own interest in the First World War also comes from her interest in the poems of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, and also from her grandfather's bayonet scar from his service in the First World War. He only began to talk about the horrors of the war towards the end of his life.[267]

At least two of Barker's other novels, *Another World* (1998) and *Life Class* (2007), also deal with the First World War.[268] The major theme of *Life Class* is the ethics of representing the war in art. The paradox is that the real horrors of war are too enormous to be faithfully represented aesthetically, a problem that recalls the conversations in *Regeneration* between the war poets Sassoon and Owen (*R*, pp. 80-85; pp. 140-141; pp. 217-219). Sassoon also remarks 'how big it is, the war, and how impossible it is to write about' (*ED*, p. 220).

The first part of Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy, *Regeneration* (1991), can be read as a literary appropriation of Elaine Showalter's theory that, like Victorian women, many British soldiers suffered from powerlessness and the loss of autonomous control over their own lives.[269] Barker cites Showalter in her 'Author's Notes' as one of her sources (*R*, p. 252). A second element of Showalter's theory incorporated by Barker into her trilogy is the idea that shell shock took different forms in officers and regular soldiers. Officers were believed to suffer from more intellectual symptoms such as nightmares, depression and hallucinations, whereas common soldiers suffered from paralysis, mutism, blindness or deafness. In the trilogy, the working-class officer Billy Prior suffers from mutism.

Barker locates the origin of soldiers' war neuroses in the restrictions of socially conditioned gender expectations, which make the internal conflicts and trauma even worse. The dilemma of the soldiers as it is portrayed by Barker in her trilogy is that in order to be

[266] Leese, *Shell Shock,* p. 174.
[267] Donna Perry, *Backtalk: Women Writers Speak Out* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), p. 47.
[268] Pat Barker, *Another World* (London: Penguin, 199); Pat Barker, *Life Class* (London: Penguin, 2008).
[269] Showalter, *The Female Malady*, pp. 172-173.

cured, they need to voice their fears, but by doing this, they threaten their masculine identity. This view is expressed by one of their therapists, Dr Rivers, whom Barker models on the real-life psychiatrist, anthropologist and neurologist, W.H.R. Rivers. In the trilogy, Rivers provides a running commentary on the effects of the First World War on male self-perception. His dilemma as a doctor who both heals and destroys codes of traditional masculine identity is highlighted at an early stage of the trilogy: 'fear, tenderness – these emotions were so despised that they could be admitted into consciousness only at the cost of redefining what it meant to be a man' (*R*, p. 48).

Trauma is a by-product of hyper-masculine expectations of the war. Men found themselves in a situation of confinement in the trenches, analogous to that experienced by Victorian and Edwardian women. Ironically, the First World War, mythologised as a masculine experience, triggered a 'crisis of masculinity' that expressed itself in the phenomenon of shell shock.[270] In *Regeneration*, a host of shell-shocked officers, among them the fictionalised poets Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, undergo treatment for shell shock in Craiglockhart Hospital, near Edinburgh. In the spirit of Showalter's theory, Rivers links his patients' war trauma to the notion of emasculation and to questions of gender identity: "The war that had promised so much in the way of 'manly' activity had actually delivered 'feminine' passivity, and on a scale that their mothers and fathers had hardly known. No wonder they broke down." (*R*, p. 107-108).

This link is represented in the third novel of the trilogy, *The Ghost Road* (1995), via the fictional shell-shocked soldier Ian Moffet. The link between trauma and gender is highlighted by Moffat's fears of being emasculated by the paralysis of his legs, identified by

[270] Lena Steveker, 'Reading Trauma in Pat Barker's *Regeneration* Trilogy', Susana Onega and Jean-Michel Ganteau (eds.), *Ethics and Trauma in Contemporary British Fiction* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), pp. 21-36 (p. 35).

Rivers as 'pure hysteria, uncontaminated by malingering' (*GR*, p. 48). In the *Regeneration* trilogy, Rivers thus defines victimhood as emotional repression, implying that the shell-shocked patients that he treats are unknowing victims of the confrontation between their gendered upbringing, continued in the trenches, and the horrors they must endure in the trenches. This is reminiscent of Woolf's Septimus Smith, who is also a victim of the repression of grief, a repression that corresponds to accepted codes of male behavior. By asking his patients to acknowledge their emotions, Rivers criticises and deconstructs traditional notions of masculinity. Barker presents trauma as the decisive trigger of the crisis of masculinity, and Rivers is the fictional character who voices a gendered perspective on shell shock.

In line with my overarching argument concerning the capacity of First World War fictional prose to complicate over-simplified notions of victimhood, I interpret Barker's use of the cultural/literary trope of shell shock as a means to focus on the *Regeneration* trilogy's philosophy of selfhood. As with *Mrs Dalloway*, this selfhood is portrayed as a means, albeit limited by the patriarchal forces, to discuss the potential of the victims of shell shock to retain a certain degree of moral integrity. This discussion is at odds with the conventional focus on the figure of the vulnerable body, seen by Bach as the quintessential symbol of innocence (see the Introduction). This notion of selfhood is closely linked to the image of the split personality embodied in *The Eye in the Door* (1993), the second volume of the trilogy. This novel explores questions of trauma and how to survive it. More importantly, though, *The Eye in the Door* explores ethical questions concerning the relationship between the self and the other. Lena Steveker argues that Barker's trilogy can be seen as an illustration of philosophical theories that are interested in the self and otherness.[271] Emmanuel Levinas

[271] Steveker, 'Reading Trauma in Pat Barker's *Regeneration* Trilogy', p. 33.

sees that the self is intricately linked to otherness, which forces the self to enter into a relationship of ethical responsibility.[272]

In Barker's trilogy, the focus on selfhood concerns above all its male fictional victim-soldier Billy Prior, who suffers from blackouts and a dissociated self that is morally objectionable: 'Though he still had no memory of doing it, he had betrayed Mac. [Mac is a childhood friend turned war dissenter] (*ED*, p. 266).' This otherness turns Billy into a victim-perpetrator and complicates the trope of innocent victimhood, as will be seen later. However, Billy's amount of moral agency is severely limited by the magnitude of his mental illness. Agency is given strict boundaries, but it still exists. The same is true of Septimus Smith.

When Rivers asks Prior to recognize his internal other within himself, instead of silencing it, he asks him to admit that his sadistic self is now an integral part of his selfhood: 'I think there has to be a moment of … recognition. Acceptance. There has to be a moment when you look into the mirror and say, yes, this too is myself' (*ED*, p. 249). *The Eye in the Door* implicitly accuses British society of having repressed the unpleasant memories of the war, represented by shell shock sufferers. When Billy Prior's girlfriend and fiancée-to-be Sarah visits him in Craiglockhart, she notices that the mutilated soldiers have been located somewhere where the public cannot see them (*R*, p. 160). Sarah thinks that 'if the country demanded that price, then it should bloody well be prepared to look at the result.' (*R*, p. 160). The act of recognizing these wounded men 'would have constituted an ethical act of acknowledging that these men and their traumas too were part of British society during and after the First World War'.[273]

[272] Emmanuel Levinas, *Die Spur des Anderen. Untersuchungen zur Phänomenologie und zur Sozialphilosophie*, ed. and trans. by Nikolaus Krewani (Freiburg: Alber, 1983), pp. 218-221.
[273] Steveker, 'Reading Trauma in Pat Barker's *Regeneration* Trilogy', p. 35.

As pointed out by Steveker, there is a similarity between Rivers' advice to Prior that he should integrate his other self into his personality, and Sarah's remark that British society should accept that the mutilated and shell-shocked servicemen also belong to the British war effort. The acceptance of Billy's other, morally objectionable self and the acceptance of the ugly side of war by society in general are the condition for a regeneration of the self, and for the regeneration of society. In both cases, one can argue that accepting that there is no innocence in war is necessary for the individual and society to come to terms with trauma. Consequently, the notion or illusion of innocent victimhood in times of war is an obstacle to the process of healing this trauma. Both *Mrs Dalloway* and the *Regeneration* trilogy thus question the trope of innocent victimhood associated with shell shock and replace it in their discussion of how to overcome the traumatic experience of war.

On a more individual level, the other takes the form of Billy Prior's aggressive, violent self. *The Eye In The Door* (1993) is preceded by a quotation from Robert Louis Stevenson's gothic horror novella *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886): 'I learned to recognize the thorough and primitive duality of man; I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, […] I was radically both'. Barker applied the Jekyll and Hyde story as an expression of multiple, contradictory personalities co-existing in one human consciousness. Through explicit quotations, near-quotes from *Jekyll and Hyde*, shared motifs, for example the dual mirrors in *The Eye in the Door* (*ED*, pp. 8-9), Barker's novel presents the psychoanalytical treatment of Prior by Rivers as a parallel to Stevenson's case of Dr Hyde.

The only literary critic to link Billy Prior to the trope of innocent victimhood is Karen Patrick Knutsen, who rightly identifies that when Billy Prior dies at the end of Barker's trilogy, 'the image of the dead soldier as the quintessentially innocent, sacrificial victim of

war is problematized.'[274] Knutsen links Barker's reference to the Jekyll and Hyde dualism to the trope of the 'physically degenerated working class', which is evoked in the trilogy by Major Huntley, one of the psychiatrists who collaborate with Prior's psychiatrist Dr Rivers (*R*, p. 211). The leitmotif of the split personality is useful to foreground Prior's guilt incurred as a traitor to the social class to which he belongs. This is due to the dualistic mode of presenting Billy Prior, who recovers from a traumatic experience on the Western Front war neurosis by taking on a desk job in London, working in the Intelligence section of the Ministry of Munitions. The issue of split personality links with innocent victimhood in the sense that it makes clear that seemingly innocent victims can also be violent perpetrators because they suffer from shell shock.

The Ambivalence of Class

Prior plays a crucial role in Barker's trilogy as the transgressor of three boundaries. Firstly, as a bisexual man, he challenges the homophobic atmosphere described above all in the second volume of the trilogy, *The Eye in the Door* (1993). This atmosphere is exemplified by the Pemberton-Billing trial in 1918, in which the Canadian-born actress Maud Allan sued the MP Noel Pemberton-Billing for having published an article which accused Allan of having a lesbian affair with the Prime Minister's wife, Lady Asquith, orchestrated by German spymasters. Billing accused the two women of being at the centre of a conspiracy in which wives of powerful men were allegedly being enlisted for a 'Cult of the Clitoris'.[275] Secondly, as one of the shell-shocked officer-patients of army psychiatrist Dr Rivers, Prior reverses the

[274] Karen Patrick Knutsen, *Reciprocal Haunting: Pat Barker's Regeneration Trilogy* (Münster: Waxmann, 2010), p. 87.

[275] At the trial, Pemberton-Billing was acquitted of all charges of libel. Basil Thomson, head of Special Branch at the time, wrote of the trial: 'Everyone concerned appeared to have been either insane or to have behaved as if they were.' Ciaran Conliffe, Noel Pemberton Billing And The Cult Of The Clitoris. *HeadStuff*, 3 September 2017 <https://headstuff.org/culture/history/noel-pemberton-billing-and-the-cult-of-the-clitoris/> [Last accessed: 13 August 2023].

roles of psychoanalyst and patient by uncovering, in a series of discussions with Rivers, the doctor's own traumatic childhood experiences, marked by a repressive, authoritarian father. Thirdly, as an intelligence officer on the home front, Prior betrays his class loyalties by spying on his working-class childhood friends who are conscientious objectors and political dissidents.

For the purpose of my argument, I concentrate on the third of these transgressions - Prior's spying on his working-class childhood friends - as it illustrates the dualism that Pat Barker uses to articulate two of her main themes in the trilogy under scrutiny: class and trauma. These two themes are embodied and complicated in the figure of Billy Prior, as Prior betrays the wanted anti-war resistance leader Patrick Mac Dowell, or 'Mac', one of Prior's childhood friends. The reason for this betrayal is to be found in the trilogy's second novel *The Eye in the Door*, in Prior's war neurosis, which triggers moments of memory lapse. During one of those blackouts, Prior betrays Mac. One can therefore argue that Prior is both an innocent victim of his trauma-induced memory lapses, but also a perpetrator or traitor in terms of social class. For the purpose of my argument concerning the connection between the trope of shell shock and selfhood, both class and trauma are important: class is what Prior betrays, which turns him into a perpetrator; trauma is what can only be healed by integrating the awareness that there can be no pure moral innocence in times of war. I argue that the model of selfhood discussed in the *Regeneration* trilogy depends on the interconnection between class and trauma. Billy Prior suffers from a dissociated self because he suffers from shell shock. It is during one of his fugue states that he betrays his working-class friends. The *Regeneration* trilogy model of selfhood, as voiced by Dr Rivers, claims that accepting the negative potential of one's personality is a condition for being healed from trauma.

As mentioned in the Service records for the First World War in the National Archives, the imperatives of warfare provided an opportunity for upward social mobility to a considerable number of working-class soldiers to reach the ranks of officer:

> In August 1914, the officer class in the British army was a small and privileged élite numbering only 15,000 men. During the course of the war, a further 235,000 individuals were given either permanent or, more frequently, temporary commissions. The pressing need for an expanded officer corps enabled men from a wider variety of social and educational backgrounds to become ”temporary gentlemen”.[276]

The figure of Billy Prior shows the ambivalence felt by and towards this class of officer. In chapter two of *The Eye in the Door*, Captain Charles Manning, a wounded intelligence officer with whom the bisexual Billy Prior has an affair, describes Billy's ambivalence towards his status as a working-class officer:

> the basic truth was the man [Billy Prior] was neither fish nor fowl nor good red herring. Socially. Sexually, too, of course, though this was a less comfortable reflection. Manning describes the ”temporary gentleman” Prior as “one of those dreadful people – well, they were dreadful – who aped their betters, anxious to get everything 'right', and became, pallid, morally etiolated and thoroughly nauseating.” (*ED*, p. 20)

Billy's father uses the same imagery in the first volume of the trilogy, *Regeneration*, in a discussion with Dr Rivers about Billy's youth: 'I'm not proud. He should've stuck with his own. He's neither fish nor fowl.' (*R*, p. 57). The fact that both the working-class representative (Billy's father) and the upper middle-class officer Manning criticise the social status of the 'temporary gentleman' demonstrates the importance society places upon fitting people into a fixed social category. It also shows that the traditional class divides continue alongside the endurance of suffering shared by the soldiers. Shortly before Prior is

[276] Service records for the First World War. *The National Archives*, UK: <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/+/https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/service_records/sr_officers.htm>. [Last accessed: 1 May 2024].

killed in action, he evokes a certain sense of shared victimhood when he looks at the men of his platoon. Even if the remark in his diary is ironic, it illustrates their ambivalent feelings towards their service: 'We are Craiglockhart's success stories. We don't remember, we don't feel, we don't think […] we are objects of horror. But our nerves are completely steady. And we are still alive.' (*GR*, p. 200).

Prior's ambivalence towards the working class from which he originates is essential to the trilogy's overall cultural pessimism. Far from being the innocent victim of the war waged by the British state against political dissenters, who are mostly members of the working class, Prior actively participates in this war as an intelligence officer who has to report the actions of his own peers. In a discussion with Patrick 'Mac' MacDowell (Mac), a pacifist who organizes strikes in munition factories, Billy Prior, who is MacDowell's childhood friend, expresses his ambivalent feelings towards the working-class:

> […] the part of the proletariat I've been fighting with – the vast majority – they'd string *you* up from the nearest fucking lamp-post and not think twice about it. And as to your striking munitions workers …' Prior swept the shed with a burst of machine-gun-fire. (*ED*, p. 110).

Prior willingly spies on his friends. His ambivalence is illustrated by the fact that during this meeting, he wants to help his pacifist friends by discrediting another intelligence officer called Spragge, who produced false evidence against the pacifists (*ED*, pp. 105-115). The guilt from which he suffers as a result is illustrated by Barker's use of the dissociated or split personality.

The image of the mirror serves as the symbolic marker of Prior's doubleness or dissociation. His guilt is too strong to be alleviated by the self-centred eros, or fatherly love, that Prior's psychiatrist Dr Rivers feels for his patient. I interpret this fatherly love as self-interested because it is inefficient, even destructive, and only works in the service of Rivers

himself, and the military authorities he represents. Rivers really cares for his officer-patients, but his loving care helps them to cope with their shell shock, with the result that they are sent back to be exposed to mortal danger at the front. In the end, Rivers' feelings of fatherly love only help to prolong the war effort, and are thus in the service of the government and the military.

Rivers leads Prior to discover that he suffers from multiple personalities that will bear his responsibility for him when confronted with traumatic events: 'I survive out there by being two people, sometimes I even manage to be both of them in one evening.' (*ED*, p. 229). Prior's guilt for betraying his childhood friends Beattie Roper and her husband, the Socialist deserter Paddy 'Mac' MacDowell, is discussed by Rivers and Prior towards the end of the novel. Rivers tells Prior to accept his guilt by recognising that it was his duty, as an intelligence officer, to tell the police where Mac was hiding. However, Prior is aware of his guilt: "He could not, whether to satisfy Mac or console himself, say, 'I did my duty.' What had happened was altogether darker, more complex than that." (*ED*, p. 266).

Shortly before this extract, Prior is portrayed as torn between two kinds of loyalty: loyalty to his childhood friends, and loyalty to his comrades in arms, whom he sees threatened by the actions of the conscientious objectors, who, for example, try to sabotage the production of munitions by organising strikes: 'And one did feel at times very powerful that the only loyalties that actually mattered were loyalties forged there [at the front]. Picard clay was a powerful glue.' (*ED*, p. 255). Nevertheless, Prior also feels loyalty to Mac: 'But Mac, he thought. Mac.' (*ED*, p. 256).

Barker's use of Prior's 'Jekyll and Hyde'-blackouts may be seen as having a double function: first, it illustrates the *Regeneration* trilogy's complex treatment of the issue of moral agency; second, it helps to foreground, especially in *The Eye in the Door*, a concept of

selfhood based on the theory that trauma can be overcome if the shell-shocked patient willingly integrates his aggressive personality traits into his self. The traumatised self must be accepted back into the midst of society, only then can it be healed. This is Rivers' advice to Billy Prior, but, as seen above, Rivers' message can also be applied to British society. Given the fact that trauma is associated, throughout the trilogy, with loss of autonomy, the trope of shell shock acquires the potential to regain lost autonomy. This positive function is at odds with the conventional perspective on shell shock as an exclusively negative force. However, this regenerative aspect of shell shock is severely limited by the fact that Billy Prior dies at the end of the trilogy, which does not give him the opportunity for regeneration.

The destructive effects of Rivers' fatherly love, or self-centred eros, are illustrated by Prior's wish that Rivers should rescue Prior from his anxiety and guilt: 'You're my external conscience, Rivers, my father confessor. You can't let me down now, you've *got* to make me go back.' (*ED*, p. 228.) In this sense, Rivers helps Prior to avoid any confrontation with his guilt, by declaring his patient fit to go back to the frontline. In the *Regeneration* trilogy, guilt is an essential ingredient in the novel's construction of multiple personality disorder as a symbol of a schizophrenic society at war. However, within Billy Prior's schizophrenic behaviour, there is room for a considerable amount of human agency. As a result, guilt, which is the result of this human agency, becomes an integral part of Barker's notion of schizophrenia.

The third novel of the trilogy, *The Ghost Road* (1995), concludes with Prior's death from poison gas inhalation during a futile attack on the Sambre-Oise canal, one week before the Armistice. Two examples of guilt illustrate the ambivalent moral agency of both Prior and Rivers. Firstly, Dr Rivers is portrayed as responsible for the agonising suffering of one of his patients. *The Ghost Road* undermines Dr Rivers' moral innocence despite his well-meant

fatherly feelings for his patients. Rivers understands that he has failed his patients, when he helplessly watches the agonising death of the young Lieutenant Hallet, who has been horribly wounded in the head. Hallet cries out the unintelligible words 'Shortfarvet', which Rivers interprets as 'It's not worth it' (*GR*, p. 274). The theme of fatherly love is omnipresent in this climactic scene, illustrating Rivers' guilt. Hallet was saved on the front by Prior before he was sent to Rivers' London hospital, and Hallet's father, a patriotic Major, despairingly insists that his son's death was worth it.

Secondly, it is not only the presence of guilt, but also the absence of guilt that complicates Prior's moral innocence. This is achieved through Barker's dualistic mode of presenting the behaviour of her working-class officer Prior towards the very comrade-soldiers to whom he feels loyal. A good example is provided by a scene in *The Eye in the Door*, which illustrates the schizophrenic distrust of potential opposition against the war coming from the 'enemy within'. In this case, the enemy within is represented by the soldiers under Prior's command after his return to the Western Front. By linking two scenes united by the theme of censorship, Barker suggests that Prior becomes simultaneously the victim of this witch hunt against potential dissenters, and one of its agents. In chapter fifteen of *The Eye in the Door*, Prior finds Lionel Spragge, one of the intelligence officers spying on Beattie Roper's family, in his flat. During the ensuing discussion with Spragge, Prior notices that Spragge has read the intimate correspondence between Prior and his girlfriend Sarah Lumb:

> Spragge was removing Sarah's letters from underneath the ornament on the mantelpiece. No, not removing it. *Putting it back*.
> 'Have you read that?' Prior burst into the room. He remembered how explicit Sarah's references to their love-making had been. 'Have you read it?'
> Spragge swallowed hard. 'It's the job.'
> 'You shouldn't have done that.' (*ED*, p. 197)

The 'job' that Spragge refers to here consists of violating privacy for the sake of arresting dissenters. Prior breaks Spragge's nose and eventually finds out that it was he himself who betrayed MacDowell: "'It was you who told the police where to find MacDowell?' Spragge looked up from the dim interior. 'Not me, guv.' His tone was ironical, indifferent.' Lode says it was you.' (*ED*, p.199). As Prior has betrayed MacDowell during one of his memory lapses, he cannot remember what he did. It is Spragge who has to tell him the truth about his betrayal. Yet Prior himself does the same job in *The Ghost Road*, when, after his return to the Western Front as a commanding officer, he reads the private letters of his soldiers. In the following extract from Prior's diary, we learn that he opens their letters, finding out intimate biographical details, and censoring them to prevent any sensitive or upsetting information reaching soldiers or their families:

> I sit at a rickety little table censoring letters, for the post has arrived, including one for me from Sarah saying that she isn't pregnant. I don't know what I feel exactly. I ought to feel delighted and of course I am, but that was not the first reaction. There was a split second of something else, before the relief set in. Letters arrive for the dead. I check names against the list and write *Deceased* in the top left-hand corner. Casualties were heavy, not so much in the initial attack as in the counter-attacks. (*GR*, p. 198)

In contrast to Prior's feelings of guilt for betraying Mac, the fact that Prior gathers intelligence on his comrades in arms does not seem to make him feel guilty. This absence of guilt also exemplifies the contradictory status of Prior as both the victim of state censorship and as an active perpetrator of it. In this sense, Prior is similar to Septimus Smith in his lack of empathy for victims of the repression of individual freedom. In *Mrs Dalloway*, the perspective of Lucrezia as a collateral victim of her husband's illness is contrasted with Septimus' thoughts that he had married her without loving her. This can also be seen as a kind of lack of empathy for Lucrezia's difficult situation as a wife who is an innocent victim of her husband's delusional state.

To sum up, one can only partially agree with critics such as Leese who place the issue of gender identity at the centre of Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy. He concludes that in the trilogy, the trope of shell shock 'signals the repression of men, their status as victims of, and rebels against, imposed gender roles.'[277] While the issue of gender identity is undoubtedly important, my reading of the trilogy has foregrounded the various forms of moral guilt of the shell-shocked fictional First World War soldiers in order to discuss the wider issue of human agency in the context of the cultural trope that suffering from shell shock automatically implies victimhood. The feelings of guilt of these fictional protagonists challenge the received notion that shell shock equals moral innocence.

Both Catherine Lanone and John Brannigan accurately interpret the *Regeneration* trilogy as offering the reader no consolation.[278] Lanone argues that love is portrayed in Barker's three First World War novels as a destructive force, in the sense that it destroys Rivers' belief in duty:

> Therapy becomes an ambivalent process of "salvation" which creates an intimate bond with three surrogate sons (as Barker adds to the "real" poet Siegfried Sassoon the imaginary characters Burns and Prior), and it is this love which ultimately shatters Rivers's belief in his duty even as he performs it.[279]

The failure of feelings of eros to expiate Prior's and Rivers' guilt must be seen as the logical consequence of the *Regeneration* trilogy's overarching cultural pessimism. Wartime Britain is depicted, above all in *The Eye in the Door*, as a schizophrenic society that blurs the boundaries between moral innocence and collaboration with anti-democratic repression.

[277] Leese*, Shell Shock*, p. 175.
[278] Catherine Lanone, 'Scattering the Seed of Abraham: the Motif of Sacrifice in Pat Barker's *Regeneration* and *The Ghost Road*', *Literature & Theology*, 13.3 (September 1999), 259-268; John Brannigan, *Pat Barker* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).
[279] Lanone, 'Scattering the Seed of Abraham: the Motif of Sacrifice in Pat Barker's *Regeneration* and *The Ghost Road*', p. 263.

Feelings of guilt do exist, but they become invisible, as they are blocked by psychological repression mechanisms.

Both Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy portray shell-shocked First World War soldiers as characters who combine contradictory, irreconcilable attitudes. Both works use the trope of 'shell shock' as a metaphor for the conflict between social conformism and individual freedom. This trope can also be read as a literary tool that is used to portray two different versions of selfhood. In *Mrs Dalloway*, Clarissa's selfhood is embodied by her recognition, as a reaction to Septimus' suicide, that the self is merged with other people and places, in contrast to a stable and unitary notion of the self, as propagated by the forces of patriarchy. Her group solidarity with victims of repressive forces is the result of this awareness. However, her affirmation of life means that, unlike Septimus' radical act of committing suicide, she continues to make compromises. This is where Clarissa's grey zone of conscience is located. In the *Regeneration* trilogy, selfhood is equated with an integration of otherness into one's own personality. In both novels, the crucial issue raised by the portrayal of the fictional characters is the question of how to preserve a certain degree of moral integrity while fulfilling the demands and expectations of a society at war. The portrayal of the fictional victim-soldiers Septimus Smith and Billy Prior, and of Clarissa Dalloway, in their struggles to emancipate themselves from these demands complicates the issue of their agency. Their status as compromised innocent victims of patriarchal repression and war-related trauma complicates the trope of innocent victimhood associated with war victims who lack agency.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

This thesis has analysed complexities associated with the trope of innocent victimhood in First World War prose fiction dealing with four different kinds of injustice: first, anti-Semitic discrimination directed against German and French Jews; second, ethnic cleansing of the Ottoman Armenian community; third, military injustice suffered by frontline soldiers during and shortly after the First World War; and finally, the inhumane psychiatric treatment of shell-shocked British soldiers during and after the conflict. Given the thematic approach of this study, the novels selected are representative, not of all First World War prose fiction, but of those texts that describe the conflictual relationship between the power of the nation state and the individual victims of that power. This relationship provides the basis for analysing the difference between the way the First World War is represented in state-level centenary commemorations, marked by the trope of innocent victimhood, and the more complex ways in which the victims of injustice are represented in the fictional world of twelve selected First World War novels.

The cross-cultural approach of this thesis has demonstrated that two recurring patterns emerge from the literary representations of victimhood and injustice during the First World War. First, the twelve texts portray fictional protagonists who are conscious of the ambivalent nature of their actions and decisions. This is illustrated by the important presence of these protagonists' sense of guilt. I argue that this sense of guilt indicates that despite their status as victims, the protagonists retain a considerable amount of human agency. Second, this guilt is closely linked to the portrayal of two kinds of love, selfless agape and self-centred eros. The common denominator between the four interwar novels discussed in the thesis is that selfless agape is discussed as a potentially redemptive force that might

atone for the ambivalent choices made by the main fictional characters. In the post-1990 texts, I have shown that love is also present in the shape of self-centred eros, in the shape of romantic love relationships or fatherly love. The notion of innocent victimhood is never a static state, but moves between a future to be hoped for, and a past to be regained. The link between innocent victimhood and love lies in the notion that innocence both anticipates hopes for a better future, or it looks to regain some kind of lost innocence by justifying moral shortcomings set in the past. I argue that these two aspects of innocence are embodied in the twelve novels by the feelings of love of the fictional protagonists. However, I argued that the presence of love complicates and questions innocent victimhood, instead of contributing to the protagonists' redemption.

The complexities of the two feelings of guilt and love in the diegetic world of the fictional texts – and the ways in which these complicate any easy categorising of the protagonists as innocent victims – contrast sharply with official narratives of state-sponsored First World War centenary commemorations in Germany, France, Britain, Turkey and Armenia. These commemorations focus on a narrative of national sacrifice and innocent victimhood, which explains their silence concerning the guilt of the various actors involved in the four different kinds of injustice examined in this thesis. These commemorations draw attention away from the reality of violence in war. The diegetic universes of the fictional prose texts are marked by a transnational, general sense of responsibility for actions undertaken by individuals who are victims of injustice. In this sense, the novels selected for this thesis are representative of a widespread preoccupation with guilt on the part of novelists, which spans more than a hundred years, but which has been generally overlooked in the critical literature on First World War prose fiction.

This preoccupation with guilt, demonstrated in my analysis of the individual novels, is represented from the perspective of the victims and their varying degrees of responsibility in their predicaments. It is here that Primo Levi's concept of the grey zones of conscience provides a powerful tool to describe the dilemmas of the fictional characters examined in the five chapters. This concept precludes any black-and-white moral assessment of the guilt incurred by these protagonists. It sheds new light on the notion of individual agency in prose fiction dealing with the First World War by problematising the trope of innocent victimhood, albeit at the price of portraying a somewhat disillusioning picture of human behaviour in the face of injustice. Nevertheless, these two recurring patterns, the presence of guilt and the presence of love as a redeeming force, do not blur the differences between the national contexts in which the portrayal of the injustices is set. In each of the five main chapters of this study, the trope of innocent victimhood is set both in a specific national context and against cultural tropes of innocent victimhood that are dominant in a given national context.

In Chapter Two, the emancipatory struggles of the German-Jewish protagonists were discussed, in the context of these protagonists' support for the war effort of a structurally anti-Semitic Prussian state. My readings of Arnold Zweig's *Junge Frau von 1914* (1931) and Avi Primor's *Süß und ehrenvoll* (2013) problematised the ambivalent human agency displayed by both female and male German-Jewish characters. With the help of gender-aware criticism, the emancipatory struggle of Zweig's female heroine Lenore Wahl in Zweig's *Junge Frau von 1914* was discussed. She is the victim of sexualised violence originating from the brutalisation of men caused by the war. My reading focused on Lenore's ambivalent marriage to her rapist-fiancé, which she sees as an act of selfless reconciliation. Men, like Lenore's father Hugo Wahl, are also victims of militarism, as they uncritically support the state's militarist structure and its anti-Semitic core. The ambivalent support of German-

Jewish protagonists for a state that discriminates against them is also illustrated in Avi Primor's post-1990 novel *Süß und ehrenvoll*, in the shape of Ludwig Kronheim and his fiancée Karoline Schulzendorf. Karoline's emancipation from her anti-Semitic parents is ambivalent because she vows to educate her children as both Jewish and German patriots. Karoline recognises the anti-Semitic nature of the German state, but hopes to play her part in overcoming it by educating her children in this way. She may be naive, but she is not ignorant. The implication of this ambivalent fictional portrayal of German-Jewish support for the German war cause is that emancipation from male dominance is possible (Lenore Wahl), whereas emancipation from excessive nationalism remains impossible. In Primor's novel, the French-Jewish involvement is represented in the French combat soldier Louis Naquet, who also becomes the victim of anti-Semitism in the French army. Unbeknownst to him, he kills his German-Jewish counterpart Ludwig in combat. The result is that Ludwig is not only a morally compromised victim of anti-Semitism, but also a victim of the tragic circumstances of war that lead to a French Jew killing his German counterpart. Primor's portrayal of his German and French Jewish protagonists is ambivalent and challenges the trope of innocent victimhood, as his protagonists are depicted as morally-compromised victims, through their blinkered nationalism, but also as victims of the circumstances of war. They are examples of Levi's grey zones of culpability because they move between their loyalty towards their state, while becoming victims of the tragic imperatives of war. This moral complexity contrasts with the notion of Jews as loyal German patriots that is foregrounded in the commemorations, in Berlin, of the fallen German-Jewish soldiers. The tragic complexities of war and the guilt incurred were absent from these commemorations.

In Chapter Three, the discussion of the guilt incurred by fictional Armenian protagonists during the Armenian genocide highlighted their use of violence while resisting

the Ottomans' ethnic cleansing of Armenians. One of the novels discussed in Chapter Three, Franz Werfel's *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh* (1933), demonstrates that the individual is limited by an excessive identification with his ethnic roots, as exemplified by the fate of its main protagonist, Gabriel Bagradian. Although Gabriel's death is glorified as a sacrifice for the sake of the Armenian victims of deportation, his ambivalent decisions as a military leader problematise the trope of innocent victimhood of official Armenian commemorations, which sanctify every Armenian victim of the genocide. In Chapter Three, we saw that human agency is also a self-destructive force in Ahmet Ümit's *Patasana* (2000), which is used to avenge the murder of Armenian victims of the genocide. Similarly, in Chris Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls* (2012), also discussed in Chapter Three, the violence used by its main heroine Laura Petrosian's grandfather in 1915, avenging the murder of his family by killing an Ottoman official, problematises the notion of Armenian innocent victimhood conveyed by the official Armenian commemorations. It also casts an ambivalent light on the human agency involved in trying to remember the genocide itself, as Laura Petrosian is faced with the question as to whether she should reveal dark family secrets to the public, thereby accepting that her Armenian ancestors had to take morally ambivalent decisions when faced with the threat of physical elimination. Her ancestors can therefore not be viewed as wholly innocent victims.

Chapters Four and Five analyse the trope of innocent victimhood by focusing on the image of the vulnerable body as a symbol of innocence. In Chapter Four, the theme of revenge was considered as a means to punish the injustices resulting from callous military judicial systems in the First World War. These injustices can be seen in the physical details of the execution of an innocent prisoner, and in the self-mutilation and facial disfigurement of French combat soldiers. In the texts examined, I argued that the notion that this apparatus

crushed innocent individual soldiers is complicated by the crimes and/or ethical transgressions committed by these soldiers. Arnold Zweig's *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa* (1927) illustrates that, although its eponymous hero Grischa Paprotkin is unjustly sentenced to death by the German military authorities, he nevertheless accepts his fate because he feels guilty for his previous life as a ruthless Russian soldier who enjoyed killing his enemies. Grischa's human agency is embodied in his psychological development from a callous soldier to the epitome of human martyrdom. This psychological change problematises Grischa's role as a soldier who killed enemy soldiers without pangs of conscience. Grischa is a victim of the unethical demands imposed on soldiers. In this sense Grischa is an innocent victim of the atrocities of war in general. However, his feelings of guilt add psychological depth to his status as an innocent prisoner of war unjustly sentenced to death. In Sébastien Japrisot's *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* (1991) and Pierre Lemaitre's *Au revoir là-haut* (2013), which were also discussed in Chapter Four, assumptions of innocent victimhood are cast into doubt through the criminal actions of the fictionalised French First World War soldiers portrayed in these texts. Japrisot's novel portrays three female heroines who choose diametrically opposed ways to cope with the unjust death sentences meted out to their respective fiancés or sons. Whereas the first of Japrisot's women, Mathilde Donnay, is satisfied with the hope to continue her pre-war love relationship with her fiancé, the second female heroine, Tina Lombardi, chooses to avenge her dead fiancé by murdering the officers who refused to implement a presidential pardon. Japrisot's text does not use any moralising narrative voice to comment on Tina's revenge. I argue that this silence of the text puts Tina's agency in the grey zone of conscience, as the novel neither condones nor condemns her act. What is certain is that Tina is a female victim of war that adds moral complexity to the trope of innocent victimhood. The mystery about Mathilde's fiancé

Manech is solved at the end, when she finds out that he suffers from amnesia, but lives under the false identity of a fallen French soldier. This soldier's mother, Juliette Desrochelles, is the third female figure of importance in the novel, and the second that adds moral ambivalence to the notion of innocent victimhood of female victims of the war. Tina and Juliette are the two female protagonists that complicate the figure of the innocent bereaved wife and mother of a fallen serviceman. Tina Lombardi and her fiancé Ange may be the victims of the dysfunctional military justice system, yet her act of blood revenge turns her into a morally-compromised female victim of circumstances. Juliette Desrochelles' agency is, however, less controversial, although it is illegal. Her silence about Manech's real identity saves him from imprisonment. The different degrees of responsibility portrayed in the novel, both on the side of the soldiers and on the side of the collateral female war victims, add nuance to the trope of the innocent victimhood. In *Au revoir là-haut*, the third novel discussed in Chapter Four, the figure of the innocent vulnerable body is applied to the facially-disfigured war veteran Edouard Péricourt. The novel is set mostly in post-war France, when Edouard Péricourt chooses to live a life of misery, not wanting to return to his father Marcel, who had severed contact with his son before the war because of his son's homosexuality. Edouard considers himself to be a victim of an ungrateful French state who disrespects its war veterans. To avenge this perceived injustice, Edouard and his friend Albert construct a criminal fraud scheme. I see Edouard as morally-compromised victim of the physical cruelties of war, being facially disfigured. This iconic war wound is usually associated with innocence and heroic endurance of pain. Edouard's revenge against society thus problematises the moral innocence of the figure of the facially-disfigured soldier. Whereas revenge was discussed without being commented in Japrisot's novel, revenge is satirised in Lemaitre's text. But both the perpetrators of the fraud scheme and one of its main victims,

Marcel, are satirised. The implication is that in none of the three texts, revenge is glorified as a means to right a wrong, although the main protagonists of the texts by Zweig, Japrisot and Lemaitre are victims of the brutality of war. Nevertheless, the protagonists in the two post-1990 novels in Chapter Four take their actions in the grey zone of culpability, as they can be seen as morally-compromised victims of war.

In the discussion in Chapter Five, the assumed innocent victimhood of those damaged by the war focuses on the psychological suffering of British First World War soldiers. Their innocent victimhood is problematised by Woolf and Barker's use of the trope of shell shock. The feelings of guilt of the fictional characters were set in the context of the trope of shell shock, especially as it is perceived in the British context. In this chapter, I offer a revised definition of shell shock that is also based on text-based criteria which foreground the importance of the human agency of the fictional shell-shocked soldiers portrayed in Woolf's and Barker's novels. The discussion focused on the uses of the trope of shell shock as a means of offering the readers two different concepts of selfhood. I argue that these two concepts are constructed as alternatives to the patriarchal repression from which the shell-shocked soldiers are suffering. Although the traumatised soldiers in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy are innocent victims of the impact of war on their mental health, they retain enough human agency to acquire moral ambivalence. In the case of Woolf's Septimus Smith, this ambivalence is illustrated by different reactions to his suicide. Barker uses the trope of shell shock to trigger Billy Prior's split personality, which protects him from having to face the negative sides of his personality and of war. This split personality is discussed as being simultaneously a positive and a negative condition. Both novelists thus use the trope of shell shock to add complexity to the traditional portrayal of the shell-shocked victim-soldier, which is marked by the absence of agency. Furthermore,

Woolf uses her female heroine, the upper middle-class Clarissa Dalloway, to illustrate a model of selfhood that discusses the issue of how to preserve one's moral integrity under the pressures of a patriarchal society that suppresses individuality. I argued that Woolf's text discusses the extent to which these characters can retain their moral integrity in the context of a male-dominated society that represses personal freedom. The lack of agency that is associated with the figure of the innocent shell-shocked victim-soldier is reversed by both Woolf and Barker into a victimhood that foregrounds agency, albeit an ambivalent agency. Furthermore, both Clarissa and Septimus offer two different ways of overcoming these oppressive forces. The psychiatrists who treat Septimus are representatives of this oppressive system. Septimus chooses to commit suicide, which is seen by Clarissa as expressing a refusal to be compromised by the forces of repression. By contrast, Clarissa rejects suicide. She becomes aware that her role in society is to facilitate connections with people from different backgrounds. However, both alternatives are ambivalently portrayed by Woolf. The same applies to Clarissa's feelings of agape, in the shape of her solidarity with Septimus as a victim of repression. Septimus' victimhood is not only used as an image of the suffering and impact of war on the individual, but it is also positively used as a means to highlight that there can be solidarity between these victims. This solidarity is made possible by Clarissa's empathy for Septimus' status as an innocent victim of social norms and traumatic war experiences.

In the discussion of the other set of texts analysed in Chapter Five, Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy (1991-1995), I argued that although Billy Prior, the shell-shocked working-class officer, feels guilty for betraying members of his own social class, this guilt is complicated by Prior's ambivalent feelings towards this very class. Prior is a victim of war trauma, but also of his past, when he was sexually abused. His split personality is a means to

prevent himself from becoming aware of these dark memories. At the same time, his split personality is also discussed by his psychiatrist Dr Rivers as a means to accept these negative memories as the condition to be regenerated. This dual personality was caused by the fact that Billy, as a teenager, was the victim of sexual abuse by a priest. Barker's use of the literary trope of shell shock, which triggers Billy's malignant double, has two functions: it complicates Billy Prior's agency, and thus also complicates the trope of the innocent shell-shocked victim-soldier. It serves as a symbol for the trilogy's notion of selfhood. This notion is based on the awareness, expressed by Billy's psychiatrist Rivers, that one must accept the potentially malignant other as an integral part of one's identity. The implication is that both Woolf's and Barker's notions of selfhood can be seen as defensive in nature, as they both are based on a compromise with forces, whether societal (Septimus/Clarissa) or psychological (Billy Prior), that repress individual freedom. The innocent victimhood that both shell-shocked officers certainly represent, due to their mental suffering, is used to portray the limited emancipatory potential of human agency in the face of patriarchal repression.

The trilogy's other main protagonist, Dr Rivers, is also a victim of the imperatives on the medical profession in times of war. He is a victim in the sense that his mission is to heal his patients in order to send them back to the frontline. However, his feelings of guilt complicate his status as a victim. This guilt is closely associated with his feelings of fatherly love towards his patients, which I describe as an illustration of self-centred eros. It is self-centred because his fatherly love for his patients ultimately accelerates their healing process, which, in turn, sends them back to the frontline. Instead of protecting his patients, he sacrifices them. Just like Billy Prior, Rivers is a morally-compromised victim. Rivers' feelings of eros can be seen as self-justifying, as they are intended to soothe Rivers' awareness that he ultimately cannot protect his patients.

As explained in the introduction, I see the two kinds of love, agape and eros, as the illustration of the redemptory promise associated with innocence. Agape is used in the four interwar novels to discuss if the fictional protagonists' can alleviate their guilt in the future. Agape contains a certain hope for a future where innocence can be achieved. Eros has the same function as a potential redemptory force, but it is used as a means to regain a state of moral innocence that was lost, by exculpating past moral ambivalences. In *Junge Frau von 1914*, Lenore Wahl's feelings of agape take the form of a vow to work as teacher who spreads the message of pacifism to the young German generations. In the case of *Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh*, Gabriel Bagradian's selfless, excessive identification with his ethnic roots can be seen as a fictional representation of Werfel's idea that the future for all ethnic minorities lies in identifying with their own roots, as opposed to being seduced by nationalism. In *Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa*, Grischa's selfless agape is represented in his dream of reconciliation with the enemy. In the case of Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, I see Clarissa's philosophy of human interconnectedness as an expression of her empathy with the victims of war and patriarchal oppression. In these four interwar novels, I argue that, despite the good intentions of these protagonists, their feelings of agape are problematised by the moral ambivalence that is associated with them.

Similarly, the thesis has argued that the feelings of self-centred eros which are evident in the more recent First World War novels also help to challenge the notion of innocent victimhood by being associated with the protagonists' ambivalences, which, in themselves, add nuance to the trope of the innocent victim without agency. As with agape, eros adds the question of whether and to what extent these ambivalences can be alleviated. Eros helps to complicate the trope of innocent victimhood by highlighting the ambivalences of the protagonists' reactions to injustice. In Primor's *Süß und ehrenvoll*, the German-Jewish

characters refuse to acknowledge the ingrained and enduring anti-Semitism of the German state, thinking that their romantic relationship will protect them from the effects of anti-Semitic discrimination. In Ümit's *Patasana*, the avenging American-Armenian archaeologist Timothy Hutton, and the avenging Hittite scribe Patasana, justify their lust for revenge with the fact that those they are punishing are the perpetrators who harmed their beloved partners or relatives. In Chris Bohjalian's *The Sandcastle Girls*, the present-day narrator Laura Petrosian realises that commemorating the Armenian genocide may have a cathartic effect on her guilt for having ignored her family's past. However, exposing this past to the public means that she will have to accept that her grandparents' individual involvement in the events in 1915 forced them to take morally ambivalent actions and decisions. In Japrisot's *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* and Lemaitre's *Au revoir là-haut*, revenge is associated with self-absorbed eros in the couple Tina Lombardi/Ange Bassignano (Japrisot) and the father-son relationship between Edouard and Marcel Péricourt (Lemaitre). The two post-1990 texts problematise the trope of innocent victimhood of the French First World War soldiers: although they are victims of a dysfunctional military apparatus during and after the war, their feelings of eros, instead of exculpating their ambivalent decisions, add further complexity to them. I see eros both as a driving force for Mathilde's search for her fiancé Manech, and as a destructive feeling that enables Tina's blood revenge. In Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy, eros is visible in the shape of Dr River's fatherly feelings for his patients. As Rivers continues to send his healed patients back to the frontline, I argue that his fatherly love can be seen as a mechanism to justify to himself his complicity in continuing the slaughter of his officer-patients. Eros thus not only adds complexity to the notion that the figure of the shell-shocked soldier is an innocent victim, but it also illustrates that the guilt incurred cannot be alleviated.

The novels examined in this thesis on representative examples of First World War fiction dealing with four specific injustices have demonstrated that a broader, more complex comprehension of the moral dilemmas reimagined in creative fiction set in the context of the First World War is both possible and necessary. Literature enables both a cognitive and affective connection with this conflict, as it encourages the exploration of a wide range of ethical complexities and grey zones that are invariably missing from official commemorations of the First World War, and from popular representations of the victim-soldier. The fictional narratives examined in this thesis act as agents of memory, thereby making the experience of, and reflection upon, injustice available to their readers from a variety of perspectives. In contrast to the often misleading memory transmitted by popular and cultural tropes of innocent victimhood, this thesis has shown that the memory represented and conveyed in the novels selected for this thesis confronts the moral ambiguities of human agency when faced with these injustices.

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