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DISABLING DISCOURSES IN GERMAN LITERATURE
FROM LESSING TO GRASS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

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The Ohio State University
1998

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ABSTRACT

Although much theoretical and historical work has been undertaken recently that explores the human body, pain, illness, disease, and cultural and discursive constructions of bodily phenomena, little research in the humanities has examined the experience of disability and its attendant cultural constructions. Social factors such as the establishment and distribution of insurance monies, the diminishment of access to education and meaningful employment, and pervasive public stereotypes of weakness and asexuality all play a role in the daily experience of disability, yet these experiences are frequently omitted from contemporary intellectual discussions of the human body.

Examining the ways in which literary representations of disability function in well-known works of German literature, this dissertation employs an interdisciplinary approach. Through analysis of textual production from seemingly disparate discourses of law, medicine, religion, and sexuality, this study examines the portrayal of male figures who acquire disabilities in conjunction with a national war. This particular focus allows for analysis of prevalent historical notions of individualism, citizenship, and nationhood. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s Enlightenment drama Minna von Barnhelm suggests that physical impairment need not compromise an officer’s ability to serve his nation. Achim von Arnim’s Romantic novella Der tolle Invalide auf dem Fort Ratonneau problematizes the causation of mental illness and ultimately positions disability as a placeholder for
deviance and dangerousness. Leonhard Frank’s 1918 collection of novellas Der Mensch ist gut calls attention to the use and abuse of metaphors designed to entice young men into military service. Günter Grass’s post-war novel Die Blechtrommel offers a paradoxical portrayal of Oskar Mazareth’s dwarfism, suggesting on one hand the capacity of these extended metaphors of disability to articulate resistance to fascism, while on the other hand implying Oskar’s inherent complicity with German National Socialism through his violent, destructive behavior.

Despite some development, a resilient and often unqualified notion of human wholeness appears in the primary texts under consideration. This study of four literary works from two centuries of German culture ultimately reveals both discontinuities and continuities in the discursive function of disability over time.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My sincerest thanks are due Professors Leslie Adelson and Dagmar Lorenz for guiding me in this project. Their high standards of scholarship were consistently matched with generous support and encouragement. I thank them for recognizing my vision of this topic and providing both the guidance and the freedom to allow it to take shape. Professor John Davidson merits my gratitude for his careful readings and willingness to engage in thoughtful discussion. I thank Professor Brenda Brueggemann as well for her keen insight into Disability Studies and for her enthusiastic support of my work. Additionally I thank the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures at The Ohio State University for providing me with generous support in the form of Blume, Seidlin, and Dissertation Fellowships, including a year of study at the Rheinisch-Wilhelmsche Universität in Bonn.

I fondly acknowledge Bob Lynch’s contributions to this dissertation and thank him not only for giving me the job that started this journey, but also for his valuable insights and even more valuable friendship. I thank Steve Schmersal, a gifted writer and cherished friend, for consistently challenging me to reach further. For their care and confidence I thank Ester Riehl, Anita Brown, Mike Paxson, and Linda Carpenter. Finally, I wish to thank my parents, Jane and Joe Hamilton, and my sisters, Margie and Mindy, for their imaginative and unqualified love and support.
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CHAPTER 1

DISABILITY: THEORIES AND HISTORIES

Disability is a concept, which is not to say that disability is all in the mind. Disabilities are often believed to be apparent or self-evident. To discuss disability as a purely discursive issue might seem inappropriate, because disability is overwhelmingly associated with the body and perceived through bodily senses, particularly through sight. A discursive approach might seem to subordinate the material body too drastically, yet I shall argue in this project that disability is a product of many layered and often competing social discourses, and further, that literary portrayals and metaphors of disability have not only reflected, but have also helped to shape medical and legal notions of disability. Thus the history of people with disabilities cannot be seen apart from the history of writing about disability and the history of scholarship (both medical and other) on disability. The concept of disability requires analysis of the social and historical processes that contribute to its existence and that ultimately shape the lives of people who fall into the category of the "disabled." My dissertation will focus on the development of various categories of disability in Germany from the middle of the eighteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, specifically attending to four literary portrayals of disability spanning
these two hundred years. The literary texts I shall consider are well-known works that feature characters who have disabilities resulting from war injuries or in conjunction with a national war: Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s Minna von Barnhelm (1756), Achim von Arnim’s Der tolle Invalide auf dem Fort Rattoneau (1818), Leonhard Frank’s Der Mensch ist gut (1918), and Günter Grass’s Die Blechtrommel (1959). Because war is one easily recognizable cause of disability, a study of war and its representation in literature over two hundred years allows for many configurations of disability to be examined in light of one another. Three topics surrounding disability will be most productively analyzed within this common context: loss, blame, and diminished social standing. My analysis of the selected literary texts will show surprisingly constant attitudes despite the wide range of historical contexts in which they are located. First, it will become clear that war connotes damage and war injuries signify loss. Second, war clearly allows blame to be assigned: soldiers who have been disabled in war are historically not held to “deserve” their disabilities in the same way that people with cancer or AIDS might be believed by some to deserve the accompanying disabilities. And finally, in an unspoken hierarchy of disabilities, those resulting from war injuries consistently prove least ostracizing from non-disabled people. The stigma of disability is usually least damaging to those people who acquired their disabilities through war.¹

The wars under consideration include the Seven Years’ War, the Prussian Wars of Liberation, and the First and Second World Wars. I have chosen these wars in particular

¹ Oskar Matzerath from Günter Grass’s Blechtrommel is the only literary figure under consideration here whose disability was not acquired through direct military combat. His complex relationship to the Second World War will be examined in detail in chapter five.
because of their importance in German history. The participants of each of these wars expressed the establishment of their national identity as a primary goal. At the same time these wars significantly altered the national context in which the literary texts under consideration were produced. My focus on war in general stems from war’s capacity to articulate the dimensions and processes of nation building even as war helps construct those very dimensions and processes. Wars as historical events give expression to cultural structures (material and discursive) underlying them. At the center of these issues is the question of the configuration of the individual and the relationship between that individual and the larger social whole. I shall argue throughout this project that disability constitutes one important discursive dimension that has the potential to give rise to or resist war. I shall discuss ways in which literary texts both illuminate and mask the dimension of disability within historical contexts, focusing on the links among historical notions of disability, politics, nationhood, citizenship, individualism, religion, and work.

Recognizing the interdependence of discursive and material spheres within historical contexts, I shall attempt a doubled study. First I shall examine the portrayal of disability within specific periods of German literature in order to assess the development of disability as a social category, for literary portrayals of disability have the capacity to reveal cultural attitudes about disability. My study will examine selected literary representations and the cultural contexts from which they emerge in order to compare historical notions of disability. Second, I intend to analyze the function of disability in the assessment of German literature. I believe that my study of German literature will shed light on the reciprocal impact of multiple discourses. I submit that by examining more
familiar discourses of nationhood, war, gender, and race within a framework of disability, i.e., by “disabling” these discourses, I can demonstrate how disability itself is shaped not only by the material body but also by conceptual and discursive spheres whose impact is perhaps not readily apparent. Thus my study will contribute both substantive information about the construction of disability within historical contexts and a methodological model for examining the multi-dimensional discursive composition of human identity.

My research is profoundly influenced by recent developments in the United States disability-rights movement, and I shall reflect upon my point of reference throughout the course of this study. Clear caveats present themselves with this approach. First among them is that the concept of disability with which I operate simply did not exist in the historical periods in which these works were written. Simply to identify a literary character from 1756 as “disabled” thus raises a thorny question: if, as I shall argue, disability is socially and historically constructed, how then can I use the term “disability” in a context that did not recognize the category? Further, German authors spanning two hundred years cannot reasonably be measured against a late twentieth-century American understanding of disability. For this reason, I shall use my understanding of disability in order to assess the difference in historical points of view. Although an American understanding of disability from the late 1990s can hardly be applied intact to analyses of German literary texts since 1756, this vantage point is nonetheless present in my readings and will be maintained as a lens through which I examine these texts. Additionally, as I shall address later in this chapter and throughout the remaining chapters, the American disability rights movement and American Disability Studies scholarship provide important new conceptual
tools for investigating the complex matrix of discourses that work together to configure disability.

**Definitions of Disability in the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany**

Defining disability is the major task of discussing disability. I shall begin here with formal legal definitions because legal definitions most directly influence the social or the "built" world that people with disabilities must negotiate, including, but not limited to laws that apply to buildings, transportation and communication systems as well as to education, employment, and access to public places. The Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) defines disability as a physical or mental condition that interferes with a major life function such as walking, hearing, breathing, or learning; or being perceived as having such a condition. This definition places disability squarely within the context of individual civil rights and provides a clear contrast to the more normative and society-oriented German definition. The German definition falls under the larger category of social welfare. It entails calculating the measurement of "Grad der Behinderung" (degree of disability), which describes in quantitative terms the capacity of the individual to perform work. These definitions of disability draw attention to the differing fundamental assumptions of civil-rights and social-welfare perspectives. At issue here is the relationship between the individual and the collective and the value of each for the other. The ADA mandates that people with disabilities shall by right have access to all public buildings and

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2 Susan Wendell uses the term "built environment" to draw attention to cultural attitudes toward disability and their effect on social construction and organization. Wendell argues that "the built environment [was] created for too narrow a range of people and situations. One of the crucial factors in the deconstructing of disability is the change of perspective that causes us to look in the environment for both the source of the problem and the solution" (46).
services and accommodation within them; German law mandates no such access but does provide for health care and social insurance, which the American law does not.

Even as I rely on these definitions, I must point out the complex historical processes involved in creating them. There are many other types of definitions that have contributed to legal definitions and that have also changed over time: medical models, which are often used to substantiate legal categories; social and psychological categories, such as those used to direct schools, group homes and mental institutions; and personal and group identity models, such as those that might unite artists or political activists.

These definitions often shape disability even as they attempt to describe it by assigning social roles and providing justification for allocating resources. Such shaping is evident in three recent studies that cast disability in very different terms. Deborah Stone’s *The Disabled State* shows that disability can be seen as a “privilege” within the context of work, wages, and insurance. The status of disability allows a person to be exempt from work and still receive monetary compensation as though work had been performed.

Exploring the history of insurance programs and disability policies in the United States, England, and the Federal Republic of Germany (before German Unification), Stone shows that disability as a category is tremendously useful to states and to state organizations. Stone further demonstrates that the disability category is a powerful instrument of the state and can be used to help regulate the entire labor arena: “The very notion of disability is fundamental to the architecture of the welfare state; it is something like a keystone that

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3 The American Social Security Insurance system is one example.
allows the other supporting structures of the welfare system and, in some sense, the economy at large to remain in place” (12).  

Lennard Davis’s *Enforcing Normalcy* problematizes the concept of disability in terms of law and civil rights. Davis describes for example circumstances in which a deaf person who is not able to communicate through speech, writing or sign language must in effect submit himself to the mercy of the legal system. One example is the 1993 “discovery” of Junius Wilson in a North Carolina mental institution where he had been “lost” since 1925, unable to speak or assert his right to leave (169). Davis also describes the imprisonment in the United States of Jose Flores, a young man from Puerto Rico who is not able to read, write, or use sign language. Because Flores cannot communicate in a trial, he will likely be held in jail or sent to a mental institution. Davis concludes:

Flores (...) is so profoundly disabled that he can never be released from jail, never be tried. Like part of a jigsaw puzzle that has been lost he fits into no system. He is guilty of disability, and under a system that demands normality he will remain in limbo. (...) Given the fact that he will never be taught sign language, that means he will be in jail for the rest of his life. (170)

Another recent study of disability offers a third way of conceiving disability. Nora Groce’s *Everybody Here Spoke Sign Language*, a study of hereditary deafness on Martha’s Vineyard at the opening of this century, shows how deafness did not need to be defined as a disability because virtually everyone on the island used sign language along

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4 War has played a critical role in this debate as well. Stone notes that “military service is perhaps the most important and probably the first area where disability-based exemptions were introduced” (5). Shapiro concurs, writing that “the (American) nation’s sense of indebtedness to men who became disabled while fighting its wars was to inspire many major disability programs throughout U.S. history” (59).
with speech. Thus, deaf people encountered no stigma and could expect full inclusion in all the activities of life on the island.

Within the Stone, Davis, and Groce studies, disability plays a strikingly different role: first as a privilege, then as deserving punishment, then finally as though a condition commonly held to be disabiling were no disability at all. If each of these studies focuses on experiences of disability in the twentieth-century United States, how are such disparate conceptions possible? Which of these concepts most accurately describes disability? Does the acknowledgment of one concept of disability render the others less viable? The very broad range of experiences given in these works alone makes clear how necessary it is to examine the particularities of social contexts. This is precisely what I shall undertake in this dissertation as I trace changes in historical and cultural definitions and configurations of disability in Germany.

The Whole Body

It is necessary to delve into earlier historical periods to uncover the roots of later notions of disability. Although a comprehensive analysis of the influence of Greek and Christian notions of human wholeness and disability would run too far afield here, I would like to touch upon some of the major philosophical and religious foundations that are present in the German literary works under consideration. One foundational concept is the Platonic concept of kalokagathia, which holds that the beautiful, whole body is the reflection of a beautiful mind (Jaeger 646). The combination of goodness and beauty

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5 With regard to disability, people in virtually every historical period have maintained some notion of this concept. Although there has been some debate as to the dynamics of the relationship between the body and the mind, the body has historically been seen most often to reflect the mind and give a visible indication of the state of the mind. For people with
created the ideal toward which men would work, where "work" refers to physical exercise and education. This concept provides philosophical underpinnings for establishing standards of bodily value which could then be applied to human beings. Measured against an ideal concept of goodness that included beauty among its more important components, the disabled body could not fare very well. Both Plato and Aristotle debated whether or not a disabled child should be raised, and both recommended not raising the child. They argued that the burden on the society would be too great and the rewards too small (Bernsmeier, Arbeitstext 66).

It is important to emphasize that the Greek notion of the human body upheld the male body as the epitome of wholeness. Rosemarie Garland Thomson describes Aristotle’s de facto equation of femaleness with disability. Referring to Book Four of Aristotle’s Generation of Animals, she outlines Aristotle’s concepts of a “generic” type of human body and its opposite, the “monstrosity.” Thomson concludes that “Aristotle conjoins the ‘monstrosity’—whom we would today term ‘congenitally disabled’— and the physical disabilities, as I shall describe in detail in later chapters, this mind-body dualism has most frequently been invoked in assessing the needs of the disabled and at times when the value of disabled people to their larger societies has been in question. In virtually every instance in which the body’s reflexive capability has been held to be viable, people with disabilities have been deemed less able to contribute and less valuable to a society than their non-disabled peers. Later disability-rights activists have argued that this dualism is at the core of the problem of discrimination against people with disabilities. This notion of wholeness was assumed and quantified in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as the science of statistics grew. First used to compile information about the state, statistics came to be applied to the human body for medical purposes. With statistics came a new concept that was applied to human beings: the concept of the norm. As deviation from the norm was increasingly seen as a problem to be corrected, the norm, becoming the standard against which all human bodies are measured, became in effect the nineteenth-century ideal. Lennard Davis notes: “With bourgeois hegemony comes scientific justification for moderation and middle-class ideology. The average man, the body of the man in the middle, becomes the exemplar of the middle way of life” (26).
female outside the norm” (20). Isabel Hull underscores the Greek designation of maleness as the standard body type, noting that “Aristotle and his followers considered male sexual physiology perfect; semen caused conception by itself (the one-seed theory)” (245). These points show the physically strong and beautiful male body to be not only whole in and of itself, but also to embody the standard of human wholeness.

Much the same way in which ancient Greek notions of the human body have influenced understanding of disability from the Enlightenment to the present day, so too have foundational Christian concepts permeated modern thinking. The Judeo-Christian Bible is organized around binary thinking and relies on the language of binary opposites: heaven and earth; good and evil; pure and sinful; male and female; healthy (or healed) and sick. “Able-bodied” and “disabled” would justifiably fit into this opposition. In each of these pairs, one station is held up as higher, more valuable, and more desirable than the other. Within these binary opposites, it is toward the “good” station that one must work. Many biblical passages may be understood to oblige a reader to move from sinfulness to purity, from evil to good, and through divine intervention, from sick to healthy. An imperative of cure clearly results from this binary framework.

“Disabled People in the Bible,” a brief article by Charles J. Kokoska, summarizes the portrayal of disabled people and the influence that these portrayals have had upon “cultural standards and forms of art and literature” (20). This article’s basic contribution is an accounting of the references to disability in the Bible and a grouping of these incidents into distinct categories. The resilient idea finds expression in every one of the primary texts under consideration here. The simple framework of wholeness and strength vs. brokenness and weakness remains intact in Leonhard Frank’s Der Mensch ist gut.
references according to the "positive," "negative," or "neutral" image that they conveyed. Kokoska concludes that forty-six of the 180 incidents of disability (identified through the descriptors blind, deaf, diseased, dumb, mute, sick, crippled, maimed, and lame) contained "negative connotations" (20). Although he did not offer much explanation of his division between "positive," "negative," and "neutral" beyond the phrase "relative to current standards," Kokoska did characterize the negative portrayals as those which portrayed the disabled person in an inferior role or one that stigmatizes the disabled individual (20).

Stigma and the construction of Otherness

Concepts of idealism and normalcy provide social standards of bodily existence and human behavior. Deviation from these standards yields in most every culture predominantly negative consequences. Some exceptions certainly exist, for example when a person's deviance is believed to render that person to be particularly insightful, powerful, or otherwise gifted with extraordinary talents. One thinks here of Homer, the poet whose blindness imbued him with extraordinary insight, or perhaps Beethoven, whose deafness is often invoked as having contributed to his musical genius. For the most part, however, differentness from the perceived normal population has usually resulted in stigmatization.11


9 Kokoska provided no further definition of disability.
10 Kokoska wrote in 1984.
11 "Differentness" is of course a broad and notoriously vague category whose determinants are never stable.
understanding of stigma as a visual, bodily mark of "something unusual and bad about [a person's] moral status" (1). He uses the term stigma to "refer to an attribute that is deeply discrediting," and although his study is not limited to the topic of disability per se, a vast number of his observations apply to disability as the experience of bodily difference (3). Of particular importance is the basis Goffman offers for understanding disability as a social construction and the vocabulary Goffman offers for describing the ways people manage or control the attributes that stigmatize them.

Goffman devotes a long section of his study to the practice of passing, acting or posturing in such a manner as to hide a discrediting attribute or to position oneself among those who are not stigmatized. At issue here is the degree of visibility of one's difference, a concept that has direct bearing on the study of disability. Many disabilities are, after all, not readily visible: a short list would include asthma, deafness, or early stages of degenerative diseases such as AIDS or multiple sclerosis. A person who has such a condition might choose not to disclose it if doing so might yield unfavorable responses. That a disability might be hidden or controlled makes it clear just how difficult it is to define disability and how much of disability is defined, often inadequately, by simple visual observation.  

12 The concept of passing is present in varying degrees in the primary literary texts I analyze in this study. Those characters who have undergone amputation or who experience paralysis have of course little opportunity to hide their disabilities. In chapter two, for example, I shall discuss Lessing's Tellheim, who bemoans the obviousness of his paralysed arm. In chapter four I shall address Eugen in Ernst Toller's Hinkemann (1921), who invests extraordinary effort to hide his less visible disability.
Goffman points out that “the normal and the stigmatized are not persons but rather perspectives” (138). Goffman lays bare the power of stigmas and offers possible reasons why “normals” might stigmatize others. In his conclusion he calls for an interrogation of “normalcy” and an investigation of the possible political motivation behind stigmatization. He notes:

The stigmatization of those with a bad moral record clearly can function as a means of formal social control; the stigmatization of those in certain racial, religious, and ethnic groups has apparently functioned as a means of removing these minorities from various avenues of competition; and the devaluation of those with bodily-disfigurements can perhaps be interpreted as contributing to a needed narrowing of courtship decisions. (139)

Some concept of Otherness most often informs any act of stigmatizing and is usually present in some form in discussions of disability. Simone de Beauvoir incorporates the term “Other” in The Second Sex (1952) by identifying “Man as the Subject, Woman the Other” (xvi). A direct substitution of “disabled person” for “woman” in this equation would not be possible, for such a substitution would equate women with disabled people and would imply that men, simply by virtue of their gender, were the categorical opposite of disabled people. Yet this concept of Otherness is particularly helpful in a discussion of disability, not when it is set against the category of “Man,” but when it is set against the category of “Subject.”

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13 Goffman’s examples, however, often suggest otherwise. Published in 1963, the work’s terminology does not reflect the type of critical self-awareness that is regularly practiced in academic research today. Because of this, made most evident in Goffman’s persistent use of the phrase “we normals,” a reader might justifiably argue that Goffman in fact restigmatizes the very people he identifies as stigmatized.
Otherness in the case of disability often connotes grotesque, monstrous, dangerous, or uncontrollable qualities. Because of the fear that these qualities instill in the "normal" population, disability has historically been viewed as something to be controlled, normalized, or even eradicated. People who have disabilities have found very little opportunity to act as subjects of their lives or as subjects in written or artistic representation. Instead, they have been viewed as objects of fascination, scorn, and pity and treated as objects of study, manipulation, and aggression. One must be aware of the subjectivity of another person in order to affirm that person's rights; in the case of disability, where the disabled person is viewed as an object of the non-disabled subject, the potential for subordination, rejection, and worst, abuse become evident.

Another important study of Otherness, Sander Gilman's *Inscribing the Other* (1991), details the psychological processes of "othering" and stereotyping. Gilman's notion of Otherness is similar to the "abnormality" around which disability has historically been defined. Gilman's work centers on the question of how the German saw the Jew, what in his or her history of the understanding of the Jew (and the Jew's understanding of his or her self) permitted the pathological demonization which led to the view of the Jew as a vermin, as a disease within the body politic (18).

To study this question, Gilman examines processes of human perception and the role of stereotypes that are for human beings "a crude set of mental representations of the

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15 Many of the ideas cited here also appeared in Gilman's earlier article "Why and How I Study the German" (1989).
world” (12). He points out that stereotypes allow the individual to define him- or herself by offering a needed sense of difference, but that there is a very great disparity between necessary stereotyping and that pathological stereotyping that is unable to “distinguish the ‘individual’ from the stereotyped class into which the object might automatically be placed” (13). Gilman explores how and where “necessary” becomes “pathological” and what mental processes allow for this progression by examining various creative artists’ projections of the self and the Other. The Other, as Gilman defines it is neither inherently good nor bad, but as its name implies, simply other than the self, created in order to better know the self. He writes: “There is always an Other for us, no matter how we define ourselves. The ultimate Other is the doppelgänger, the Other which is ourself, but a self projected onto the world” (14). Gilman’s goal, like mine in this study, is to understand how people learn who they are by working out who they believe they are not. Unlike Gilman, however, whose study is primarily psychological and in many regards ahistorical, my project examines the Otherness of disability in historically specific terms. Although stereotypes of disability in German culture have proved resilient, I shall show through my literary analyses that the dimensions of disability are shaped by specific historical processes and modified by dynamic social vectors of race, class, and gender.

Disability and discourses of identity

16 In response to Gilman’s article, Leslie A. Adelson draws attention to Gilman’s ahistorical arguments. Adelson writes that they are “stripped of specific contours by the dichotomous rigidity with which they are applied. If it is true—and I have no reason to doubt it—that each of us is motivated by a deep psychological need to produce stereotypes of some sort, what does that tell us about what particular stereotypes are produced by whom and of what groups under what social and historical circumstances with what effect?” (Response 205; emphasis in the original).
Disability, gender, sexual orientation, race, and class are discursive categories that share a number of constitutive attributes and political concerns. All offer a challenge to fixed categories of wholeness or binary opposition. Disability Studies provides a new analytical lens through which to examine their interrelationship in the construction of human identity, for the dichotomy of able-bodiedness and disability is inherent in the overarching dichotomy of normalcy and abnormalcy that informs each of these discourses. Despite some limitations, feminism and feminist theory are the most likely places to begin theorizing about disability, for feminism has long been concerned with many issues compatible with disability. Some common issues are those of identity formation and the distribution (or lack) of economic and political power. Feminism has begun an interrogation of the role of the female body with regard to the construction of individual identity and society at large; this investigation needs to be carried further and applied to the role of the disabled body.

Disability studies shares with feminist scholarship the interrogation of social norms and the conviction that social construction plays a great role in creating identity categories. Feminists have long argued, for example, against a purely ontological definition of “woman” and have explored the ways in which cultural positions have configured the category “woman.” In this manner, many scholars doing work on disability have explored the social construction of the category of disability, often applying feminist analyses to their subject. Yet substantial differences exist between feminist scholarship

17 Thomson identifies a strategically important linkage, writing that “terms from feminist theory can be enlisted to challenge the persistent assumption that disability is a self-evident condition of physical inadequacy and private misfortune whose politics concern only a limited minority” (22).
and disability studies. The differences I shall address below provide important sites from which to pose critical questions about the interrelationship of feminist and disability discourses. Those sites of critical inquiry yield analytical instruments with which I shall address the representation of disability in the works of German literature under consideration.

Many feminist projects, both political and analytical in nature, decry the lack of subjective agency afforded to women throughout history. Yet disability has been noticeably absent from feminist discourses, and people with disabilities have not been afforded the very type of subjective agency that feminists have long sought. That this should be a point of contention for people with disabilities illuminates a theoretical blind spot within certain feminisms. This blind spot indicates that feminist discourses implicitly posit women's oppression within a structural paradigm of able-bodiedness. Wendell's *The Rejected Body* takes this unreflected reliance to task. Wendell argues that simply too little has been heard from people with disabilities. Her book offers theoretical challenges to feminism from a disability-centered perspective, fusing autobiographical anecdotes with philosophical analyses. Her primary point of contention with feminism is with what she views as its disproportionate efforts to elevate the status of the female body and disprove the belief that the female body is weak. The faulty extension of this syllogism, that a weak

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18 Wendell argues further for differentiation among all the various types of disabilities: "We will not have an accurate understanding of what it is to be disabled until we hear from everyone who is disabled" (72). She maintains that too much is said about "them" in medical diagnoses and legal definitions (for example, into which legal or employment categories they might fall) with too little reflection upon the position of those people making the diagnoses and legal decisions. After all, is it impossible that people with disabilities might also be doctors and lawyers and employers?
body is "feminine" or "feminized" has also been a pervasive assumption throughout Western culture and a topic of feminist criticism. This has import for the present study of the literary representation of disabled men. Each of the literary works considered has articulated some notion of compromised gender integrity as a result of disability, further attesting to the interrelationship among discourses of gender and disability. Feminist scholarship has produced the most refined vocabulary for describing the construction of gender, and it is with this vocabulary that my analysis will proceed.  

Some elaboration is necessary at this point. Feminist writing has challenged Western patriarchal ideals of body and body image, yet feminists, Wendell suggests, have not adequately reflected upon their own ideals. Wendell argues that feminism has been too much interested in portraying the strengths and the power of a female body, and for this reason, feminism has not been willing to consider in any depth a body that is not strong or that is suffering or in pain. She writes:

Feminists have always criticized the idealization and objectification of women's bodies, recognizing them as sources of exploitation and alienation. (...) Yet feminist movements have expressed their own body ideals, often insisting on women's strength and overlooking the fact that many women's bodies are not strong. (...) we have underestimated the bodily frustration and suffering that social justice cannot prevent or relieve. (93)

19 My particular focus on war further illustrates the interrelationship between disability and gender by providing historical parameters. Historically, waging war is a specifically male enterprise. Theoretical questions of gender and sexuality also emerge when disability and war are juxtaposed, because disability in literature is often portrayed in terms of loss, specifically the loss of phallic power. See in particular my discussion of Lessing's Tellheim in chapter one and of Ernst Toller's Eugen in chapter four.

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Feminist theory, however, has often criticized the mind-body dualism that so often elevates the mind over the body. In this framework, the female body is particularly subordinated because it does not conform to the Western ideal body, which is male. In an effort to reclaim the female body as an important site of identity formation and of human authority, feminists have argued for the necessity of grounding theoretical discussion of the body in the empirical, material, experienced body. Wendell holds this to be necessary, but not to the point of excluding issues of transcendence as well. Many people with disabilities must live with chronic pain, and they therefore rely on some type of spirituality or concept of transcendence in order to modify their awareness of pain and extend their sense of self beyond the strictly corporeal. While not arguing for an idealist notion of transcendence,\(^{20}\) Wendell nonetheless suggests that an experiential notion of transcendence or what she terms "strategies of transcendence" of the body should be considered as a means of dealing with pain and understanding the self (178).

Regarding identity formation, Wendell reiterates the important point that "identities/social positions are interactive, rather than additive" (72).\(^{21}\) One is not first a "woman," to which one adds, for example, a race, a sexual orientation, an economic status, an educational level, and then a disability. These categories of human existence and

\(^{20}\) Wendell attribute feminist resistance to philosophical notions of transcendence to the impression that "they are seen to originate from philosophies and/or religions that devalue the body (especially women's bodies) and bodily experience" (165).

\(^{21}\) Many feminist critics and theoreticians have written about multiple identity factors that exist simultaneously. Among the earliest efforts to problematize the interrelationship of racial, ethnic, and gendered identities was the "Combahee River Collective Statement" of 1977.
social organization inform and create the other categories even as they distinguish themselves from one another.

It is perhaps misleading to give so much attention to the relationship of feminism and disability, for discourses of race and class operate simultaneously alongside gender and disability to create human identity. Because discourses of disability, race, class, and gender share a number of constitutive attributes, it is not possible to treat them as fixed, disparate, or isolatable variables. Much like disability and gender, discourses of disability, race, and class also inform and produce one another. As Stone makes clear, the construction of disability is intrinsically linked to economic structures and social class. Davis concurs, citing Michael Oliver’s study *A Politics of Disablement: A Sociological Approach* which states that impairment and disability are not distributed randomly, but instead even “chance” and “accidents” fit a pattern involving class and race (85).

Specific problems of race and class are pertinent to this study of German literature. As I shall show in the literary and historical analyses that follow, discursive interrelationships crystallize in notions of work and war, where each sphere allegedly indicates a person’s ability to contribute to the well-being of the social totality. Because the “wholeness” of the individual is, in the literary works under consideration, potentially constitutive of the social “whole,” race and (dis)ability in particular are rendered critically important. One pivotal issue is genetics and the inheritability of acquired characteristics. Davis, for example, writes about how deafness was viewed as a race because deafness had genetic origins. The issue of reproduction is also pertinent, because historically disability

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22 The weight I attribute to feminist theory is, I believe, warranted, for the primary literary works under consideration foreground gender as a constitutive component of disability.
has never been viewed as a desirable physical or mental trait. Many attempts have been made to alter human genetic composition in order to prevent a wide variety of disabilities.

Another example of how race and disability are interrelated is found in the lived experience of both. Disability, like race, elicits the experience of stigmatization and discrimination. Referring once more to my earlier discussion of wholeness, the ideal of the male body has contributed greatly to the notion of the individual in Western culture. Yet both race and disability have provided grounds for denying individuals political rights. Davis’s example of the deaf and illiterate Puerto Rican prisoner makes this clear, as does the earlier U.S. policy of counting black males as three-fifths of a person.

Issues of race, class, gender, and disability draw attention to the possibility of multiple identities. A person can be and is often, after all, a member of more than one social group. In the German literary texts under consideration here, race, class, and gender are at times explicitly problematized and at other times have an implicit function. My goal in this project is not simply to increase general awareness of disability as an aspect of human identity by setting it on par with more familiar discourses of gender, race, and class. I am more concerned with exposing pathologizing tendencies that assert themselves in literature despite an author’s stated goal of “helping” the disabled. I am also concerned with the conflation of race, class, or gender with disability when that conflation is used to hold a position of deviance or aberration. Through my detailed analyses of disability in the

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23 In a rare and radical departure from this ideal, Katherine Dunn’s novel *Geek Love* (1983) imagines a family for whom disability is highly desirable. The narrator, the child who has the fewest disabilities, laments that “it was a disappointment when I emerged with such commonplace deformities” (8).

24 U.S. Constitution. Art. 1, sec.2. This was repealed on July 9, 1868, in the Fourteenth Amendment, sec.2.
remaining chapters I shall show that this placeholder is the predominant function of
disability in the German literary works under consideration.

**Representation: Disability as metaphor**

The language used to describe disability often draws from or intersects with
discourses of science, medicine, morality, and religion. The main difficulty in discussing
literary portrayals of disability is caused by slippage among discourses and by layering of
meaning.\(^{25}\) Does a given portrayal of disability provide insight into disability, per se, or
does it function largely as a metaphor, speaking to another issue through its symbolism?

Discourses such as science, medicine and religion inform and at times create other
discourses; "literature" is yet another discourse. Overlapping discourses within literature
are evident in the following questions posed by major works of world literature. Literature
asks: Is physical impairment to be attributed to God or some other supernatural power, as
in several Old Testament stories? Is physical impairment a punishment for a wrong, as in
the self-mutilation and blindness of Sophocles's *Oedipus*? Does physical impairment
render meaningful participation in society impossible, as in the case of Quasimodo,
banned to the bell tower in Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris*? Does physical
impairment require cure, as in the case of people living with AIDS in Tony Kushner's play
*Angels in America*? In each of these examples, the discourses that overlap and inform one

\(^{25}\) In another example of the layering of social discourses, it is interesting to note that most
American writers with disabilities and disability studies scholars are quite familiar with
German National Socialism. Kenny Fries writes, for example: "I know how dispensable
my life and the lives of so many disabled people have been in many societies, most notably
Germany under Nazi rule" (13). These writers often identify Nazi policies and practices
toward disabled people as an integral part of the global history of people with disabilities.
another are those of the physical body and, in order of the examples given, discourses of religion, morality, social participation, and medicine.

Often these discourses overlap in attempts to understand the origins of a disability or to contemplate human responses to a disability. Susan Sontag's *Illness as Metaphor* (1978) asks why there has been such a strong tendency to "interpret" illness or to derive some meaning from illness. Taking tuberculosis and cancer as her primary examples, Sontag describes why metaphors evolve most quickly when there are no ready explanations for the origin or the course of a disease. Sontag goes to the root of the need to understand disease and finds that

the notion that a disease can be explained only by a variety of causes is precisely characteristic of thinking about diseases whose causation is *not* understood. And it is diseases thought to be multi-determined (that is, mysterious) that have the widest possibilities as metaphors for what is felt to be socially or morally wrong. (61)

Describing the process by which a disease of the body transforms into a metaphor for society, Sontag writes: "First, the subjects of deepest dread (corruption, decay, pollution, anomie, weakness) are identified with the disease. The disease itself becomes a metaphor. Then, in the name of the disease (that is, using it as a metaphor), that horror is imposed on other things" (58). I shall argue in this study that this very discursive slippage

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26 Even though disease and disability are not necessarily the same thing, they often share so many features that it is possible to use Sontag's work to analyse historical notions of disability. Disability, like disease, is frequently believed to have an origin and is most often held to be (at least theoretically) alterable, as through cure, prevention, or normalization through science or education.

27 The origin of Francoeur's insanity in Achim von Arnim's *Der tolle Invalide auf dem Fort Rattoneau* is debated throughout the novella. Possible causes include his mother-in-law's curse; the pressure to divide his loyalty between the German army and his French wife; and the existence of a rumour alleging his insanity.
takes place in the discourse of disability and that a major factor behind this tendency toward metaphor is that people who have disabilities have so infrequently been viewed as authoritative, autonomous subjects of their lives. They have historically been subjected to the authority of scientists, doctors, teachers, political leaders and the clergy. Independence and subjective agency have rarely been the experience of a wide range of people with disabilities. I shall examine in later chapters on German literary works the ways in which metaphors can be used to obscure as well as to illustrate. I shall address in particular how specific metaphors of disability have concealed a broad range of struggles for political and social power.  

Sontag holds that the use of metaphor to describe a disease is particularly dangerous for people living with that disease, for the disease and the person who has it often become conflated. The person who has the disease is then likely to respond with feelings of guilt and to assume that he or she has done (or not done) something to deserve it. Sontag writes about punitive notions of disease, noting that “ostensibly, the illness is the culprit. Widely believed psychological theories of disease assign to the luckless ill the ultimate responsibility both for falling ill and for getting well” (57). In her later work, *AIDS and Its Metaphors* (1988), Sontag describes this tendency in even greater detail:

The move from the demonization of the illness to the attribution of fault to the patient is an inevitable one, no matter if patients are thought of as victims. Victims suggest

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28 Power struggles assume a variety of shapes and forms. I shall demonstrate that even ostensibly favorable representations of disability mask far less benevolent attempts to eradicate disability. Leonhard Frank’s *Der Mensch ist gut* is a particularly good example, for in his eagerness to prevent all disabilities, Frank in effect reifies the very standards that elevate the able-bodied over the disabled. In doing so he virtually assures that those people he attempts to support will never attain subjective agency and political autonomy.
innocence. And innocence, by the inexorable logic that
governs all relational terms, suggests guilt. (99)

In a similar manner, disability within many and diverse historical settings was and
is perceived to have punitive qualities. Within this logic, the particularities of disability are
subordinated to the (perceived) larger question of punishment and blame. I shall argue in
this dissertation that the explanation of disability through metaphor does not stem from or
serve people with disabilities. Metaphorical representation of disability ultimately
contributes to the ostracism of people with disabilities and justifies their lack of political
power.

Sontag is not the only person to analyze the use of metaphors in describing
physical difference. Stone also points out that the impact of germ theory was most often
articulated with metaphors:

The medical profession began to apply the model of
infectious disease everywhere, finding bacteriological causes
for nonbacterial diseases, and medical research concentrated
on the search for 'magic bullets' or specific antidotes to
each disease-causing agent. The metaphor of infectious
disease shaped public thinking about the nature of all illness.
Even if a specific microbe had not yet been isolated for a
disease, people assumed that such a microbe existed and
had only to be discovered. (Stone 96; emphasis in the
original)

Metaphors of the body politic: Disability as a social problem

Metaphorical portrayal of disability tends to divert attention from the specific
realities of living with a disability. Where disability is used as a metaphor, disability is
usually understood to be a social problem or a symptom of a social problem. From this

29 For example, Oskar Matzerath's dwarfism in Grass's Die Blechtrommel is understood
by some to represent the stunted ethics of Germans during the period of National
perspective the disabled person usually represents a metaphorical threat to the well-being of the society as a whole. People with disabilities, on the other hand, are themselves threatened when a society, be it fictional or real, views them as metaphors of deviance, for that society many take any number of measures to protect itself from the "threat" of disability. The disabled person is thus endangered, for the elevation of a social totality does not automatically assert the value of the disabled individual enough to protect him from his own society. This conflict does not result from mere conjecture, but has historical precedent: the use of metaphors reached its most heinous extreme during the period of National Socialism when people with disabilities were murdered in the Nazi effort to "cleanse" the German people of genetic "impurity."

With regard to a larger social totality, a person with a disability is often believed to be a liability or burden to that society. People who have disabilities were historically and are often today seen to be burdensome by many standards. Disability-as-burden appears in the context of employment, whereby a disabled person might require more accommodations than "normal" workers; within the context of morality, whereby disability is believed to have supernatural origins, as in punishment for unacceptable behavior; within the context of patriotism or nationalism, whereby people with disabilities are not able to perform military service or are not able to show athletic prowess in competition; or within the context of law and social services, whereby people with disabilities receive medical care, special education, transportation assistance, or other such Socialism. Another aspect of Oskar's portrayal, however, mediates this interpretation somewhat, for Oskar's dwarfism is also a marker of his refusal to participate in Nazism.

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services. In each of these contexts, it remains the burden of the disabled person to prove his worth to the larger society. Thus these scenarios give rise to a variety of social responses to disability that emphasize cure or insist upon the necessity of “overcoming” the limitations imposed by disability.

From what sources do metaphors of disability originate? We may begin to answer this question by asking others, namely: What is the value of the individual to the collective? What is the value of the collective to the individual? Who owns the body? Sontag probes these very questions in her study of metaphors of illness. Sontag comments on the historical development of the concepts of individualism and social organization by means of discussing disease. She writes:

Unlike the Elizabethan metaphors—which complain of some general aberration or public calamity that is, in consequence, dislocating to individuals—the modern metaphors suggest a profound disequilibrium between individual and society, with society conceived as the individual’s adversary (73).

The German literary works in my analysis confront this very dilemma. Like Sontag, I shall address the configuration of the individual within specific historical periods by analyzing the social constructions of disability within them.

Disability and work

The concept of disability as a social concern is intrinsically linked to historical notions of work. This idea crystallizes in the period of industrialism in which the very

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30 Stone's formulation of disability as a “privilege” addresses this type of social liability. Stone points out that in the United States “disability can provide an exemption from the normal civic obligation to honor one's debts. Public utilities (telephone, electricity, gas) in many states may not terminate service to a sick or disabled person who cannot pay his or her debts if the person provides some kind of certification from a doctor—usually a simple letter.” (6)
notion of citizenship came to be ideologically associated with work. The notion of the "average worker" becomes important for planning and implementing the goals of industry (see Davis, 28). The need for a normal body (in order to procure its highest use-value) gives rise to the category of disability. For the first time, bodies are widely subjected to measurement and assessed according to their adherence to or deviation from the norm.

Otto von Bismarck has a prominent role in this discussion. Bismarck initiated a comprehensive and compulsory national social insurance system in the newly unified Germany in 1883, which was followed by an industrial accidents law in 1884 and culminated in the German Invalidity and Pension Law of 1889 (Stone 36). According to Stone, Bismarck gave three explicit rationales for his social insurance program:

One was that a program of insurance, and particularly pensions, would make the worker realize that his future was tied up to the future of the state, and therefore he would be less likely to join the Social Democratic Party or be otherwise politically rebellious. (57)

This concept presupposes that a worker is more important to the social whole than the social whole is to the worker. But there is some tension here, for only as part of a social whole would the individual worker receive benefits. Still, the overt acknowledgment of the links between individual welfare and political loyalty tilts the balance in the favor of the social whole. The individual here clearly works to serve the state.

Bismarck’s second reason for instituting national insurance concerned the "underlying philosophy of government that emphasized the duty of the state to rule in accordance with Christian ethics and to promote the welfare of its members" (Stone 57).

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31 This concept of state-induced loyalty is important for discussing Leonhard Frank’s Der Mensch ist gut.
Stone concludes that the benevolent and the self-serving qualities of such paternalism were kept in balance by their very tension: “the benevolent sentiments (...) also justified the policy that would best serve the state’s political interests” (57).

Finally, Bismarck reasoned that “the state should reduce the burdens of poor relief for local governments by assuming the costs of pensions for invalids and the elderly. In the second reading of the bill before the legislature, Bismarck said that the parishes and counties (Kreise) would be considerably helped if the poor law changes were distributed more evenly among larger units” (Stone 57). This relocation of distribution authority enlarged the central government’s influence in the lives of individual workers.

Bismarck’s influence is felt even in the present-day Federal Republic of Germany. The present-day German social network provides a model of rehabilitation and care that many nations emulate. Disability policy nonetheless operates on the notion that disability is a social problem and not an issue of individual civil rights. Although Germany does not have a strong tradition of civil rights, the first article of the Basic Law of the Federal Republic does make an unequivocal claim to promote universal human rights: “Die Würde des Menschen ist unantastbar” (Art. 1 Abs. 1 Satz 2 GG). The claim to protect the “dignity of the human being,” however, is not sufficient to guarantee self-determination to people with disabilities. Increasingly subject to cost-benefit analyses, disability policy frequently elevates the welfare of the many above the welfare of the few. This tendency subordinates people with disabilities and precludes their full involvement in the activities of daily living, thus putting their claim to the rights of full citizenship at risk. Clear discrepancies exist in the contemporary German social welfare state with regard to people
with disabilities: on one hand, the often-praised “social network,” the federally- and state-
run system of insurances that is the primary marker of the German social welfare state,
provides high-quality, comprehensive health care; on the other hand, this very system
defines disability by measuring the reduction of a person's capacity to work against a
standard or a norm, thus perpetuating the notion that disabled people are less than whole.
Since 1974, West German law has defined disability using the normative instrument,
“MdE” or “Minderung der Erwerbsfähigkeit” factor: the factor indicating the degree to
which the capacity of the individual to work is diminished (Schmidt 15). This factor was
renamed as “Grad der Behinderung” (“GdB”), or “degree of disability” in 1986, yet the
resulting designation is still one that measures the reduction of one's capacity to work.
Thus a person might be designated “50%” or “75%” and would receive corresponding
benefits.

It remains remarkably unclear, however, exactly how “work” is defined so as to
arrive at the GdB factor. Carol Poore draws attention to the overwhelming deference to
the German market economy and highlights the “contradictions associated with the whole
complex of work, employment, and performance, connected, as they are to certain deeply-
rooted ideas about the ‘value’ of the individual to a society based on profit” (188). Poore
further identifies an area in which tension exists between an individual’s responsibility to
his or her society and that individual's opportunity for personal development:

The central problem underlying this practice of defining
disability as decreased work potential is that work or
performance is not perceived as being a possibly creative or
fulfilling activity. Rather, it is viewed primarily from the
point of view of economic gain and social control. (190)
This formulaic approach to defining disability gives rise to tension between an individual's claim to the rights of full citizenship and the well-being of a social totality, for such a definition of disability quite literally renders a disabled person burdensome to the social whole. This person's claim to full civil rights thus stands in clear conflict with the interests of the social totality.

Stone's *The Disabled State* points out conflicts such as this. Her work describes the historical use of the disability category in the United States, England, and the Federal Republic of Germany. Without denying "that disability entails handicap, social stigma, dependence, isolation, and economic disadvantage," Stone "focuses on disability as an administrative category in the welfare state, a category that entitles its members to particular privileges in the form of social aid and exemptions from certain obligations of citizenship" (4). She examines disability's position as a floater between a "need-based" and "work-based" system of distribution. Within this framework disability is clearly a social problem, "a conflict between work and need as the basis of claims on resources" (13). On a national and state level disability is most often defined in terms of work, however definitions of both work and disability fluctuate within given historical and cultural periods:

The tension between the two systems based on work and need is the fundamental distributive dilemma. To resolve it, society must develop a set of rules to determine the boundaries of the two systems (...). The boundary is something that each society has to invent, to redesign in the face of changing social conditions, and to enforce. (...) A successful resolution of the dilemma will have certain general characteristics, but every particular resolution is designed by politics, not by some universal logic. (17)
Stone traces the history of the clinical concept of disability and shows how medical
determination of disability has become the defining authority. She also shows that courts,
particularly in the United States, have gained the authority to override medical
determination of disability and acted—on an individual, case-by-case basis, to expand the
definition to include more people. Stone shows the context of social insurance, and she
points out that different people, agencies, and institutions in different positions within this
framework have differing and often competing interests in defining disability.

Subjective representation: Disability as personal experience

A discussion of the euphemisms for disability is necessary in any historical analysis
of disability. Euphemisms are generally used to soften or mask unpleasant or upsetting
details. Many changes have taken place regarding which words appropriately describe
disability. A person with a mobility impairment might be called “crippled,”
“handicapped,” “disabled,” “physically challenged,” or “differently-abled.” In German,
various terms of disability include “behindert,” “gelähmt,” or “Krüppel.” One important
aspect of the German language is its capacity to create words for people using only
adjectival descriptors. Thus, in German, a blind (German: “blind”) person is “der / die
Blinde,” a deaf (taub) person is “der / die Taube,” and so on.\(^3\)\(^2\) Although a “people-first”
shift in language has been advocated by numerous American disability-rights organizers,

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\(^3\) Some examples of this type of usage are indeed found in other languages, including
English and French. Stone notes that “the term ‘invalid’ in German usage was borrowed
from the French, where it was used in the beginning of the eighteenth century to describe
men unfit to be soldiers” (58). Achim von Arnim makes use of this term in his novella Der
tolle Invalide auf dem Fort Ratonneau.
such a trend has not found a foothold among German speakers.\textsuperscript{33} Joseph Shapiro’s \textit{No Pity} and various issues of the American periodical \textit{Disability Rag} have featured discussions of “people-first” language.\textsuperscript{34} The goal of this effort is to first acknowledge a human being, and only later, if necessary, name that person’s disability. Thus a “blind man” would ideally become “a man who is blind;” a “wheelchair user” would be “a person who uses a wheelchair,” and so on. German-speakers who do not advocate such an effort frequently describe the cumbersome phrases that would result. The capacity of the German language to create a noun from an adjective is instead regarded as an advantage.\textsuperscript{35}

The problems of language include not only terminology, but also agency and authority. Although the focus of his work is on work-oriented rehabilitation for people with disabilities, Udo Sierck nonetheless considers language to be a central issue to the emerging disability community in Germany. Writing in 1992, he noted

die historisch gewachsenen Formen der institutionellen und sozialen Aussonderung bedingen eine Sprachlosigkeit und Handlungsunfähigkeit, die mit den tatsächlichen körperlichen oder geistigen Besonderheiten wenig zu tun haben, aber in die Denkschablonen über “die Behinderten”

\textsuperscript{33} Nor has it become the standard American usage, although more intentional reflection has taken place among English speakers than among German speakers.

\textsuperscript{34} Some contributors to the \textit{Disability Rag} feel that this effort does not go far enough. S.L. Rosen writes that “‘disabled’ is in many ways even worse [than ‘handicapped’].” Rosen prefers the word “survivor,” which, ironically, can connote outliving a war, albeit a very different one from the wars described in the literary works under consideration here.

Rosen writes: “‘Survivor’ is a real word. It is not negative; it always conveys a sense of wholeness, of skill in just those ways we have had to be skillful” (quoted in The Ragged Edge 20).

\textsuperscript{35} Scheuerbrandt, Günter, Dr. rer.nat. Personal interview. 10 November 1994; Müller, Joseph. Personal interview. 24 October 1994. Scheuerbrandt is the director of the Testlaboratorium Breitnau, a medical research facility of the Deutsche Gesellschaft Bekämpfung der Muskelkrankheiten, e.V. Müller is the founder and publisher of the German disability advocacy magazine \textit{Handicap: Das Magazin für Lebensfreude.}
The "mold" (Denkschablone) that Sierck describes is slowly being recast by writers who have in fact begun to speak in their own terms (für sich das Wort ergreifen). In an emerging literary discourse of disability, both in the United States and in Germany notable language changes are evident. The language used to describe disability and the representation of disability in literature has changed through the appearance of autobiographical and testimonial literature written by people with disabilities. People with disabilities in the United States and in Germany are increasingly becoming writing subjects rather than being written about. They have usually only been written about by health care providers and social scientists. Writers with disabilities are disengaging themselves from the historical position of the studied object, i.e. the medical or psychiatric patient who appears in a case study or in a literary text for the supposed benefit of non-disabled readers. They are increasingly engaged in self-definition and self-representation. Their writing often constitutes a corrective undertaking or attempts to educate a misinformed reading public about the realities of living with a disability. Contemporary American writers who have written book-length creative non-fiction from a disability-

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36 In chapter five I shall consider whether Oskar Matzerath’s first and third person narrative in Grass’s Die Blechtrommel might be analyzed in light of this development. Oskar’s perspective as a three-foot tall young man, together with his belligerent drumming and glass-shattering cries, disrupts conventional narrative forms and problematizes subjective agency. Thirty years later, Ursula Hegi’s female narrator in the American novel Stones From the River (1994) provides a clear counterpoint to Oskar Matzerath. Trudi Montag contributes an explicitly disability-centered consciousness to her narrative, but unlike Oskar, invites the readers to identify with her.
centered perspective include Nancy Mairs (Waist High in the World. A Life Among the Nondisabled, 1996), Ann Finger (Past Due. A Story of Disability, Pregnancy and Birth, 1990), and Kenny Fries (Body. Remember, 1997). These are complex, largely autobiographical works that problematize the category of disability. Notably absent from them is any opportunity to summarize the experiences of disability with metaphors.

Similarly, recent German-language autobiographical literature by people with disabilities eschews the symbolic approach and details personal accounts of discrimination and ostracism that result from having a disability. Andrea Buch's An den Rand gedrängt (1980) and Sigrid Arnade's Weder Küsse noch Karriere (1992) problematize traditional literary and social metaphors that present disability as a burden or "liability" to a social whole, and in an attempt to "set the record straight" invite discussion of disability in terms of subjective experience and individual civil rights. These works provide varied and differentiated accounts of many of the physical and mental conditions that, despite their seeming unrelatedness, fall under the medical and political designation "disability." A broad range of physical and mental conditions is covered in each of these works, including blindness, spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, Thalidomide-Syndrome, and others. The people interviewed cite little more than the social responses to disability as "qualities" they share with other people designated "disabled": limited interaction with their non-disabled peers; a paternalistic health care system; severely reduced access to education and employment; lack of involvement in decision-making processes that affect their daily lives; and the non-disabled community's pervasive though erroneous perception that sexuality simply does not exist in the lives of people with disabilities. These testimonies question a
model of disability that is based on an ostensibly ahistorical notion of “wholeness” and in doing so call for new analysis of the very term “disability” and its impact on human lives. Marking a significant discursive shift, these works explore the many and varied manifestations of disability itself. The authors and editors examine disability as a topic, and, rigorously questioning the use of mythology and metaphor, use language that describes disability as an experience. Their writing introduces a disability-centered perspective and offers insightful critique of the merits of disability as a literary device. The interview and personal narrative forms introduce a new voice into disability discourse: the voice of the individual who lives with a disability. This newer voice operates in the tradition of social critique undertaken by Leonhard Frank and Günter Grass37, yet the individuals who speak in An den Rand gedrängt and Weder Küsse noch Karriere reconfigure the terms of disability discourse by claiming a central voice. In other words, the people interviewed do not view themselves as a symptoms of a larger social problem or a burden to German society, instead they view any unreflected deference to German society to be a burden to them. While this type of inversion is an important first step toward emancipation, the writers of these collections do not adhere to the notion that a social whole is necessarily the antagonistic opposite of an individual. Instead, the writers of these narratives insist upon recognition as an integral part of the German society. Their texts give evidence of the writers’ developing consciousness as a members of a particular

37 I shall argue in later chapters that literary works by both Frank and Grass may, to a limited extent, be understood to advocate greater public accommodation for people with disabilities and recognition of their rights to self-representation.
social group. Most evident is their call for new evaluation of the role and history of people with disabilities in Germany.

**Disability as an issue of civil rights**

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 places disability squarely within the realm of civil rights. Joseph Shapiro chronicles the struggle for civil rights in the American Disability Rights movement in his study *No Pity. People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement* (1993). His study confronts popular images and myths of the disabled as helpless people and documents their political work toward independence and self-sufficiency. In describing the movement as a whole, Shapiro notes that "diversity is its central characteristic" based on the widely divergent experiences of disability and on the lack of any one leader or spokesperson for the political movement (11). Shapiro places the emergence of a group consciousness among people with disabilities in the late 1970s. Around this time, he notes, people with disabilities also began to be recognized as a consumer group; advertising began to address people with disabilities and to portray them in print and broadcast media.

One of the most important issues surrounding disability is that of accessibility. People who have disabilities are often prevented from having meaningful access to education, employment, transportation, communication, or various forms of entertainment. Civil rights laws aimed to correct this problem. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 expressly forbade any federal agency, public university, defense or other federal contractor, or any other institution or activity that received federal funding to discriminate against anyone solely by reason of handicap (Shapiro 65). Drawing
attention to the many links between other civil rights movements in the United States, Shapiro notes that the wording of this disability-related legislation “was clearly copied straight out of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which ruled out discrimination in federal programs on the basis of race, color, or national origin” (65).

No Pity also chronicles the changes in the language used to describe disability. Describing the changes in public discourse after the Gallaudet University student and alumni protest in 1988,38 Shapiro concludes that

Gallaudet gave Americans a new rights consciousness about disability. It was reflected in post-Gallaudet journalism, which focused less on “supercrips” and sad cases (...). Newspaper stories began using the words “disability” and “rights” in the same paragraph. (74)

These political changes were not only topics of study in American universities, the disability-rights movement was to a great extent also undertaken in the university system.

Disability Studies in the United States

Scholarship on the construction of disability and the history of people with disabilities is the primary activity of people engaged in Disability Studies in American colleges and universities. In addition to the organized Society for Disability Studies (1982), there is a standing Committee on Disability Issues in the Profession (1995) and a Disability Studies Discussion Group (1997) within the Modern Language Association. These professional organizations have a dual focus on issues of access and professional

38 Gallaudet University students, faculty, and alumni protested the administration’s decision to hire as University President a hearing person instead of someone who was deaf. In another example of the connection Shapiro draws among late twentieth-century American political discourses, he notes: “[Gallaudet] was the closest the movement has come to having a touchstone event, a Selma or a Stonewall” (74).
development and on scholarly inquiry into disability as a category of human identity and experience. As late as 1995, the word “disability” was not used as a category in the database of the American Modern Language Association (MLA), despite the fact that in that year the MLA had already organized several conference sessions dealing with the topic of disability. A person attempting to do research into disability would have had to choose a word such as “handicap,” “cripple,” or “disease” in order to find lists of scholarly works that address this admittedly broad topic. Disability Studies is a new field of academic scholarship that borrows not only from the American Disability Rights movement, but also from the American Civil Rights movement, the Women’s movements, and from feminist scholarship. Disability Studies examines the cultural and social determinants of disability, assuming that disability is not solely an issue of personal physiology or bodily health, but that disability is profoundly shaped by the culture in which a person lives.

Despite the establishment of academic disciplines in which human identity is problematized and historicized, such as Women’s studies, Black Studies, Gay and Lesbian studies, scholarly inquiry into disability has only recently begun to take place at American universities and colleges. Centers of Disability Studies are located at Brandeis University,

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39 H-Dirksen L. Baumen notes in Profession 1997, the most recent issue of the Modern Language Association’s journal of opinion about the modern language profession, that until very recently American Sign Language (ASL) was classified “in the MLA International Bibliography (…) alongside such invented languages as Klingon and Esperanto. (…) Beginning with the 1996 edition, the MLA International Biography will classify sign languages on the same hierarchical level as, say, Indo-European languages” (169).
Brown University, San Francisco State University, The University of California at Berkeley, and at the University of Hawaii.

Disability studies is necessarily interdisciplinary. Borrowing from cultural studies and the above-mentioned identity studies disciplines, disability studies takes place in such diverse academic fields as psychology, sociology, history, political science, English, and German. Common to all fields is the investigation into the social configuration and experience of disability within given social and historical frameworks. The focus on the experience of disability and the rejection of a purely medical model of disability separates disability studies within the humanities from the study of disability in the medical, behavioral, or social sciences.

Disability Studies in Germany

Some humanities-based scholarship on disability has taken place within Germany and within German Studies in the United States. Two book-length studies trace the portrayal of disability in German literature, Helmut Bernsmeier's *Das Bild des Körperbehinderten in der deutschsprachigen Literatur des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (1980) and Hans-Jörg Uther's *Behinderte in populären Erzählungen. Studien zur historischen und vergleichenden Erzählforschung* (1981). Bernsmeier's study of literary images of disability is useful insofar as it gathers a large number of physical and mental conditions under the new heading of "disability" and begins to analyze them in terms of their social construction. Bernsmeier gives less attention to the literary qualities of the majority of these portrayals, dismissing most of the texts as examples of stereotyping. This is where the limitations of his analysis become clear. Although I believe it is important to
identify inaccurate stereotypes in literature, my aim in this dissertation is not simply to
dismiss stereotypes as untrue, but instead to analyze the construction of the images even
as I analyze the construction of the concepts behind them. Uther's text similarly
investigates negative or patronizing images of disability in popular literature, however his
text also does not investigate the construction of those images or their function within
given narratives. Uther and Bernsmeier alike rely on a medicalized notion of disability and
presume disability to be self-evident. I hope to show throughout this dissertation that such
presuppositions only serve to “enable” the literary stereotypes that Uther and Bernsmeier
ultimately dismiss. A strictly medical model of disability does not sufficiently address the
complex discursive construction of disability. Because most work on the discursive
dimensions of disability has been undertaken in the United States, I believe that my
position of critical insight rests on a growing foundation of scholarly work and can
contribute an important comparative perspective to the study of disability in German
literature.

Some critical German work has begin to address the discursive construction of
disability. Several articles analyze literary portrayals of disability in German literature,
including Christian Mümer’s “Fabelhafte Behinderte,” (1985) which addresses the
appearance of blind and lame characters in fables and aphorisms. Mümer points out that
although disabled characters figure so prominently in fables, most fables are not written
for people with disabilities: “Die Fabel ist nicht mit oder für Behinderte geschrieben, sie
folgt einem Betroffenheitsmodell. Die Betroffenen sind in der Geschichte zwar die
Behinderten, in der Moral aber die Nichtbehinderten” (93). These authors look to Hans
Mayer's Außenseiter (1975), which offers a challenging critique of Enlightenment ideals, and Joachim Hohmann's Schon auf den ersten Blick. Lesebuch zur Geschichte unserer Feindbilder (1981), a documentary history of prejudice, for theoretical and historical grounding in the topic of differentness and the status of outsiders.

In Germany, most of the writing that features disability as a perspective is closely linked with feminist writing. Many disability-centered works problematize women's experiences with disability. Most German research on the topic of disability per se, however, has centered on historical research into the treatment of people with disabilities during the Nazi period, including the question as to what became of the victims of Nazism and what the perpetrators did after 1945. Examples of this investigation include Ernst Klee's "Euthanasie" im NS-Staat. Die "Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens." (1983), Klee's Was sie taten—was sie wurden (1985), Peter Weingart's Rasse, Blut, und Gene. Geschichte der Eugenik und Rassenhygiene in Deutschland (1988) and Martin Rudnick's Aussondern, Sterilisieren, Liquidieren: die Verfolgung Behinderner im Nationalsozialismus (1990).

Disability has recently re-entered the news in Germany as prominent politician Wolfgang Schäuble, quadriplegic since an assassination attempt on October 12, 1990, considers running for Federal Chancellor. An in-depth article in Spiegel magazine openly debated the possibilities and potential problems (both for Schäuble and for the German state) of electing a Federal Chancellor who cannot walk ("Hält er durch?" Nov. 25, 1991). The result has been a broad discussion of both the symbolic resonance and the liberatory potential of this prominent person's disability.
Disability as a topic of American German Studies

Poore's article, "Disability as Disobedience? An Essay on Germany in the Aftermath of the United Nations Year for People with Disabilities," (1982) first introduced the topic of disability into the field of German literary and cultural criticism in the United States. Personal experiences prompted her to write this article. She writes:

1970 at the National Theater in Munich: As a person with a visible physical disability, I was informed by the cashier that he did not want to sell me a ticket because I would “disturb” the other members of the audience. After some argument, he did sell me the ticket, and my German woman acquaintance thanked him for being so nice.

1981 at the Bundestag in Bonn: While waiting with a group to go to the visitors’ gallery, one of the group leaders suggested that I go on ahead of the others up the flight of steps and then remarked to the other leader: “Then it won’t take so long, and we can keep to our schedule.” Why is the idea of a procedure taking thirty seconds longer than “normal” such a frightening thought? And why is there an immediate attempt made to separate and segregate the person who is the cause of this “disturbing” effect? Why do we agree to this separation, or why do we resist it? (Poore 162)

Poore describes the treatment of people with disabilities in Germany from the Weimar Republic until the time of the article’s publication. Documenting important trends in medicine, treatment, and rehabilitation, Poore writes about prejudice, fear, and pathology from both a psychological and a historical perspective.

In this dissertation I intend to advance the discussion of disability in German literature. The overarching methodological approach that I shall use is a Disability Studies approach as developed within the specifically American academic context. My operative assumptions of disability center on its largely social construction through the confluence of
discourses. Questioning the viability of a purely medical model of disability, I shall nonetheless explore the ways in which medical concepts of disability have influenced public understanding of what disability is. In the process I shall attempt to uncover points of resistance to this model. In this regard, my study will attend in large measure to the experiential and, where possible, autobiographical literature that counters the historically dominant view of disability as a social problem.

I shall also examine how disability functions as a discursive system through which issues other than disability are articulated. To this end I shall explore the ways in which disability is used as a literary and cultural metaphor. The analyses that follow will show that disability is most often appropriated to articulate deviance, aberrance, failure, and flaw. Additionally disability is regularly invoked as a barrier to social progress. I shall demonstrate that these tendencies result from naturalized assumptions of embodied human "wholeness," a naturalization that literature itself has the power to effect.
CHAPTER 2

ERASURE THROUGH ACCOMMODATION: 
THE FUNCTION AND PORTRAYAL OF DISABILITY 
IN GOTTHOLD EPHRAIM LESSING'S MINNA VON BARNHELM

This chapter will address the attitudes of eighteenth-century Enlightenment and Pietist movements toward the human body and will specifically address the interdependence of gender and disability as they relate to the construction of the individual citizen. Within the larger social context of institutions of marriage and citizenship, I shall discuss divergent theories and practices of medicine in the eighteenth century and address the ways in which patients might be expected to deal with illness and disability. At issue in this chapter is the construction of the individual and the contested cultural meaning of illness and bodily difference in that process. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s comedic drama Minna von Barnhelm (1767) offers a particularly rich portrayal of these very issues and processes. I include this drama in my analysis of disability in German literature for several reasons. The play’s primary male character, Major von Tellheim has a paralyzed arm, and the portrayal of a major literary figure with a disability is of course central to this dissertation. In addition, the context of this play is important, because like my study of disability, Minna von Barnhelm also examines the tension between an individual and his
social environment. A third reason concerns the literary genre of the Enlightenment
dramatic comedy with its attendant awareness of social station. I shall argue that the
Ständegesellschaft, or the hierarchical social organization of eighteenth-century German
states is inherently, if not expressly, constitutive of the concept of disability. Finally,
analysis of Minna von Barnhelm should shed light on the divergent movements of the
Enlightenment and Pietism as they promote largely antagonistic attitudes regarding the
experience of embodied life and the care of the human body. I shall ultimately argue that
eighteenth-century conceptions of disability play a central role in the formation of the
Enlightened human subject. Therefore, a study of the portrayal of disability in the
literature from this time period will have import for later literary works which follow in the
Enlightenment tradition.

I shall begin my study by noting several findings from medical history studies,
including Antonie Luyendijk-Elshout’s “Of Masks and Mills: The Enlightened Doctor and
His Frightened Patient” (1990) and Johanna Geyer-Kordesch’s “The Enlightened and the
Pious in Eighteenth-Century Germany” (1985). Although my methodological assumptions
differ from those of the studies’ authors, discrete points from the studies are nonetheless
useful and pertinent to my inquiry into the social discourse of disability.⁴⁰ One such point
is the attention Geyer-Kordesch gives to the role of manners in medical diagnosis. She
finds that manners were to be displayed at all times, for manners indicated that the

⁴⁰ Both Luyendijk-Elshout and Geyer-Kordesch rely on a medical model of disability,
suggesting that disability is essentially a topic of health and medicine. Thus they presume
that disability has primarily biological origins. My model acknowledges that aspects of
certain disabilities are legitimate topics for medicine, but that disability is best understood
as the absence of ability and that it is socially and culturally created.
emotions were kept in check. Fear and anxiety were held to lead directly to hypochondria and hysteria, two of the most talked-about ailments of the eighteenth century. Luyendijk-Elshout writes that “in hypochondria or in (...) melancholy, delusions were observed with suspicion by the enlightened rationalists, since they disturbed the worldly order of state” (197). Bodily pain or suffering was not to be acknowledged in public, disability and illness were to be concealed if at all possible, and any visible markers of disability or illness were to be minimized through near-Stoic behavior. Geyer-Kordesch argues that “melancholia, hypochondria and pain are existentially apparent for the Enlightened as well as the Pious. The mark of the enlightened man, however, is their denial” (186). I would agree with her finding, yet it is important to add another dimension to her interpretation of the enlightened sick person’s behavior. Such a minimization would ensure that the person who was sick or disabled would not view that

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41 Two very popular books appeared which discussed in lay terms desirable behavior for patients. Johann Daniel Longolius’s Der Galante Patient (1727) is subtitled “a philosophical manual of how a sick person should behave charmingly and decorously” (Geyer-Kordesch 184). Johann Ulrich Bilgauer’s Nachrichten an das Publikum in Absicht der Hypochondrie (1767) considered the incidence of hypochondria to reduce greatly the rate of repopulation.

42 Luyendijk-Elshout notes that “the eighteenth-century physician saw as many anxious patients as the physicians of today” (188). Geyer-Kordesch concurs, writing that hypochondria and melancholia were “painfully present” in the eighteenth century (185).

43 Geyer-Kordesch describes the visit of Johann Georg Sulzer to the court of King Frederick the Great of Prussia at a time when Sulzer was in very poor health. During the visit, which lasted for several hours, the “only concession made” to Sulzer was permission to lean against something (187).

44 Geyer-Kordesch’s use of the word “man” as well as my use of the masculine possessive pronoun “his” are intentional and will be retained throughout this chapter wherever the typical Enlightenment figure is mentioned. This will reflect the fact that the Enlightenment as a movement was overwhelmingly driven by men and its goals aimed at enlightening men of well-educated social classes. As Geyer-Kordesch notes, “Enlightenment has a universal claim and yet the personalities and concepts which defined its image did not derive either from a mass culture or from popular ideas” (180).
sickness as impinging on his worth as a person or his capacity for reason. The figure of Tellheim in *Minna von Barnhelm* will demonstrate both the denial of illness and the achievement of enlightenment unencumbered by disability.

Enlightenment thought clearly elevated the mind over the body. Pietist thought, in contrast, typically viewed the body as a vessel for the soul and considered bodily conditions to have meaning that required explanation. Luyendijk-Elshout notes, for example, that pietists “invoked religious agents as antecedent to physiological causes” (190). The body was a means of communicating with the divine; illness, therefore, demanded both acknowledgment and interpretation. Sickness or disability were thought to indicate a person’s spiritual condition and therefore any bodily problem required earnest attention.45

Pietism and Enlightenment as literary movements began to distinguish themselves from one another after English Empiricists John Locke and David Hume claimed that the source of human thought was located in the human senses and could be ascertained through experience. Enlightenment philosophers such as Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Christian Wolff advanced these ideas, incorporating them into their theories of the monad (*Monadenlehre*) and of logic, respectively.46 An Enlightenment notion of embodiment thus

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45 Professor Georg Ernst Stahl of the medical faculty at Halle became the leading authority of “pastoral medicine” which posited medicine as “the servant of faith and godliness” (Luyendijk-Elshout 206). Professor Friedrich Hoffman, also at the medical school at Halle, aligned himself with Enlightenment thinkers and viewed the human body using the mechanical model.

46 Leibniz’s monad theory held that the hierarchically arranged monad was the smallest unit or station of human existence. He maintained that each station would strive for the “best of all possible worlds” in transition to the next station, thus deriving an optimism that was popularized by Christian Wolff. Wolff postulated the inherent rationality and morality of that which may be derived from logic.
instrumentalized the body in the service of logic and rationality. This is indeed the case in Minna von Barnhelm. Writers of Enlightenment literature worked from the premise that literature had valuable didactic potential and could offer assistance in bringing about the enlightenment of their readers. In contrast, Pietist theorists such as Philipp Jacob Spener and writers such as Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock strove for religious renewal and intensification of spiritual life. Their works emphasized a different aspect of embodiment, one in which personal feelings and sensations signaled the presence of God.

Lessing, Gottsched, and the Literary Enlightenment

The genre of Minna von Barnhelm contributed to creating and conveying Enlightenment ideals, for the drama was important to eighteenth-century audiences for its capacity to instruct. Lessing began to write Minna von Barnhelm oder das Soldatenglück in 1763 and published it in 1767. This play established a new direction for the literary genre of the dramatic comedy. Eighteenth-century drama had been influenced until this point in large measure by the dramatic theory of Johann Christoph Gottsched. Gottsched's Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst (1730) established clear rules for the drama. According to Gottsched, drama was to imitate nature (and not imagination or possibility) insofar as nature was understood to adhere to an identifiable organization. Gottsched advocated the notion of the Ständeklausel, which stipulated that characters in a drama should be drawn from specific social classes: figures in a tragedy may come only from the upper classes, and figures in a comedy may come from the lower classes. The form of a drama should contain the three unities set down by Aristotle: unities of plot, place, and time. The content of a drama should be moral in nature and should instruct an increasingly
bourgeois audience in moral virtues. Gottsched also held that comedy was an appropriate genre for teaching moral values, because of the potential for an audience to learn from comic figures. According to Gottsched, an obvious flaw or imbalance in the main character should constitute the primary device through which the audience would learn a moral value. Although, to a certain extent, Minna von Barnhelm adheres to Gottsched’s directives, Lessing ultimately broke with Gottsched’s concept of drama and established a new direction for the German theater.\(^7\)

Deviating from Gottsched’s prescription, Tellheim comes from the aristocratic class known as “der dritte Stand.” Not a landed gentry, Tellheim nonetheless enjoyed the privileges of class distinction. The figure of Major von Tellheim does indeed provide a comic study in imbalance in his exaggerated adherence to a rigid notion of honor. Breaking the rule of the Ständeklausel, however, Lessing invited the audience to identify with the humanity of the character Tellheim and did not oblige viewers or readers to understand this character simply as a function of his class standing. In doing so, Lessing called into question not only the viability of the Ständeklausel, but he also began to grapple with the internal, attitudinal constitution of the Enlightened subject.

Although Minna von Barnhelm is clearly concerned with Tellheim’s social standing, the play focuses more intensively on Tellheim’s manner of thinking and the degree to which Tellheim compels himself to uphold societal expectations. The substance of Tellheim’s thought is always privileged above the social station he occupies and the physical makeup

\(^7\) Lessing ultimately took a very clear position against Gottsched’s rules for drama: “Es wäre zu wünschen, daß sich Herr Gottsched niemals mit dem Theater vermengt hätte. Seine vermeinten Verbesserungen betreffen entweder entbehrliche Kleinigkeiten, oder sind wahre Verschlimmerungen” (Lessing, 17. Literaturbrief 1759).
of the body he inhabits. In short, Lessing portrays Enlightenment to be a phenomenon of substance, not simply of form.

Lessing was well aware of the drama's capacity to instruct, and he accentuated this didactic quality in Minna von Barnhelm. This "Lustspiel" deals with issues at least as weighty as the presentation of morality for imitation by the audience. One of the few comedic dramas from the period of the German Enlightenment, Minna von Barnhelm concerns the formation of an Enlightened human subject, Major von Tellheim. In order to achieve Enlightenment, Tellheim would be expected to demonstrate a large capacity for reason, moral virtue and decency, industriousness, and honor. Above all, however, he would be expected to demonstrate these qualities in balance, and this is where Tellheim fails. Disregarding the Enlightenment expectation of balanced behavior that demonstrates sovereignty over the emotions, Tellheim calls far too much attention to his difficult circumstances and the pain they cause him. Furthermore, his concept of honor and his perception of honor's requirements are so rigid that he risks forfeiting love and friendship. An audience watching the play could see the conflict enacted on the stage and conclude by the play's resolution the proper course of action. Ideally, audience members would then be able to apply what they had learned in their own lives.

The Seven-Years' War

The action of Minna von Barnhelm takes place during the Seven-Year's war, concluded only four years before the play's premiere. The war itself is presented as a

48 The Seven Years' War (1756-1763) resulted from the conflict between Frederick the Great of Prussia and Maria Theresa of Austria. Frederick intended to expand Prussian territory by winning Silesia, then part of the Austrian Empire. The Prussian army invaded Saxony, at the time allied with Austria, in order to weaken Austria's military strength. The
recently concluded event. Its battles and its goals are rarely thematized, although some lines allude to historical battles. Tellheim is said, for example, to have fought "'bei den Katzenhäusern' a hill near the village of Katzenberg where in 1760 the Prussians fought the Austrians and in 1762 several engagements took place" (Harrison 12). One important component of the war was the collection of taxes to finance the war. Prussian officers were ordered strictly to enforce tax payment, although some, like Tellheim in the play, were generous with the Saxons and even contributed some of their own money or property. Other Prussian officers used the opportunity to obtain money for themselves, and in the play, Tellheim is wrongly accused of doing so. Riccaut, the French mercenary in the third scene of the fourth act presents a dim picture of the war and of courtly manners. He is a beggar and possibly a swindler. In the end, despite Minna’s reservations about his character, the Frenchman does indeed keep his promise to speak on Tellheim’s behalf before the king. The historical accuracy of the play’s setting and the colorful mixture of characters from different parts of central Europe led Goethe to describe the

Peace of Hubertusburg ended the war in 1763, with the result that Austria renounced its claim to Silesia and Prussia granted Saxony its independence. Lessing seems to have had a personal interest in a reconciliation between the German states, having spent much of his life in both Saxony and Prussia. He was born in Saxony and studied at the Saxon University of Leipzig, and in 1748 he moved to the Prussian capital Berlin to work as a journalist, critic, and dramatist. He traveled frequently between the two states during his lifetime (Harrison 10).

The figure of Riccaut also found the least favor with critics reviewing the premiere of Minna von Barnhelm. In Hamburg, the Unterhaltungen wrote: “Den Riccaut de Marlinière wünschen wir ganz aus dem Stücke heraus” and the Deutsche Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaften noted that “Was uns am wenigsten in dem Lustspiele gefällt, ist der französische Offizier” (Steinmetz 7,8). This disfavor seems to indicate the degree to which this character constituted an unwelcome attack on the francophile Frederick the Great and his use of unscrupulous mercenaries during the war (Harrison 17).
play many years after its premiere as the “wahrste Ausgeburt des Siebenjährigen Kriegs” (Giese 40, Whiton 89).

**Topics in the Critical Reception of “Minna von Barnhelm”**

Interpretations of the play address a variety of issues ranging from the satirical and comical qualities of the characters to Lessing’s critique of political absolutism and his desire to see reconciliation between Saxony and Prussia, the previously warring German states. I offer here a sample of the wide range of topics in the critical reception of the play in order to introduce the seemingly divergent discourses that, I shall argue, converge in the portrayal of disability. Because Tellheim’s absolutist posture is the clear focus of *Minna von Barnhelm*, a number of critics have debated the extent to which *Minna von Barnhelm* addresses the absolutist government of Frederick the Great. Jürgen Jacobs notes two major leanings in criticism: the first is toward Erich Schmidt’s opinion that the play be understood as a “‘vaterländisches Stück,’ was sich vor allem im Schluß zeige, wo die königliche Gnade wieder alles ins Lot bringe;” and the second is toward a more satirical and critical interpretation of the king’s involvement as put forth by Franz Mehring and Peter Weber (75). Jacobs himself finds middle ground in the “deutliche Reserve gegenüber dem absolutistischen Staat, (...) aber nicht als ‘Affront’ gemeint” (75). Still others have debated Lessing’s portrayal of Frederick the Great as a *deus ex machina* figure. Simonetta Sanna finds this conclusion improbable, given the play’s emphasis on Tellheim’s becoming an independent subject (64). Likewise, Heinz Schlaffer contends that it is the developing bourgeois citizen who ultimately resolves the play’s conflicts (125). Other topics of criticism concern the play’s portrayal of characters from different German-
speaking regions, including Bert Cardullo, who finds that “in *Minna von Barnhelm*,
national characteristics—Tellheim’s Prussian rigidity, Minna’s Saxon warmth, and
Riccaut’s French raffishness—are means to the desired end of German national
consciousness (16). In any case, *Minna von Barnhelm* was and is overwhelmingly
regarded as a sign of an emerging national German theater (Steinmetz 3; Cardullo 15;
Harrison 10). Noting its contemporary setting and the “lebendige und reich
durchgezeichnete Figuren” in the drama, Jacobs writes

> hier gewann das Lustspiel mit einem Mal eine enorme
psychologische Bereicherung, einen dichten Bezug zur
zeitgeschichtlichen Situation und eine vorher unbekannte
Subtilität in der Entfaltung einer moralischen Problematik
(69).

The moral problems to which Jacobs refers concern the behavior of the individual in
society and the degree to which self-interest is appropriate to the emerging Enlightenment
subject. These problems will be subtly reshaped in this discussion of disability and its
portrayal in eighteenth-century German literature.

Despite the broad range of aspects to which many critics have drawn attention, no
critic has analyzed the portrayal of the main character’s disability, although at least two
have cast their analyses in terms of disability. Robin Harrison uses terms like “blindness”
and “paralysis” figuratively to represent Tellheim’s inability and unwillingness to
understand or to act (32). Harrison suggests that Tellheim’s paralyzed arm is best
understood as a metaphor for his preoccupation with his honor, which “seems to have had
a paralyzing effect on him” (31). Peter Giese makes use of disability as metaphor in his
study: “Tellheim versinkt in eine Verblendung und Betäubung, die das Scheitern von
Aufklärung beweist” (36). Simonetta Sanna also uses terms of disability in her analysis, suggesting that disability appropriately describes the opposite of reason and understanding, Lessing’s apparent goal for Tellheim. Examining Tellheim’s processes of individuation and personal development toward subjectivity, Sanna writes: “Diese Prozesse zeichnen sich in meiner Untersuchung ab als Übergänge der Art Blindheit> Kurzsicht> Tiefsicht> Verstand” (20). Her analysis posits Enlightenment as vision. Sanna calls attention to all the instances in which Tellheim literally sees what he is supposed to learn: “Nach dem (...) Wendepunkt erscheint Tellheim einerseits noch blind, andererseits hat sein Sehen begonnen” (196). The use of vision as a metaphor and tool for literary analysis may indeed have merit, in that to do so in this instance is to analyze the play in terms of the context in which it was written. I believe, however, that it is productive to analyze the construction of metaphors rigorously and in light of the experienced conditions from which they are drawn. Literal blindness is not present in the play; but another disabling condition, paralysis, is. I believe that examining the portrayal of Tellheim’s paralyzed arm as it contributes to an experienced disability will shed even more light on the figure of Tellheim and ultimately the construction of the enlightened subject during this period.

Disability and the Figure of Major von Tellheim

Despite its title, the action of the play centers around the Major von Tellheim, an officer of the Prussian military who has been discharged from duty and is troubled by a slanderous attack on his character. Compounding Tellheim’s precarious situation are his

50 This was also the primary metaphor for Enlightenment thought. Reason and clarity of vision were symbolized by the rising sun, or “lumen ingenii.”
debt and paralysis: one of his arms was paralyzed during the war. These would pose more serious problems were it not for the fact that they are in Tellheim’s case eminently resolvable. Several people owe him money; Just, his servant, is willing and able to help him in any way; and Minna, Tellheim’s betrothed, declares that her love for him remains unchanged. Insisting that to accept help would impinge upon his concept of honor, Tellheim’s exaggeration is made evident and even comic in that he assumes the stereotypical characteristics of a helpless and scorned person.\(^{51}\) He describes himself to Minna as “der Verabschiedete, der an seiner Ehre Gekränkte, der Krüppel, der Bettler” (39). He insists that he has changed greatly and is no longer in command of his body or his spirit: “Sie meinen, ich sei der Tellheim, (...) der seines ganzen Körpers, seiner ganzen Seele mächtig war” (39). Tellheim’s melancholy attitude and his unmannered focus on his own discomfort are presented to the audience as the source of his estrangement from Minna. The conflict that is to be resolved in the play is Tellheim’s need to place the problems he faces in proper perspective. The problems themselves are clearly secondary to his imbalanced attitude.

Minna’s response to Tellheim constitutes the central lesson that the audience is to learn from the play. Her response is also where the audience can find Lessing’s position on the disabled body and see its function in the play. Hoping to persuade Tellheim that his situation is perhaps not really so dire, Minna mocks the weight of Tellheim’s personal burden more than once: “Das klingt sehr tragisch!” (39) and “Ein Krüppel, sagten Sie?”

\(^{51}\) Tellheim correctly connects his compromised honor to his social standing. Wittkowski describes the great value placed on honor in the eighteenth century: “Die Ehre ist keineswegs einfach ‘die Ehre,’ sondern die Wertgeltung ‘in den Augen der Welt’” (52).
Nun (indem sie ihn von oben bis unten betrachtet), der Krüppel ist doch noch ziemlich ganz und gerade (...) ziemlich gesund und stark (...) Ich besinne mich, daß Sie allerdings ein kleiner Krüppel sind“ (74). Minna describes Tellheim’s physical condition in far more modest terms than his: “Ein Schuß hat Ihnen den rechten Arm ein wenig gelähmt.—Doch alles wohl überlegt: so ist auch das so schlimm nicht” (74). She points out Tellheim’s exaggerated notions of honor: “Weil Sie einen Schuß in dem Arme haben, machen Sie sich zu einem Krüppel. Ist das so recht? Ist das keine Übertreibung?” (75). Through these more tempered statements, Minna is shown to understand the actual extent of Tellheim’s problems. She knows that workable accommodations are readily available but that Tellheim’s attitude prevents him from exercising his options. Further, Minna demonstrates the proper proportions in which to view disability: she does not succumb to Tellheim’s exaggerated claims nor does she allow him to revel in delusional self-pity. Minna’s position in this regard may be linked with contemporary knowledge of hypochondria and hysteria. She tries repeatedly to point out not only the irrationality of Tellheim’s despair but also the infringement of social mores. According to Luyendijk-Elshout, “the civilized man had to wear his mask to fit into the new order of optimism and rationalism and to show a firm belief in the order of nature, with its laws and certainties” (227). Throughout most of the play, Tellheim shows no such effort.

Minna’s remarks address not only Tellheim’s specific disability, but also the process of attaining Enlightened subjectivity. Tellheim never regains use of his arm in the play, but instead his paralysis remains visible. Through Minna, Lessing privileges substance over form: a paralyzed arm is simply a paralyzed arm, and the disability that
results requires simple accommodation. Enlightenment, as it is portrayed in this drama, on the other hand, encompasses the mind, spirit, outlook, and actions, over all of which Tellheim retains control. By showing that only in Tellheim's mind does the paralyzed arm assume such overarching significance, Lessing shows Enlightenment to allow not only for embodiment, but also for disabled embodiment.

The action of the play chronicles Minna's efforts to make Tellheim aware of his excesses so that he might modify his inflexible position. In at least one sense, Minna's efforts prove successful. After Minna mocks Tellheim's disability to the point of its near erasure, his paralyzed arm loses its prominence in the play. Minna has indeed persuaded Tellheim to minimize his disability and thus normalize his behavior. His paralyzed arm, however, remains, as do unanswered questions asking how Tellheim will adapt his daily activities so as to accommodate his disability. How exactly will Tellheim, a discharged mercenary officer, provide for her and live in the manner to which they are both accustomed? At least one factor beyond the paralyzed arm itself complicates Tellheim's full integration into social life, and that factor is his social standing.

Tellheim is accustomed to being the giver and not the receiver of help. He refuses to accept money that he cannot repay or to accept assistance that he cannot afford. He maintains this stance in his interactions with Just, Minna, Paul Werner, and Frau Marloff, believing that to accept help is to compromise his dignity and consequently, his social standing. His servant Just would be able to help him whenever his paralyzed arm would pose difficulty, but Tellheim is reluctant to retain Just because he is not able to pay him for his service. To accept service anyway would be to accept charity, and this is for Tellheim
unthinkable. Refusing Paul Werner's offer of money, Tellheim says "es ziemt sich nicht, daß ich dein Schuldner bin" and "ich will dein Schuldner nicht sein" (53). Tellheim so recoils at receiving that he also refuses to accept money that is owed to him. He convinces the widow Marloff to use the money she owes him for her own son (I, 6). This action demonstrates the genuine dilemma that Tellheim faces and allows the audience to appreciate the difficulty of his decisions. On one hand, it is indeed admirable that Tellheim would donate money owed him to the son of Frau Marloff. On the other hand, Tellheim clearly needs the money for himself, and it is money that is legitimately owed to him. This encounter with Frau Marloff offers a touching situation and it shows that Tellheim's refusal to take money is not entirely absurd.

Other scenes in the play illuminate situations with which an eighteenth-century audience would be familiar. The audience could be expected to respect Tellheim and to take his problems seriously, because the problems that Tellheim faces would have been recognized as serious problems. According to John Whiton, "[Lessing] wanted to break with the old miles gloriosus tradition in comedy, wherein the soldier figure always appeared as a bragging buffoon" (92). Whiton further maintains that Lessing wanted to put Tellheim in a truly difficult situation in order to gain the audience's respect for him. Indeed, despite his often comical exaggeration of his problems, he is not shown to be a simply laughable figure. Further contributing to the urgency of Tellheim's situation is the

52 Tellheim has already referred to himself with the disparaging term "der Bettler" (39).
53 Tellheim's believability as a character has been upheld by critics who address both fictional and non-fictional aspects of the play. According to Judith Aikin, Tellheim's exaggerated honor never quite attains the ridiculous quality it would have in a true comedy (19). Whiton is one of many critics who have written about the historical accuracy
potential charge to be made against him if he should continue to dwell on his misfortune (both bodily and financial).

It is evident at many points in the play that Tellheim’s emotional attention to his problems in effect causes the biggest problem of all, namely his estrangement from Minna. His paralyzed arm only contributes to his burden. Overindulging in melancholy complaining, Tellheim does not demonstrate proper enlightened behavior. The enlightened person would learn the importance of minimizing personal pain and difficulty, and Lessing shows that not doing so puts Tellheim in the most precarious position. All of the characters in the play try to help Tellheim put his disability in “proper” perspective, for it is clearly Tellheim’s extremist thinking that poses the most problems for him. Wishing to steer Tellheim away from his preoccupation with honor, Minna recognizes that he has attributed unseemly weight to the problems caused by his disability and his financial situation. The alleviation of this weight would be evident in refinement and manners, and this is what Tellheim needs to learn in the play.\textsuperscript{54} Tellheim shows no moderation, and this is shown to prevent his growth toward enlightenment. Minna, in contrast, takes a very tempered, empirical approach to Tellheim’s situation. She examines the concrete evidence of his paralyzed arm and she considers the impact his paralysis will have in specific settings. She does not come to the sweeping conclusion that Tellheim draws of total loss or incapacity. When, after Minna’s considerable effort, he finally does recognize the need of the play. Whiton has focused specifically on the figure of Tellheim and asserts his clear correlation to a living man, Ewald von Kleist (99).

\textsuperscript{54} Geyer-Kordesch notes that “the mundane, the urbane, the \textit{Weltweiser} not only adopts but is appreciated for his triumphant moderation in the face of his own physical decomposition” (182).
for moderation, he is able to resolve his conflicts, including any difficulty posed by his paralyzed arm.

Throughout the drama, two projects have worked together to move Tellheim from despair. One concerns revising his rigid manner of thinking and the other concerns acknowledging that Tellheim did in fact lend his own money to pay the Saxon taxes. Minna’s encouragement works to combat Tellheim’s emotional and intellectual extremism. An offstage event, the procurement of the letter from the King, clears Tellheim’s name from the slanderous attack on his character. Therefore, the combination of a changed attitude and some external validation allows for the resolution of Tellheim’s conflicts in the play. Because the scenes of the play deal primarily with efforts to change Tellheim’s extremist thinking, I would like from this point on to focus on Tellheim’s attitude and self-image, particularly as it regards his experience of his disability. The rest of my analysis will address the perception and experience of disability, giving particular attention to the ways that money, rank, and gender work together to construct the disability that Tellheim has.

Disability, Class and Gender in the Play

Money plays a particularly important role in Tellheim’s life, for it not only causes his most urgent problems in the play, Tellheim’s ultimate access to money will provide the benefits that only a person in his situation would receive. Tellheim is well aware of the interrelationship of money and social standing. One of the express reasons Tellheim will not accept money from Paul Werner is because he knows that if Werner were to lack money, he might not be in a position to better his social standing: “Du brauchst es, mehr als Wachtmeister zu werden, dich auf einer Bahn weiterzubringen, auf der ohne Geld auch
der Würdigste zurückbleiben kann" (54). Minna is rich and Tellheim knows it (56). Yet Tellheim will also not accept money from Minna, because to do so would upset the convention of a stronger man supporting a weaker woman. Harrison notes that Minna shows little regard for this convention, noting that "she is not prepared to accept Tellheim’s view of the traditional role of the sexes, which allows the woman, as a member of the weaker sex, to be dependent on the man, but not vice versa" (27). Instead she takes an active role to teach Tellheim of the error of his rigid thinking. She stages the Ring-Intrige, the series of exchanges of her engagement ring with his, in the hopes of bringing him to self-reflection. Upon learning that Tellheim has used his ring to pay his debt at the inn, Minna redeems it from the innkeeper. Minna’s maneuvering is designed to make Tellheim aware of both the internal attitudes and external circumstances which have heretofore determined his actions. Minna describes the main problem to be overcome to be one of pride: "bloß ein wenig zu viel Stolz (...) scheint mir in seiner Aufführung zu sein. (...) Ein Streich ist mir beigefallen, ihn wegen dieses Stolzses mit ähnlichem Stolze ein wenig zu martern" (60).

Self-assurance is what Minna shows Tellheim to lack. She works hard to bring him away from his either/or manner of thinking. To be sure, this is also in her own interest, because she loves him and wants to marry him. He refuses to marry her at this time because he finds himself so much in need. Minna shows Tellheim how to temper his self-centered, self-pitying emotions so that he may allow himself to love her freely. She teaches him not to be so melancholy but to prize the more valuable emotion of love. She wants him to let his heart speak freely, for she knows that if he follows his heart, he will admit
that he loves her. In short, she wants him to come away from his overbearing emphasis on his own misery. When Minna hears Tellheim speak of his disability, she mocks his earnestness so that he might view his paralyzed arm in better proportion to the entire quality of his life. Her feigned commiseration over the seriousness of his destitution is so obviously out of place that it cannot help but show Tellheim how unseemly his whining is. This is consistent with contemporary Enlightenment thought regarding the expression of suffering or misfortune. Again, Geyer-Kordesch: “the weakening of the body and its ailments called for a philosophic stoicism which merged with new habits of worldliness. Men of the world, fashionable men, kept quiet as to their disabilities” (189).

In choosing to approach Tellheim with mockery, Minna’s actions conjure the medical discourses surrounding hypochondria and hysteria. She identifies his complaining as exaggeration, and she rejects his assessment of himself as “ein Krüppel.” Because Tellheim dwells so much on his own suffering, Minna senses in him the gloom and pessimism that are for the enlightened a form of pathology. Throughout the play, Tellheim predicts only the most dreary life for himself and does not anticipate getting better. He does not want to be around other people the way he might avoid them if he had an infectious disease.

Medical discourse overlaps with the discourse of social standing as it appears in the play. Again, this overlap occurs whenever the topic of honor is at issue. Lessing shows that Tellheim’s refusal to accept what is due him is caused by an exaggerated concept of honor that borders on arrogance. Jacobs writes:

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55 Tellheim’s exaggeration has linked him with the Pietist tradition of the enthusiastic expression of suffering. Geyer-Kordesch notes that “the Pious (...) revel in pain” (199).
Diese Fehler bestanden vor allem in einer Verhärting und Vereinseitigung seiner Haltung (...) So weist er Minnas Zuneigung und Trost zurück, weil es mit seinem Stolz und seinem Ehrgefühl unvereinbar ist, daß er als Unglücklicher und Nehmender, und nicht als Überlegener und Gebender Minna heiraten sollte (71).

Jacobs locates the source of Tellheim’s problems in his unwillingness to reconcile his need to depend on other people with his customary position as the person on whom many people depend. This quotation illustrates that Tellheim maintains a strict division of roles: helpers are only helpers and people who need help are apparently unable to give help. Tellheim links this division to social standing and to bodily ability. Because one aspect of his life suddenly places him in the new (for him) category of “receivers of help,” he concludes that he must completely abandon his other social affiliations. Lessing shows through the character of Minna that this extremist thinking is wrong. Insofar as disability requires at times dependence on other people for assistance, it stands in direct opposition to the honor that Tellheim wishes to display. Lessing shows this to be a function of Tellheim’s class as an aristocrat and a military officer. Geyer-Kordesch notes that “pain [was] to be subordinated to class behaviour” (186). Because the entire play revolves around the fact that Tellheim does not subordinate his pain and does not display the proper behavior expected from someone of his stature, we can see the extent to which disability and social standing inform and help to create one another. The resolution that Tellheim finds in Minna von Barnhelm is really available only to someone of his station and gender. Tellheim, after all, has the means to accommodate a disability: a trusted servant who will assist him and the financial resources to allow him to live comfortably. If
the same physical condition of paralysis were to be found in another character of the play, the potential for resolution would not be the same. The ideas presented here are for the enlightened, aristocratic male.

Disability, gender, and class are intrinsically related within the Ständegesellschaft and within the mind of the figure of Tellheim. For Tellheim, these categories of human identity are united through the concept of honor. Tellheim thinks that the diminishment of one of these aspects of his identity necessarily compromises the others as well. The very fact that it is not easy to determine which diminishment “came first” shows the interdependence of disability, gender, and class. Did the disability cause his dismissal? Did his debt render his honor questionable? Tellheim relinquishes all of his own desires for he feels he no longer may lay claim to what otherwise would have been his, namely money, position as an officer, and the opportunity to marry Minna. Although Tellheim’s exaggeration provides much of the play’s comedy, Tellheim does in fact have an accurate sense of the interdependence of disability, gender, and class. Implicit in his refusal to marry Minna after his paralysis is Tellheim’s belief that his sexuality has been compromised. This is not only a problem of honor, but as Isabel Hull argues in Sexuality, State, and Civil Society in Germany 1700-1815, the sexual system of the eighteenth century provided the underpinnings of the emerging civil society. Hull writes that “marriage was after all a primary Stand in the Ständestaat (...) In short, the nexus of

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56 This aspect of Tellheim’s character would be expected from someone of his social standing. Sanna notes: “Durch die Triade Ehre-Glück-Dienst ist Tellheim an die absolutistische Öffentlichkeitssphäre gebunden und in die homogene Gruppe der Ehrenmänner, d.h. der Adligen männlichen Geschlechts, integriert” (47). For the proper aristocratic man, the code of honor stood in virtual opposition to the practices of friendship and love (Sanna 48).
political, social and authority relations was charted as much by the marital _Stand_ as by the other _Stände_" (77). If, as Hull suggests, sexual expression in the heterosexual bond of marriage was perceived among the practitioners of civil society to be "the culmination of the fully developed individual personality," then Tellheim shows clearly that disability is sufficient to disrupt that social economy (5).

Another way to understand the interrelationship of sexuality and disability in this instance is to surmise that Tellheim himself is convinced of the asexuality of the disabled. Many of Tellheim's actions, in particular his forfeiture of his engagement ring, support this possibility. In dwelling on his disability, Tellheim reasons that he is no longer capable of being a good husband to Minna. His reluctance to marry her signals his tacit equation of disability with male sexual impotence. When at the culmination of the _Ring-Intrige_ Tellheim re-accepts his own ring, he rejoins the established civil society.

Tellheim's exaggeration does not seem so out of place up until this point, for Tellheim obviously knows the social and sexual rules of his century. Indeed, if he does not marry, he will forfeit his access to the rights of full citizenship and virtually guarantee his complete withdrawal from social life. Hull writes that

> the association of sexual maturity, sexual potency, solidity of character, citizenship, marriage, and social stability formed a tightly wound tautology, in which each term flowed ineluctably into the other. Indeed, the very condition of being human was defined in this constellation in which the sexual component was absolutely necessary. Hence, the common descriptions of nuns and monks as "these

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57 This concern was not restricted to the eighteenth century. The debate over whether people with disabilities should be allowed to marry has continued well into the twentieth century. See for example Kluge, K. J. and Leo Sparty, eds. "Sollen, können, dürfen Behinderte heiraten?" Bonn-Bad Godesberg: Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Hilfe für Behinderte, 1977.
unfortunate middle things [unseeligen Mitteldinger],"
"these hermaphroditic creatures [Zwittergeschöpf]," or of
bachelors as "sick souls" (242).

The phenomenon of occupying an unstable location between two clearly defined positions is already present to a certain extent in Tellheim's character. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, Tellheim belongs to the "third" class (der dritte Stand), for he is neither completely aristocratic, that is, landed, nor is he bourgeois. His disability, together with his (temporary) poverty and his refusal to marry all work together to reflect the instability of his emotions and his position in society.

The project undertaken in the play is the restoration of Tellheim's stability. In the end resolution is achieved by minimizing the impact of his disability. This is done in two ways. First, Tellheim has learned throughout the course of the drama that his disability is not best understood as a private, fateful experience to which he must resign himself. Minna has helped him adopt quite a different approach, namely a pragmatic and empirical assessment of the specific situations in which his paralyzed arm will require accommodation. The second concerns a possible allusion Lessing makes to a long-standing view of disability as punishment for a wrongdoing. Typical of absolutism were what Hull describes as "mirroring punishments' where a thief might lose the hand that had stolen, a blasphemer, the tongue, or where a score of different methods of execution were carefully fitted to different crimes and criminals" (77). Readers may wonder whether Lessing alludes to this type of punishment by "disabling" the arm that was alleged to have stolen. As Tellheim is exonerated from the accusation of theft, his paralyzed arm loses prominence in the play. In both cases, the minimization of the disabled arm subsequently
affords Tellheim the confidence to marry. Not only does his disability dwindle in importance as his conflicts are resolved, but it also soon ceases to be mentioned in the play. Ultimately Tellheim is assured of the stability of his Stand.

Conclusion

Disability is a subtle, yet very important feature of the character Lessing creates in order to advocate Enlightenment. Although the play is not about Tellheim’s disability per se, and although Tellheim’s problems are not solely a result of his paralyzed arm, Lessing nonetheless uses disability to criticize the very type of rigid thinking that would logically discount disability. In Tellheim’s manner of thinking, disability may be understood only in terms of a binary opposite: one is either absolutely disabled or one is not. Lessing clearly does not privilege this view in Minna von Barnhelm. To the contrary, he shows through the figure of Tellheim that a disability can be present and might indeed impede a person’s activities in certain instances, but that the disability need not compromise the dignity or the worth of the individual in question. Minna’s empirical, pragmatic assessment of Tellheim’s paralysis is required to convince Tellheim that what he has is a disability, that is, the absence of an ability, not a complete and unconditional invalidation of his life. In this regard, one might reasonably conclude from this play that movement toward Enlightenment would likely encourage people with disabilities to believe that their physical abilities should not severely hinder them in social settings, and in this sense, Minna von Barnhelm presents a commendable effort to challenge inflexible conceptions of disability. One clear disclaimer must be made, however. Lessing’s suggestion that it is sufficient simply to tell this disabled person that his disability is “not that bad” points to the very
specific and limited framework in which a disability would not be detrimental. We must not automatically conclude from Minna von Barnhelm that this possibility is universalizable, for Minna von Barnhelm deals with a very specific disability obtained in a very specific way. Tellheim has earned honor through his military service and the people around him are happy to see him rewarded for his service in the military. King Frederick II is also portrayed at the end of the play as expressing gratitude for Tellheim's service, thus lending an official stamp of approval of Tellheim's work on behalf of the Prussian army. Tellheim has a disability that the general public would recognize as "honorable" acquired, and he could expect broad sympathy for his wound. In other words, Tellheim's disability would not be cause for suspicion or skepticism, so no one would begrudge him remuneration for his service. We may not infer from this drama that people whose disabilities were not acquired through military service are similarly entitled to benefits and respect. In fact, several aspects of Tellheim's life render his disability both "honorable" and easily accommodated.

If, as Jacobs concludes, it is Tellheim's unwillingness to accept help which prevents the resolution of his conflicts, then it will be the adoption of a new attitude toward, among other things, his paralyzed arm which ultimately affords Tellheim the status of Enlightened. Since this is clearly the goal of the play's plot, an audience could presumably learn a number of concrete lessons regarding disability: first, that it is not proper to draw attention to disability to elicit pity; second, that it is wrong to conclude that disability in and of itself impinges on self-worth; and third, that the discrete acceptance of help is advisable. In short, Minna von Barnhelm features a portrayal of
disability as a social construct that requires social responses. The disability here is not only a medical condition, nor is it a curse or a communication from the divine, as Pietist thinkers would likely believe. Lessing maintains the Enlightenment ideal insofar as he recommends for Tellheim the subordination of his disabled body to an enlightened concept of spirit and mind. Tellheim resolves his conflicts only by adopting an unexaggerated, informed approach to his body in particular and his social circumstances in general. As soon as Tellheim is convinced that his paralyzed arm does not require as much attention as he had previously thought, he is finally able to live as an enlightened man. Thus the achievement of Enlightenment goals as they are presented in this drama can be appraised not only with aesthetic measures, but also through the analysis of discourses of medicine, gender, class, and now, disability.

Minna von Barnhelm, however, does not only concern one individual with a disability. Rather, the play incorporates a paradigm of disability in its exposition of the development of an Enlightened subject. Disability appears in Minna von Barnhelm as a component of human identity and clearly does not function as a placeholder for dangerousness or deviance. In fact, disability in this play occupies a fixed position only in Tellheim's mind for a limited period. That this should constitute the play's central conflict reveals the degree to which Lessing instrumentalizes contested cultural meanings of

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58 Simon Richter has also garnered insight from the analysis of these eighteenth-century discourses in his study of stimuli and attraction. He recommends further Cultural Studies analysis: "demzufolge sollte auf den ästhetischen Charakter des medizinischen Diskurses und ebenso auf den medizinischen Charakter des ästhetischen Diskurses als auch auf den rhetorischen Charakter beider Diskurse geachtet werden" (93).
disability. Lessing's critique of absolutism and his advancement of Enlightenment thought in fact rely on competing discourses of disability.

Viewed within the context of Disability Studies, competing approaches for understanding Tellheim's disability form a framework for exploring later literary portrayals of disability in German texts. Throughout the remainder of this study I shall attempt to show that key moments in various periods of German culture rely on a discourse of disability similar to that in which Major von Tellheim operates, particularly with regard to the attention given to categories of identity as they shape disability. The tension that is evident in Minna von Barnhelm, namely the tension between the impulse to focus on the social construction of disability and the impulse to ascribe metaphysical meaning to disability will continue to shape later literary works which feature disabled characters.
CHAPTER 3

SPARKING CONTROVERSY:
THE FUNCTION AND PORTRAYAL OF DISABILITY
IN ACHIM VON ARNIM'S DER TOLLE INVALIDE AUF DEM FORT RATONNEAU

Just as in Lessing's Minna von Barnhelm, the Seven Years' War also serves as the historical setting of Achim von Arnim's novella Der tolle Invalide auf dem Fort Ratonneau (1818). Unlike Lessing's Tellheim, however, the principle disabled figure in Arnim's novella does not attribute his impairment solely to the wounds he received in battle. In fact, Arnim's Francoeur does not acknowledge an impairment at all.\(^{59}\) He was indeed wounded "am Kopfe" in a battle in Leipzig, however the insanity which he is perceived to have is explored in the novella as having been derived from any number of sources and circumstances (5).\(^{60}\) Finding the cause of Francoeur's uncontrollable behavior—so that it might be corrected— is the primary question that the novella poses. Some characters in the novella maintain that a curse caused him to become insane, others believe that the head wound from the Leipzig battle is the source, and still others imply that the public pressure

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\(^{59}\) Throughout most of the novella Francoeur denies any lapse in his health or capacity for reason. He is surprised and outraged when an aide finally inquires about his health and stability: "Ihr seht so gesund aus wie sonst, und alles, was Ihr tut, ist so vernünftig."—'Wer zweifelt daran?' fragte Francoeur mit einer Aufwallung, 'das will ich wissen!'" (15).

\(^{60}\) Throughout this chapter I shall retain the terms "insanity" and "insane" when referring to Francoeur and the novella. When I discuss research into the history of psychiatry and in my general conclusions, I shall use the contemporary terms "mental illness" and "mentally ill."
of a simple rumor that Francoeur might be insane was in fact enough to drive him insane.

At issue in this analysis are the implications of these competing explanations. My reading is informed by a particular conclusion of Susan Sontag's study *Illness as Metaphor*, namely that

the notion that a disease can be explained only by a variety of causes is precisely characteristic of thinking about diseases whose causation is not understood. And it is diseases thought to be multi-determined (that is, mysterious) that have the widest possibilities as metaphors for what is felt to be socially or morally wrong. (61)

Many plot elements in *Der tolle Invalide* mirror the competing social and historical discourses that are present in the narrative structures of the text. This chapter examines the convergence of discourses in the novella. I shall argue that Arnim relies on a discourse of disability in order to pursue questions of the relationship of the individual to the social whole. His exploration of causality of Francoeur's mental illness provides a model in which he also contemplates the role of the individual in a national and political context. Several scholarly investigations have already pointed out the interplay of social, political, and spiritual impulses in the works of Achim von Arnim; my study of *Der tolle Invalide* examines in detail the embodiment of competing discourses within the figure of Francoeur. The following list provides a brief overview of the discourses operating simultaneously in

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61 Hans-Georg Werner describes the multi-directional impulses in the novella: "[Sie] erscheinen als Elemente in einem Geflecht, das nicht nur auf einer gleichsam horizontalen Ebene die Welt der sinnlichen Erscheinungen durchzieht, sondern sich auch vertikal vom Politischen und Moralischen in einen höheren, hellen, und einen unteren, dunklen, metaphysischen Bereich erstreckt. Da scheint alles mit allem verbunden und aufeinanderbezogen" (61).

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the novella. First, through Francoeur, Arnim alludes to his own national political context, specifically that of the recently concluded Prussian Wars of Liberation from Napoleon. Also present here is Arnim's concern regarding the adversarial relationship between Germany and France and his desire to see the creation of a constitutional government in Germany that would facilitate public representation. Second, in addition to overtly political topics, Arnim makes use of new scientific knowledge about psychiatry and living organisms, including emerging theories of stimulus and response. Third, he links these scientific, medical, and political concerns to underlying assumptions of gender roles and sexual mores. Fourth, he includes imaginative portrayals of emotional upheaval, specifically excitement and disappointment, that parallel his own documented emotions. Fifth, he considers the possibility of interplay between supernatural and earthly realms, contemplating divine or diabolical intervention into human lives. Sixth, and most pertinent to this study of disability in German literature, Arnim addresses the social construction of disability. He demonstrates, albeit subtly and nearly imperceptibly, that disability and sickness might not be interchangeable terms. Perhaps the most notable achievement of Arnim's short text is precisely the degree to which such disparate spheres are interwoven.

The rest of my chapter will be devoted to analyzing the ways in which these discourses serve as cultural referents within the novella and thus link the novella to its historical context.

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62 Although I have enumerated the discourses I wish to address, the numbers I attach to them should not suggest an order of importance. To the contrary, I shall attempt to show the interdependence of all of these discourses within the novella.

63 I shall show that his portrayal of Rosalie's caregiving and Francoeur's military service allude to some differences between disability and sickness.
The primary focus of the plot concerns Francoeur's unpredictable and disturbing behavior and how the people around him might respond to him. Francoeur's wife Rosalie introduces the problem and first takes action to alleviate Francoeur's emotional duress by approaching a trusted Kommandant for help. Well aware of the deeply discrediting and ostracizing nature of Francoeur's unusual condition, Rosalie requests that Francoeur might be placed far away from the city and "das Gerede der Leute" until he is well (10). This is not the first time that Francoeur was thought to be insane. Rosalie reveals that shortly after their marriage, an "Oberst" described Francoeur as "tollkühn wie ein Rasender" and "seine Kameraden meinten, er sei zuweilen wahnsinnig" (10). Here Arnim introduces the primary social repercussion of perceived insanity: stigma. Readers have not yet encountered Francoeur, yet there is no apparent reason not to trust the description that Rosalie gives as well as the rumors she recounts. Despite the fact that Francoeur is already somewhat of an outcast, both Rosalie and the Kommandant believe that the best solution for Francoeur and for the people around him is to isolate Francoeur still further.

This distinctly social response to a problem that may have a physiological cause warrants further investigation. Although this removal is offered as mutually beneficial, it becomes clear that it does not benefit Francoeur and the public at large in the same ways. Because the cause for Francoeur's behavior has not yet been determined at this early point in the novella, his isolation presupposes an adversarial relationship between Francoeur and the people around him. That Francoeur is sent to a munitions site only reiterates the potential antagonism, placing every character, literally, in an explosive situation. Again, Sontag helps readers understand the possible implications of Francoeur's insanity, noting
that metaphors of disease “suggest profound disequilibrium between an individual and society, with society conceived as the individual’s adversary” (73). Francoeur’s isolation indicates that he cannot participate in society at this time, and, as I shall demonstrate in this analysis, Francoeur increasingly serves as the embodiment of deviance and dangerousness in the novella. His disability is in every case the marker of undesirable difference.

Intrinsically linked with the social dimension of Francoeur’s insanity are the medical premises that inform it. Consider Rosalie’s assessment of Francoeur’s condition together with the Kommandant’s prognosis: Rosalie is desperately concerned that Francoeur’s insanity remain “ein Geheimnis” (10). Implicitly acknowledging that this secrecy is warranted, the Kommandant assigns Francoeur to a remote munitions storage facility. The Kommandant firmly believes that the remote location of the site will offer Francoeur some much-needed time away from the pressures of his previous assignment. This action of seeking a quieter place for Francoeur to carry out his military duties while recovering from mental stress would have been consistent with major trends in the philosophy of nature and with contemporary psychiatric counsel. Medicine during the early years of the nineteenth century concerned itself with establishing and maintaining balance within living organisms. Philosopher Friedrich W. J. Schelling maintained in his theory of sickness that an organism required a certain proportion of “organischen Kräfte,” and if this proportion were disturbed, then sickness was the result: “die Existenz des Organismus als Ganzes [ist] gefährdet und damit krank” (Wöbkemeier 27). Stimuli outside the organism were capable of disrupting the necessary balance. According to
Schelling “[die] Erregung ist von außen bestimmbar und damit veränderlich (27). This concept partially describes the Kommandant and Rosalie’s reaction to Francoeur. They thought it best to modify his surroundings in order to calm him down. They felt that in doing so, they would remove the stimuli that they believed brought on his insanity.

This approach was also undertaken in the developing field of psychiatry during the time when the novella was written. From the middle ages until the nineteenth century, mental illness moved from the domain of the church into the domain of science and medicine. No longer solely at the mercy of charitable or religious institutions, people with mental illness in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries became increasingly regarded as treatable and in some instances, curable. Dirk Blasius describes this development in detail in his book-length studies of the history of psychiatry in Germany, *Der verwaltete Wahnsinn* (1980) and *Einfache Seelenstörung* (1994). Important for this study are the ways in which characters in *Der tolle Invalide* illustrate the major tenets of psychiatry in the nineteenth century. The primary trends that will be considered here included the practice of separating the mentally ill from those around them because of the potential danger they pose to the larger community and the emergence of the psychiatric facility (“Anstalt”) as place where the community might be “protected” and the ill person might also find helpful treatment. Blasius’s *Seelenstörung* describes the rapidly increasing number of psychiatric facilities in Germany during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He argues that the establishment of such facilities expresses an important change in attitude toward people with mental illness: “Erst die Anstalt griff geistige Behinderung unter dem Gesichtspunkt einer behandelbaren Krankheit auf” (16). Blasius does not
suggest that all psychiatric facilities were models of benevolent care. To the contrary, his study elaborates on the abuses that have been carried out against people with mental illness in the name of “curing” them. His point in this study is to trace shifts in the understanding of mental illness. Where it was once a topic explained by supernatural means, for example as the result of a divine curse or the product of demonic possession, mental illness began in the nineteenth century to be explored in the context of physiology and medicine.

Supported by medical knowledge, the social response undertaken to treat Francoeur takes away much authority that Francoeur has over his life. After receiving the appointment to Fort Ratonneau, Francoeur thinks that he is becoming more closely involved with his military work, yet the people around him know that the assignment at Ratonneau is an effort to distance him from his work and his colleagues. The narrative makes clear from the beginning that Francoeur is viewed from multiple vantage points as posing a problem for the people around him. Although the characters in the narrative claim to want to help Francoeur, their actions indicate that they are at least as concerned with the threat he poses to others.  

Franco-German Relations

A look at the political landscape at the time of the novella’s appearance should help to put this analysis in broader context. Roland Hoermann does not document his finding, but he wrote that “the proceeds [from the novella] were intended for invalid veterans of the Wars of Liberation against Napoleon” (103). If this is true, it provides a

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64 In this regard, Arnim posits a clear demarcation between those people who have mental illness and those people who do not.
clear indication of Arnim’s commitment to supporting those veterans who served in the 
Prussian military during the allied attempt to force Napoleon back from central and eastern 
Europe. Yet as important as the defeat of Napoleon was to Arnim, his desire to see 
political reform in Germany was even greater. His political leanings drew from both 
liberal and conservative movements. According to Jürgen Knaack: “bei beiden Gruppen 
findet er Positives und Negatives” (15). Arnim was particularly interested in establishing 
representational government. The possibility of a new constitution had been discussed as 
European leaders mobilized their efforts against Napoleon, yet after his defeat at 
Waterloo, the possibility of a constitution received very little attention. Instead, even 
stricter controls were placed upon the people. The Congress of Vienna established the 
German Confederation (Deutscher Bund), marking the return to an absolutist form of 
government and defeating the hope that a more democratic form of government might be 
created. The restoration of a monarchical government rejected the liberal movement’s 
demand that the right to uncensored speech be guaranteed. Censorship in Prussia was 
even stricter than it had been before the wars, adding to Arnim’s enormous frustration and 
disappointment.

After Napoleon’s defeat, Arnim continued to express his political views in writing, 
remaining convinced of the need for a constitution which would allow for public

65 During the Wars of Liberation Arnim served briefly in several capacities. He was not 
accepted as an officer of the Prussian army, however he did receive an appointment as a 
captain of a battalion of a Berlin militia. The poorly funded battalion dissolved after only 
three months of operation, after which time Arnim accepted the editorship of the 
Preußischer Correspondent. In this journal, Arnim was able to publish pro-Prussian 
articles while still advocating free speech and representational government. Arnim’s ideas 
regarding the latter were increasingly censored, causing him to resign in frustration only a 
few months after he began.
participation in government and the assurance of individual rights. Yet as time passed he needed more and more to attend to his more immediate concerns. Together with his wife Bettina, Arnim had eight children, requiring him to devote increasing attention to providing for his family. He wrote a number of articles on a variety of topics in order to earn money. An attitude of resignation characterized the final years of his life. Knaack writes:

Sein Ziel einer Beteiligung der Öffentlichkeit an der Politik war nicht erreicht, Preußen war ein gut funktionierender Beamtenstaat geworden, mit liberaler Wirtschaftsordnung, strenger Zensur und einer patriarchalisch-feudalen Herrschaft. Arnim paßte sich im Laufe der Zeit diesen Gegebenheiten an, sein kämpferischer Elan schwand. (16)

Der tolle Invalide auf dem Fort Ratonneau may be understood to allude to the political events and goals that shaped Arnim’s life. Without specifically addressing Napoleon or the Wars of Liberation, the novella nonetheless problematizes the issues of political upheaval, national identity and personal emotional investment that characterized Arnim’s involvement in politics. By setting the action of the novella in the historical period of the recently concluded Seven Years’ War, Arnim effects a commentary that might have posed a greater risk for censorship or critical rejection had he set it during the actual years of the Wars of Liberation. He is able to contemplate a more harmonious resolution among the German and French characters than was achieved in reality after the war.

More analysis of the Franco-German conflicts in the novella is warranted at this point. First it must be noted that Rosalie is German and Francoeur is French. During the Wars of Liberation and during the Seven Years’ War, the French and the Prussians were
of course fighting on opposite sides. "Enemies" according to their citizenship, Rosalie and Francoeur’s love for each other faces an obstacle in this regard. This is exacerbated by the curse Rosalie’s mother places on Rosalie after they marry: “Sie verfluchte mich und übergab mich mit feuerlicher Rede dem Teufel” (7). The effects of the curse extend to Francoeur because of their marriage. Throughout the novella it is implied that the mother has made this curse because she does not approve of a “mixed,” that is, Franco-German marriage. Yet closer examination of the text reveals contradictions. Readers are told that Rosalie’s mother would not allow her to care for any wounded soldiers passing through their town, regardless of their nationality: “ich durfte keinem eine Gabe bringen, der verwundet oder hungrig vor dem Hause vorüberging” (6). Thus her mother’s rule cannot only be understood to represent nationalistic pride. Rosalie recalls the many men who had visited her mother before the war, and she notes that her mother became lonely and bitter after they were no longer able to visit her: “der Krieg hatte diese Herren meist zerstreut (...) ‘Freund und Feind waren ihr darum gleich verhaßt” (6). Despite her mother's wishes, Rosalie does care for Francoeur and soon thereafter marries him.

The Supernatural

The invocation of the devil introduces the supernatural into the narrative. Maintained throughout the text are the Christian notions of the warfare between the divine and the diabolical; the human being in this framework must be concerned with righteousness, sin, and salvation. These concepts are present throughout the novella, most clearly with regard to Francoeur. A powerful suggestion is that Francoeur has somehow been punished by God; Rosalie’s curse could then be understood as the next logical step in
this supernatural battle. Yet, as is increasingly apparent in this novella, other frameworks for understanding are available. It is quite possible, for example, that the religious dimension of the novella offers a space for conflict resolution that transcends national borders. This possibility has been noted in other scholarly analyses of the novella, including Werner’s inquiry into the novella’s narrative structures. Werner writes:

Dennoch ist die religiöse Motivik kein Beiwerk. Sie gibt den Entscheidungen der Figuren ein über die private Sphäre hinausreichendes Gewicht, vermittelt das Einzelne mit dem Allgemeinen, das Individuelle mit dem Sozialen, das Einmalige mit dem Geschichtlichen. Sie lenkt die Aufmerksamkeit des Lesers auf die allgemeine Bedeutsamkeit ihres Tuns. (65)

Stahl and Yuill also consider the implications of the supernatural, concluding that Arnim posits a metaphysical solution to the earthly problems of the novella’s characters:

By discrete use of ambivalent symbols and incidents, Arnim gives the story a theological perspective: beyond the rationally explicable psychological and physiological factors in the action, he suggests a struggle between divine and diabolical powers which ends triumphantly in the words: “Gnade löst den Fluch der Sünde, Liebe treibt den Teufel aus.” (133)

Turning momentarily from interpretations of the curse, consider the ways in which it functions in the novella. Although the curse itself conjures a major discourse that Arnim problematizes, the curse as a discrete event links other discourses in the novella. The most striking example is the linkage that the curse establishes among discourses of human sexual relationships and national identities. This linkage is specifically made in the figure of Rosalie, who believes in the power of the curse and blames herself for it. She blames

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66 I shall discuss this final saying at length later in this chapter.
herself for disobeying her mother’s warning and bringing about the curse that makes Francoeur insane. She soon conflates the curse with her love for Francoeur as she says to the Kommandant: “Meine Liebe hat den Teufel in ihn gebracht und plagt ihn und verwirrt seine Sinne” (5); soon thereafter she tells him of Francoeur’s “Unglück, dessen einzige Ursache meine Liebe war” (10). These lines from the novella invoke the discourse of sexuality.

Isabel Hull’s analysis of the sexual system in the emerging German civil society is once again helpful. Hull names three “classic themes of nineteenth-century sexual discourse: prostitution, (male) homosexuality, and venereal disease” (258). Given this trend, a provocative linkage to sexual discourse is suggested by Rosalie’s assertion that her love has caused Francoeur’s sickness: the image of venereal disease. Although an actual venereal disease is not named in the novella, the discursive similarities between venereal disease and mental illness cannot be overlooked. The notion of transgression of societal mores is common to both; the quality of divine punishment is as well, although in the nineteenth century, mental illness was frequently held to be a punishment, not necessarily to deserve punishment.

Another possibility concerns the configuration of gendered identity and the existence of clearly prescribed gender roles. Rosalie’s disobedience of her mother and the

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67 Hull notes the “morbid fixation” on venereal disease in the nineteenth century (48) as well as state attempts to regulate sexual behavior by linking venereal disease to criminality beginning in the late eighteenth century (140).
68 In the following chapters of this study I shall show that these ideas are by no means limited to the nineteenth century.
utter havoc that results express symbolically the threat of female independence. Hull notes that "the schematic dichotomy of male-active / female-passive is familiar to any observer of the nineteenth century" (411). Rosalie's disobedience transgresses social expectations. Rosalie is portrayed as recognizing the repercussions of her rebellious actions, however it must be pointed out that the actions she takes do not indicate that she regrets her decisions, merely that she accepts responsibility for them. This does not constitute a challenge to the structures of the sexual system, it simply shows that within the established parameters of this system, Rosalie acts with some measure of self-assurance and autonomy. Clearly the symbolic notions of venereal disease and deviant female behavior have revealed themselves in Rosalie in her sense of guilt, yet Arnim does not stop the narrative once Rosalie's guilt is established. He imagines that guilt to be an impetus for later, more significant action, and this is where the topic of disability enters the narrative explicitly: Rosalie's guilt over the contribution she feels she has made to Francoeur's insanity informs the way she cares for him.

Caregiving

Disability is the experience that brings these abstract spheres together into the concrete activities of daily living. Rosalie is the figure who effects this. She does this by regarding Francoeur's insanity as a physical and emotional condition that requires accommodation and care. She does not refrain from searching for a cause for his insanity, however she has already claimed the bulk of responsibility for it. She takes proactive measures to accommodate Francoeur's needs in his personal life and in his work. As Francoeur's disability becomes more pronounced, many relationships are altered and new
responsibilities arise, particularly for Rosalie. Through Rosalie’s words and actions, readers can examine an entire economy of care.

Caregiving requires sacrifice and for Rosalie requires risk. Her first act of care for Francoeur was to prepare a meal and a place for him to sleep soon after his capture (6). As his caregiver, Rosalie becomes as ostracized (here, “ausgestoßen”) as Francoeur: “Auch meine jugendlichen Bekannten in der Stadt wollten mich nicht mehr kennen, so konnte ich ganz ihm und seiner Pflege leben” (8). Rosalie describes herself this way after she has been abandoned by her mother. Usually ostracism and abandonment are associated with the person who actually has a disability, but Amim shows here that the caregiver has also been cast out of her social world because of the attention she chooses to devote to her disabled husband.

Rosalie suffers from physical and emotional problems that are possibly as great as Francoeur’s, however she is not presented as the disabled character in the novella. Her position as a caregiver exists in firm opposition to Francoeur’s as the recipient of care, yet Amim affords her several opportunities to express her own needs and to receive acknowledgment for the work that she does for Francoeur. In one instance, Rosalie confides to the Kommandant that “diese innere Qual, vielleicht auch die angestrengte Arbeit, zerrüttet endlich meinen Körper, heftige Krämpfe, die ich ihm verheimlichte, drohten mich zu ersticken, und Arzeneien schienen diese Übel nur zu mehren” (8). In another instance, Francoeur was reminded by an “alter Geistlicher” at their wedding of all

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\[\text{69 The fact that she wants to keep her own suffering secret shows that she places a higher value on Francoeur’s suffering than on her own. This is typical of a caregiver: there is often not a reciprocal relationship between caregiver and the recipient of care. Instead, the recipient of care is looked upon as being in need, and the caregiver is not.}\]
that Rosalie had done for him: "was ich für ihn getan, wie ich ihm Vaterland, Wohlstand und Freundschaft zum Opfer gebracht" (9). This is important because it shows that someone was aware of Rosalie’s perspective and even acknowledges the great degree of sacrifice that she has undergone for Francoeur’s sake. It is not entirely clear why the clergyman said all these things. Might he have felt obligated to protect Rosalie from the threat of Francoeur? From the threat of moral or spiritual degradation through her association with him? Or did the minister try to level the playing field somewhat by showing that a caretaker also has needs that must be respected?

Der tolle Invalide can be productively analyzed through a Disability Studies reading. The novella makes abundantly clear that discursive practices overlap and inform one another. Disability is shown to be a product of many social discourses. There are always two or more explanations for the things that happen in this novella, and disability is shown to be produced by the intersection of multiple discourses or itself to constitute a discourse that informs other discourses. Consider again that at least one explanation is usually spiritual or supernatural, and one is usually pragmatic or at least earth-bound. At Rosalie and Francoeur’s first meeting, there is a reference to the supernatural: “er schwor mir, daß ich einen Heiligenschein um meinen Kopf trage” (7), but Rosalie explains that what he sees is simply her bonnet. Here we see the intersection of the saintly (or at least religious) tradition of caritas with a marker of her gendered identity, the bonnet. In the earlier passage in which Rosalie confided her pain to the Kommandant, she expresses the emotional pain of the curse and the blame she imposes on herself for Francoeur’s insanity.
Yet the work that she does taking care of Francoeur also clearly drains her of physical strength.

Rosalie cares for Francoeur by means of removing him from situations that might threaten him, although this is also clearly a function of the threat that he poses to others. As a caregiver, Rosalie is very different from Lessing’s Minna von Barnhelm. Minna is not Tellheim’s primary caregiver and does not get swept up in the cycle of melancholy and misery that Tellheim expresses. Rosalie dedicates her whole being to Francoeur and his care. She devotes her complete attention to discovering the cause and finding a cure for Francoeur. She is very much engaged in the interpretation of Francoeur’s disability, showing a pronounced need to know the cause so that she might find a solution. Minna, in contrast, does not seem concerned with the way(s) in which Tellheim acquired his disability, she only wants Tellheim to articulate the concrete needs that he has. The issue of causality is far less pivotal within the Enlightenment text than it is here in Arnim’s Romantic novella. The empirical approach to determining and accommodating Tellheim’s disability is for Francoeur and Rosalie hardly viable, given the number and quality of influences to which Francoeur’s insanity may be attributed. The differences between Minna and Rosalie with regard to caregiving further illuminate not only the different class structures that existed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but also the different roles that existed for women. As should be clear from the previous chapter, the eighteenth century offered few discourses that could be harnessed to blame Minna for Tellheim’s disability. In contrast, the nineteenth century is rich with possibilities for linking Rosalie to Francoeur’s.
Disability and Military Service

At the beginning of the novella, the Kommandant is described as the “Chef aller Invaliden” (6). This sets him up as an authority on disability. His own disability results from a leg amputation. He is required to use a prosthetic leg, which provides some comedy in the narrative. The wooden leg ignites when the Kommandant uses it to stoke the fire in his bedroom fireplace. This is presented as a humorous scene and it lends a quality of pragmatic acceptance to what might be a very serious condition. He is presented as somewhat bumbling, but nothing in the novella suggests that the Kommandant is not a capable or trustworthy person.

The Kommandant is completely confident that Francoeur’s skill as an officer has not been compromised and that Francoeur would be fit to administer the munitions site responsibly. Francoeur’s disability is linked to his military service. His head wound and his uncontrollable behavior that result are for a while forgivable and even somewhat respectable, given Francoeur’s outstanding military service. The accommodation he receives from the Kommandant and from Rosalie could only come about because of his previous military record. Another person who exhibited the same behaviors as Francoeur would not likely receive an assignment to direct a munitions site. Near the end of the novella, however, Francoeur’s assurance of a satisfactory military record is doubtful. After Francoeur seals himself in the Fort and threatens to blow it up, the Kommandant recognizes Francoeur’s condition as undeniable “Wahnsinn,” insanity. He tells a troubled

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70 In the final moments of the novella, the Kommandant literally forgives Francoeur for his insanity: “Er kündigte Francoeur Verzeihung an, weil seine Wunde ihn des Verstandes beraubt gehabt” (27).
Rosalie that a military court would not likely acquit Francoeur given this mental illness:

"Wahnsinn würde von keinem Kriegsgerichte erkannt werden" (23).

Disability and Danger

Arnim shows that disability can put a person on a downward spiral: Francoeur is not originally dangerous, but his condition worsens until he poses a very real danger to the people around him. Rosalie describes this spiral toward uncontrollability: "so stieg die Heftigkeit meines Mannes mit jedem Tage, er trommelte tagelang, um sich zu zerstreuen, zankte, machte Händel, der Oberst konnte ihn nicht begreifen" (9). Readers know that this is a degradation for Francoeur, because he was earlier described as "ein außerordentlicher Soldat" (9). Francoeur’s insanity has disabled Rosalie as much as Francoeur, and so at issue is not only the health or sickness of the individual person, but also the health or sickness of the people around that person. 71

When he learns that Rosalie has spoken to the Kommandant about him, Francoeur feels betrayed and takes drastic action. He screams that his marriage to Rosalie is over: "Wir sind geschieden! (...) Sie hat mich verraten, mich vernichtet (...) wir sind geschieden!" (15). Francoeur then accuses Rosalie and the Kommandant of conspiring against him and threatens to blow up the munitions site, killing himself and all others in its vicinity:

Dem Kommandanten lasse ich hierdurch Krieg erklären, er mag sich waffnen bis zum Abend, denn werde ich mein

71 Cf. Oskar Matzerath, who drums uncontrollably in Günter Grass’s Blechtrommel.

72 National Socialist principles are often traced to German Romanticism. Although the roots of “racial hygiene” and “racial health” can be found much earlier in history, these concepts are undeniably present in texts such as Arnim’s. In Der tolle Invalide, disability needs to be eradicated not only for the health of the individual man, Francoeur, but also for the health of the social whole.
Feuer eröffnen; (...) er hat mir den Schlüssel zum Pulver-turm gegeben, ich will ihn brauchen, und wenn er mich zu fassen meint, fliege ich mit ihm gen Himmel, vom Himmel in die Höle, das wird Staub geben. (19)

Indeed, Francoeur now poses a real and imminent danger to himself and all those around him. This is clearly not the type of metaphorical danger that other disabled characters in literature represent. Der tolle Invalide presents a disability that is as dangerous to the individual as it is to the community, and this is the clearest reason why Francoeur must be healed. This literary portrayal of insanity and its repercussions is consistent with the tradition of psychiatry up until the beginning of the nineteenth century.


Arnim is clearly aware of the tradition requiring authorities to protect the public from the threat of an insane person, however Der tolle Invalide contemplates another approach: shifting the concern from protecting the public to protecting the individual. Through Rosalie, Arnim demonstrates a break with the convention of isolating a person with mental illness from the public at large. To be sure, Rosalie’s attempt to bring Francoeur away from the tower constitutes a risk, yet this is a risk that Rosalie is willing to assume. Arnim shows through the successful resolution of the crisis that the effort was worth the risk. In this manner, Arnim allies himself with those reformers of psychiatry who maintained that

73 Cf. in particular my discussion of Leonhard Frank’s Der Mensch ist gut and Günter Grass’s Die Blechtrommel in chapters four and five. Both of these works make their social critiques through metaphors of disability. In both cases, the disabilities represented feature both implicit and explicit qualities of threat.
healing was possible. Advocating that psychiatry needed to move beyond its tradition of isolating people with mental illness, these psychiatrists’s theories of active intervention presupposed the possibility of healing mental illness. Blasius describes the school of psychiatric thought led by Carl Wigand Maximillian Jacobi, detailing Jacobi’s notions of the physiological roots of mental illness and the rejection of supernatural influence:

Jacobi stand im Schulenstreit der Vormärz-Psychiatrie auf der Seite der "Somatiker", die sich von der idealistischen Psychiatrie der "Psychiker" durch ihre empirische Ausrichtung unterschieden. (...) Vehement kämpften sie für die Befreiung der Irren von "religiöser Schuld" und pädagogisch motiviertem mechanischem Zwang. Ihre Therapien setzten beim "Körper," nicht beim "Geist" des Irren an. (33)

The conclusion of Der tolle Invalide fully incorporates Jacobi’s physiological understanding of mental illness without fully excluding religious interpretation. Setting up the final scene, Francoeur is shown to be torn between two realms: "es war, als ob zwei Naturen in ihm rangen" (26). His vision of Rosalie moves him to tear his hair out: "er riß es sich wütend aus" (26). This releases a torrent of emotion; tears and blood put out the burning fuse and avert the threatened explosion: "Tränen und Blut löschen den brennenden Zundstrick" (26). Blood in this paragraph has a variety of meanings. It can recall the religious image of spiritual healing through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, an allusion which is reiterated in the final sentences of the novella in the words "Sünde" (sin) and "lösen" (to cast off): "Gnade löst den Fluch der Sünde, Liebe treibt den Teufel aus" (28). Yet blood can also be understood in the context of medicine. Arnim offers this possibility as well in the figure of the physician who examines Francoeur after he returns
from the tower: "Der Chirurg wunderte sich, daß er keinen Schmerz zeigte, er zog ihm einen Knochensplitter aus der Wunde, der rings umher eine Eiterung hervorgebracht hatte" (27). This clearly medical explanation does not supersede the supernatural presence in the novella, it merely allows the supernatural dimension to unfold as parallel earthly explanations are suggested. *Der tolle Invalide* does not elevate one sphere of influence over another, instead the novella shows how the discourses present exist in productive tension to one another to shape bodily existence.

**Conclusion**

Much ambiguity surrounds Francoeur’s behavior in Achim von Arnim’s *Der tolle Invalide auf dem Fort Ratonneau*. Two or more explanations are typically available in the text for everything that happens to Francoeur. Through this ambiguity, Arnim represents the many layers of discourse that shape human lives. Arnim shows the discourses of science, medicine, nationality, gender, and disability to inform one another, and readers of the novella may conclude that precisely this demonstration of productive tension among the discourses is Arnim’s most appreciable contribution.

Disability as a locus of human identity and a position of experience is one important discourse in this complex. Particularly important for this analysis of the construction of disability within different historical periods is a significant challenge that Arnim offers to long-standing notions of disability as the product of a divine curse. Admittedly, disability would not likely have been articulated as a social construct or as an important aspect of human identity during the early years of the nineteenth century. Yet the ways in which Arnim relies upon disability to problematize other competing discourses
are striking. In that discourses from both supernatural and earthly realms present themselves as believable sources of information, the category of disability destabilizes perceived causal relationships among religious, political and social practices. Causality is never conclusive in the text, although the characters portrayed seek to determine causality through a variety of means. With regard to Francoeur’s insanity, a practical, empirical explanation is offered for every supernatural explanation offered. When the strength of the mother’s curse appears to reveal itself, a physical problem (the bone fragment embedded in Francoeur’s skull) and emotional problems also vie for the reader’s attention. Hans-Georg Werner concurs, assessing Francoeur’s problems in matter-of-fact terms: “Angst, Druck, Mangel an Vertrauen, nicht zuletzt die Unfähigkeit, sich mitzuteilen, geben dem Fluch der Mutter Rosalies menschliche Realität” (64). Throughout the novella, Arnim plays with a variety of discourses, making quite clear that a simple model of disability (for example, the medical model that is so prevalent today) is not sufficient to describe disability or respond to it. Instead, Arnim shows that disability is experienced within social, political, scientific, medical and spiritual contexts. In his exploration of the many factors culminating in Francoeur’s insanity, Arnim shows the readers that the boundaries determining disability are unstable. Consequently the function of the category of disability destabilizes political and social discourses within the novella, ultimately calling the assessment of causality itself into question.

Disability in and of itself was not likely apparent to nineteenth-century readers of Arnim’s text, however disability is clearly instrumental in articulating the more generalizable messages that the novella conveys. A contemporary reader could not have
missed Arnim's clearest points, namely that many and disparate forces inform human life. Some are internal, some external, some are based on overarching discourses, others on discrete events. Arnim shows that all of these possibilities operate simultaneously, and he maintains through the characters of Francoeur and Rosalie that human beings act and react within diverse and shifting parameters throughout their lives. Arnim clearly demonstrates that one cannot elevate one set of impulses over another, thus a causal relationship between events portrayed in the novella cannot be conclusively established. Linking the seemingly disparate discourses of politics, gender, sexuality, and religion, disability in the text ultimately functions as a destabilizing category.
CHAPTER 4

RESTORATION, RECONCILIATION AND REMOVAL: 
THE FUNCTION AND PORTRAYAL OF DISABILITY 
IN LEONHARD FRANK'S DER MENSCH IST GUT

The text to be discussed here, Leonhard Frank's 1918 collection of novellas, Der Mensch ist gut, was chosen for its position within several literary and historical contexts. First, the novellas feature an inventive literary representation of disability in their portrayal of soldiers wounded in war. The disabilities portrayed alternately appear as symbols of a larger social problem and as distinctly individual experiences. An important contribution to existing discourses of disability, these novellas interrogate public responses to disability ranging from efforts to normalize or even prevent disability to calls for the acceptance of people with disabilities. Additionally these novellas draw attention to competing notions of the role of the individual within a social totality. Der Mensch ist gut allows for productive discussion about the configuration and role of the individual in Germany in the early part of the twentieth century and consequently about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship that Germans could expect at that time. The novellas' place in literary history also warrants investigation. Der Mensch ist gut received at the time of its publication the broadest attention given to pacifist literature as well as widespread acclaim for its author,
most notably in the form of the Kleist Prize in the year 1920. Generally understood as an example of pacifist war literature, *Der Mensch ist gut* incorporates many of the aesthetic and philosophic impulses of nineteenth-century Romanticism as well as twentieth-century Expressionism and therefore sheds light on these artistic movements. All of these contexts converge, I shall argue, in the portrayal of disability within Frank’s novellas.

The literary form of the collection merits some attention and will contribute to the interpretation of its content. Frank’s novellas were originally published as separate novellas in the “Weiße Blätter.” Each novella tells of an individual who suffers as a result of the war and experiences an almost religious conversion to a liberating ideal: love. Published together in 1918 as *Der Mensch ist gut*, the novellas function as sequential episodes of a still larger novella, its central conflict or *unerhörte Begebenheit* repositioned as a societal conflict experienced by all of humanity. According to Martin Glaubrecht

> Diese Novellen [sind] nicht bloß fünf verschiedene Beispiele einer individuellen Umkehr, sondern Beispiele und aktivistische Beschwörung für die Umkehr aller. Die unerhörte Begebenheit des individuellen Umschwungs zur ursprünglichen Güte und Liebe wird durch die Aneinanderreihung der Novellen zu der einen unerhörtcn Begebenheit, daß ein ganzes Volk sich auf das ursprünglich Menschliche, auf die Liebe besinnt und so die Revolution und das Ende des Krieges unblutig herbeizwingt (169).

Ultimately, the novellas together tell the story that Frank wished were not mere fiction, namely that of human beings restored to their originally good conditions, who would then work together to stop the war and introduce this love into their nation. Indeed, Frank’s

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74 The “Weiße Blätter” was the name of a Swiss pacifist journal to which Frank contributed the pacifist novellas that later appeared in book form as *Der Mensch ist gut* (Glaubrecht 203).
novellas crossed literary genre boundaries, for despite their fictional narrative, they were pointedly addressed to a politically charged audience and appeared in an expressly political journal. Conversely, as I shall discuss later in this chapter, Frank’s non-fiction writing displays distinctly literary qualities, contributing to an overall oeuvre with a common focus and style. The achievement of Der Mensch ist gut lies between two discursive realms, namely literature and politics. The text articulates the interdependence of these realms, yet Frank saw the literary as subordinate to the political. He intentionally instrumentalized literature in the service of affecting political change. Glaubrecht, quoting Leonhard Frank, writes, “Frank selbst wollte die Novellen nicht als Kunstwerk betrachtet wissen, sondern als ‘aufwühlendes, direkt wirkendes Manifest gegen den Kriegsgeist’” (171; Gesammelte Werke V, p. 491).

Given its overarching theme of war, Der Mensch ist gut may clearly be grouped with such well-known and widely divergent examples of war literature as Ernst Jünger’s In Stahlgewittern (1920) and Erich Maria Remarque’s Im Westen Nichts Neues (1929). As in the above examples, war literature basically followed two major trends: writing that glorified the principles and practices of the First World War; and writing, like Frank’s, that protested the war. Some discussion of the political stage is necessary, however, before exploring the war’s treatment in literature. Military and political leaders in Germany believed in 1914 that winning the war was a foregone conclusion, and most believed that this would be a short war. The public reaction was decidedly enthusiastic. Euphoric support for the war effort spread throughout Germany upon declaration of war, and a transformation in public consciousness became evident. Idealistic and figurative language
in newspapers and in speeches by government officials helped to solidify the growing sense of nation that had not previously existed in Germany. In contrast to nineteenth-century central European wars that maintained a clear separation between the battlefield activities of war and the non-war activities of civilian life, the First World War entered the public consciousness and engaged the public at large in ways previously unknown.

Hüppauf notes that “nicht Armeen sondem Völker befanden sich im Krieg” (vii). Public discourse centered at least as much on the “fulfillment of German destiny” as on the pursuit of clear political goals. Reaching well beyond conventional military spheres, the unprecedented magnitude of this war would radically change the German nation. “Dieser Krieg bedeutete die Erfahrung von Leid, Tod, Zerstörung, Sinnlosigkeit; und gleichzeitig läßt sich nach der Bedeutung fragen, die er für die Konstruktion nationaler Eigenbilder, Selbstwertvorstellungen und Mentalitäten hatte” (Hüppauf ix). The writing that appeared during this war mirrored and likely contributed to the blurring of conventional categories of social organization and the shaping (or reshaping) of national identity.

Writers during the First World War often reached back into literary and philosophical traditions of the nineteenth century. Many books, poems, newspaper articles, and political tracts testified to a widespread desire to see the Romantic ideals of the German Volk and Geist come together and be realized (Denham 52). Denham writes:

the power of the newly-discovered German spirit and the German national essence helped carry the country through the war, took its sons to the recruiting depots and then to the fronts, and brought forth a body of war literature of leviathan proportions (52).
Germany was not the only nation to seek its destiny or speak of its national character. The French and English also showed a growing nationalistic pride and confidence in their anticipated fate, winning the war. Throughout Europe, there was a widespread awareness that this war would be a monumentous and history-changing war. It was believed throughout Europe that this war was not just one that would achieve specific political goals, but also one that would seal the fate of nations in much more idealistic terms.

Religion, specifically Christian religion, was a prominent motif in war literature that appeared before, during, and after the war. Sacrifice and self-denial for the common good were important ideological tenets and complemented blatantly self-serving attitudes: hatred of the enemy went hand in hand with faith in the ultimate victory (Denham 50). Letters from young soldiers describe their faith and hope in the fatherland and their willingness to sacrifice their lives for this nation. One collection of such letters was prefaced with the acknowledgment:

The writers look forward to a regeneration of their country, and ultimately of the world, through their suffering. They willingly and gladly offer up their lives, and repeatedly declare that even defeat would be preferable to a victory which should fail to attain this object. (Witkop, quoted in Denham 72)

The public addresses of Kaiser Wilhelm II encouraged this type of thinking. In declaring war in August of 1914, the Kaiser said to large, jubilant crowds in Berlin that he no longer saw partisanship in Germany, but brotherhood. He invoked the help of God and asked all Germans to pull together to win this war:

At times to motivate soldiers and at other times to placate the general public, the invocation of Christian religious motifs and the proclamation of brotherly cooperation would appear again and again throughout the course of the war. Leonhard Frank called these practices into question in 1918 in Der Mensch ist gut, yet the majority of published war writing still maintained a sense of idealism and religious fervor. Many books were written by authors who served in the military. These books, including collections of letters from the front, were written from an insider’s perspective and loyalistically conveyed the same view of the war that was offered by the government. Newspapers and journals often featured reports from the soldiers in combat. These came from war archives “where military bureaucrats sifted through reports from the front and selected heroic anecdotes for publication” (Denham 73). Many well-known authors, including Stefan Zweig and Rainer Maria Rilke worked in the war archives. Germany also commissioned soldiers to write and publish war narratives that would appeal to the public. The writers of these books were usually those who had seen combat and could interject personal experiences into their narratives, lending a certain authority so that the accuracy of the narrative would less likely be called into question. These works often appeared in installments and could be

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75 In contrast, Leonhard Frank did not serve in the military. A staunch pacifist, Frank left Germany in 1915 and moved to Zurich to write for the “Weiße Blätter.”
purchased through subscriptions. In contrast, Der Mensch ist gut takes a position against such government-sanctioned images, viewing them as propagandistic and misleading.

Der Mensch ist gut makes many of its main points via discourses of gender and sexual identity. Gender received much attention in Europe during the first decades of the twentieth century, most notably in the works of Otto Weininger (1880-1903) and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), and constructions of gender-based identity are very much at play in Frank’s novellas. Many other prominent researchers studied gender and sexual identity during the Wilhelmine years, including physician Magnus Hirschfeld (1868-1935) and psychiatrist Richard Freiherr von Kraft-Ebbing (1840-1902). Their works advanced the discussion of gender and sexual orientation from religious and moral realms into the realm of science and medicine. This trend has import for the study of disability, as disability, gender, sexual orientation, and race were now subject to the same rules and principles of science and medicine. The tools of scientific inquiry and medical analysis were consequently believed to be adequate for understanding disability, and social and political structures were not considered to be factors in the configuration of disability. Weininger’s 1903 study, Geschlecht und Charakter, for example, describes a continuum of gender

76 The development of science and the application of its methods to human subjects marks a comprehensive discursive shift at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Along with disability, other social issues such as the role of race or sexual orientation showed similar discursive movement. James Jones notes, for example, that “homosexuality moved slowly from the strictly moral and legal realm, which encompassed social attitudes, to the realm of science, which dealt with reason and ratio” (46). Jones points out that while the topic of homosexuality did not lose its moral stigma, medicine did radically alter its view by the end of the nineteenth century. Clearly, the professions of social sciences engaged in classification of human activity on an ever-growing scale. Thus the interrogation of norms such as Frank undertakes in Der Mensch ist gut is certainly in keeping with the early twentieth century’s efforts to classify, quantify, and name aspects of human life.
ranging from \textit{Vollmann} to \textit{Vollweib}, which he maintained could be determined by examining physical evidence. I shall argue that Frank demonstrates acceptance of this theory, as the disabilities in \textit{Der Mensch ist gut} are depicted as compromising the gender-integrity of the soldiers who become disabled.

Competing concepts of gender inform one discursive realm in which Frank writes, and the debate over gender did not take place only in scientific or medical fields. Gender was problematized in a range of literary texts, yet the tradition of war literature up until this point did not leave much room for debate. Nineteenth-century war literature by authors like Carl Bleibtreu and Detlev von Liliencron,\textsuperscript{77} for example, feature the supposedly fixed masculine qualities of physical strength and heroism set against more “feminine” attributes of weakness and lack of power. These attributes are also evident in the portrayal of Frank’s disabled soldiers, raising questions as to what exactly constitutes disability and masculinity in wartime Germany.

Claire Goll’s 1917 collection of novellas, \textit{Die Frauen erwachen}, problematizes this very issue from a womanist point of view. Goll’s novellas chronicle the experiences of women whose husbands and sons are away at war. Her perspective is decidedly different from traditional portrayals of soldiers in that she neither glamorizes their military service nor expresses gratitude for it. She maintains that women and men hold fundamentally

\textsuperscript{77} Denham writes that “Bleibtreu and his fellow Naturalists saw the central role of women in the sleepy “Idealismus” of the \textit{Gartenlaube} and the parlor novel as a deadly threat to German literature; at times their railings border on misogyny. (...) Liliencron, [the Naturalists] felt, offered an antidote to the problem: ‘Das Männliche,... statt des ewigen Weiber- und Wispertones.’ In Liliencron a male voice dominates, as do male themes and perspectives.” I hope to make evident in this analysis the extent to which Leonhard Frank upholds male authority and portrays war and nation-building as particularly male enterprises.
different views of war in general and this war in particular, and she illuminates the growing
casm in one couple's bitter exchange. Discharged from service after losing his hand in
battle, the husband defends his actions:

'Wir sind Männer. Wir kämpfen nicht mit den Herzen, wir
kämpfen mit Waffen. Wir töten aus Notwehr, aus
Verteidigung. Wir schützen euch und das Vaterland mit
unserem Leben. Das ist eine heilige Sache, das ist eine Ehre,
und nicht umsonst wird man dafür belohnt.' Er zeigte stolz
auf sein Eisernes Kreuz. (154)

His wife responds:

Du, du, du bist ja ein...Du sahst durch den Ring an seinem
Finger die Frau, die jede Nacht auf ihn wartet, die an sein
Leben, an ein Wiederkommen glaubt, und konntest töten!
Du sahst die Kinder, die jeden Abend die Bitte für ihn in
gefaltenen Händen halten, und konntest töten! Du bist ja
ein Mörder! (155)

She has called him a murderer, yet she contemplates her own complicity in the violence of
the war. She wonders whether all women could not have shown more moral courage even
from within expected social roles:

Trugen sie nicht die größere Schuld an dem
Zusammenbruch der Zeit? Denn sie lebten der Duldung, der
Schwäche, der Passivität. Sie, die zur Liebe berufen waren,
verstanden nicht einmal auszugleichen, Brücken zu bauen,
hinweg über die Härten und den reißenden Strom des
kriegerischen Wesens ihrer Männer, des Gewaltsamen in
ihnen, das die Länder trennte.

The prosthetic hand that her husband now uses exists for her as a constant reminder that
she could have done more. Waking in the night and feeling the prosthesis on her
nightstand, she is overcome by the enormity of its symbolism: "Sie krümmte sich vor
Angst, die Hand füllte das ganze Zimmer an. Jeder einzelne Finger hob sich auf und klagte
Goll takes this social power into account in presenting the impact of this soldier's disabling injury along with her interrogation of social roles determined by gender. The female perspective of Goll's novellas thus expressly establishes a link among gender, disability, and nation, where Leonard Frank's novellas do not.

Both Frank and Goll write in a time when women's position as outsiders was set down in law, yet of the two, only Goll reflects on this fact of society. In the very male realms of war and politics, women simply did not play a role. They were not implicated as bearing responsibility for war, instead women's subjective role in shaping the public discourse was quite limited. Pro-war rhetoric capitalized on the image of heroic men fighting a moral fight on behalf of weaker women and children. The specific attention that Goll gives to the perspective and experiences of women makes her novellas far different from Frank's, for Frank claims to speak for all people in general and shows no critical awareness of the role that gender plays in defining his "Mensch."

Let us then observe the way that discourses of nation, religion, gender, and disability are at work in Frank's novellas. Characters who figure most prominently are Robert, a waiter, and Robert's son. The son is not named in any of the novellas. Instead, all information about him is filtered through flashbacks and centers on Robert's joy at his birth and his hopes for his son's future: "Er sollte studieren. Nicht Kellner werden" (8). Other important characters are an unnamed war widow and an unnamed surgeon.

78 Cf. Arnim's Der tolle Invalide, in which Francoeur's insanity has distinctly disabling effects on his wife Rosalie.
Although the character Robert appears in scenes with each of the other characters, it is an all-knowing narrative voice that connects the various stories and comments on them.

_Der Mensch ist gut_ is dedicated to “den kommenden Generationen.” This dedication immediately reveals Frank’s hope that development toward the pacifist goals outlined in the novellas will take place in the future. Frank’s overarching goal, the elevation of human dignity (_Menschenwürde_) through the equalizing of social classes, is twice conjured on the opening page of the work. In the first instance Robert contemplates the dignity of his occupation:

> Robert war Servierkellner in einem deutschen Hotelrestaurant. (...) Und wenn er (...) vor dem Gaste stand und eine Bestellung entgegenahm, kroch der Gedanke durch sein Gehirn: jeder andere Beruf verträgt sich eher mit der Menschenwürde. (7)

In the second reference to human dignity Robert’s anger at economic inequality becomes evident:

> Und wenn das Trinkgeld von einem Gaste kam, der ärmer als der Empfangende war, stieg aus Roberts verletzter Menschenwürde sichtbar die Verachtung empor (...). (7)

Robert soon learns that his only son has been killed in the First World War, the historical background of all the novellas. The official message to Robert announcing his son’s death proclaims that he has died on the “Feld der Ehre” (8). Angered and insulted by such euphemistic language, Robert questions this and other metaphors such as “der Altar des Vaterlandes” that are part of the German pro-war propaganda used during the First World War (22). Robert finds that these metaphors neither comfort grieving parents

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nor provide the general public sound justification for continuing the war. Instead, Robert wants something tangible:

Das Feld der Ehre war nicht sichtbar, nicht vorstellbar, war Robert nicht begreifbar. Das war kein Feld, kein Acker, war keine Fläche, war nicht Nebel und nicht Luft. Es war das absolute Nichts. Und daran sollte er sich halten (9).

For Robert, the *Feld der Ehre* and *Altar des Vaterlandes* are metaphors that serve the German government's projection of itself as an institution worthy of its citizens' lives. Frank clearly criticizes euphemisms, for the novellas expand upon the criticism of the German government that prizes itself over its citizens and compromises their human dignity by viewing their bodies as expendable. Yet Frank also uses euphemisms to make his own points. Positing a natural link between the early organization of the communist party in Germany and the pacifist movement, the novellas suggest that pacifism can efficiently and effectively defeat the real enemy, euphemistically named "das Nichtvorhandensein der Liebe" (12). It is ironic and perhaps telling that Frank chooses not to name the war specifically, but instead calls it "das Nichtvorhandensein der Liebe" at the very moment when he criticizes purely conceptual and metaphoric language as manipulative and misleading. Devastated by the loss of his son, Robert finds no comfort in the metaphors of heroism and patriotism that are supposed to alleviate his pain. He constantly rereads the lines "Feld der Ehre" and the emptiness of these words becomes clear to him. He sees in the four letters of the word *Ehre* "eine Lüge (...) von solch höllischer Macht, daß ein ganzes Volk (...) in ungeheuerlichstes Leid hineingezogen hatte werden können" (9).
Twice Robert raises the criticism that this field was not a tangible field, but a metaphor; it was not "begreifbar" (9). Soon thereafter he again pleads for concrete terms and decries abstraction: "Gott hob ihn auf für die Minute, da der Feind greifbar werden würde, fühlte Robert" (11; emphasis mine). Frank's portrayal here evokes sympathy for Robert and dissatisfaction with government rhetoric. How then should readers understand Frank's own use of tropes such as "das Nichtvorhandensein der Liebe"?

In its criticism of political rhetoric Der Mensch ist gut ultimately interrogates the relationship of language to material bodies, and by extension, to human lives. Disabled bodies will play an integral role in this interrogation, for disabled bodies are, in the novellas, the primary marker of the most devastating of social problems: das Nichtvorhandensein der Liebe. Disability per se is not targeted as the primary social problem. The prevention of war-incurred disability, however, becomes the yardstick by which progress toward political goals is measured. Frank demonstrates with this term his basic acceptance of metaphoric language. The objections he raises to the government's metaphors seem then to address particular content. Through the character of Robert, Frank rejects the platitudes that detract attention from the violence of the war. The sanitizing and valorizing phrases Altar des Vaterlandes and Feld der Ehre belie the mutilating battles that the soldiers must endure. Frank's immediate concern is the prevention of further mutilation, in and of itself an admirable and widely shared goal among increasingly war-weary readers. Of interest here, however, is the double standard Frank employs: metaphors that erase the personal pain suffered in war are apparently not acceptable, whereas metaphors for war such as das Nichtvorhandensein der Liebe that
erase the concrete dimensions of peace are acceptable. Revealed in such figurative language and metaphor is Leonhard Frank's idealistic world view, a view that links tenets of Christianity and socialism through an idealized concept of wholeness. The wholeness of the human body, the preservation of the complete—or, as the title indicates, good—human being simply displaces for Frank the wholeness of the Volk as envisioned by the pro-German rhetoric. The simple framework of wholeness and strength vs. brokenness and weakness remains intact.

The religious overtones of the following scene illustrate dichotomies of wholeness and brokenness, love and hate, and goodness and evil. At a convention of construction workers held at the hotel where Robert is employed as a waiter, Robert takes away a toy gun with which a young child plays. He holds an impromptu speech in which he confesses his heretofore tacit acceptance of a system that glorifies war and negates and denigrates love. Robert's speech sets up war as both the opposite of love and the absence of love. He blames this absence of love for the deaths of innocent sons, including his own, arguing that all people who do not act to stop war are murderers; all who do not actively love are likewise murderers. In an interesting expansion of his position Robert concedes that most people are only inadvertently or unwittingly complicit in the murderous system. He suggests that most people are "schlechtberaten" and "verblendet": "Wir sind verblendet und Mörder, weil wir den Gegner außer uns suchten und zu finden glaubten" (14). Robert insists that love is universal and therefore transcends national borders: "Ist es nicht Wahnsinn, wenn ihr euch freut über die Notiz: zweitausend französische Leichen lagen vor
unserer Linie?” (15). Being human does not depend on national allegiance for him, nor, Frank will assert, is humanity a privilege of particular economic classes. Robert exhorts,


Here, Robert implicates individuals more strongly than he had before. He no longer suggests that individuals are powerless. Instead, he insists that individuals do have the power to love and conversely, the power to deny love and engage in war. In keeping with the tenets of Christianity, war is likened to sin, and people can be released from sin when they acknowledge their complicity: “Denn nur wer hier sich schuldig fühlt, kann entsündigt werden und wieder lieben” (17). Implied here are the activities of confession and the promise of rebirth. The overarching narrative of Der Mensch ist gut is thus one of loss and restoration: after the loss of his son, Robert looks for an explanation and finds it in the cause-and-effect relationship of love, whereby the lack or loss of love leads to war and renders new life impossible. Robert's narrative wants to interrupt this cycle and prevent further loss. Robert wants to restore the love he perceives to have been lost among the German people. Again, it is important to note that Der Mensch ist gut rejects one type of wholeness, the projected images of a triumphant, militaristic Volk, for another, that of human bodies not subjected to mutilating war and of families not torn apart by death. This latter wholeness is implied to be an original human condition, and the suggested analogy to the biblical creation story is not to be overlooked. Frank relies on the
concepts of goodness and wholeness of human beings as they are relayed early in the book of Genesis, whereby sin entered into the idyllic garden causing the brokenness of an essentially good human being. On this premise, Frank suggests that humans are basically good. In writing his novellas, however, Frank begins with the corollary, suggesting that since people are broken and suffering, some sinful or damaging element must be present, or, more correctly, the healing element love must be absent. He aims to restore human beings to their originally good condition by reshaping institutions of government, removing those elements of selfishness, greed, and violence that inflict damage on human beings. Glaubrecht summarizes Frank’s Christian-utopian world view and use of visionary motifs:

Aus den Bildern und Visionen und aus dem Protest gegen die Wilhelminische Ordnung läßt sich nur ablesen, daß in der von Frank erhofften Gesellschaft die Unverletzlichkeit des Lebens oberstes Gebot sein soll, daß in ihr die Menschen sich mit Liebe und Güte begegnen werden und daß kein autoritärer Zwang den Einzelnen in seiner natürlichen Entwicklung behindern wird (20).

Note in particular Glaubrecht’s use of the word “behindern” instead of “verhindern” to signify the prevention of human development. 79 Glaubrecht alludes to Frank’s frequent use of the disabled body as a metaphor for a broken human spirit, and nowhere in Frank’s writing is this more apparent than in Der Mensch ist gut.

79 Both “verhindern” and “behindern” can mean to “prevent” or “obstruct.” “Verhindern” is more frequently used as an adjective with prepositional phrases such as “am Kommen verhindert” (Der Sprach Brockhaus Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1981) and “behindern” requires a direct object, for example “die Sicht behindern” (Collins German Dictionary New York: Harper & Row, 1990). However, both verbs could have been used correctly in the Glaubrecht quotation. Admittedly I can only speculate as to the reasons behind Glaubrecht’s choice of verbs. Within the context of this study, however, a possibly arbitrary selection of the verb “behindern” does indeed attest to the weight of Frank’s metaphors of disability.
"Kriegskrüppel," the soldiers disabled in war, play an important part in Frank's narrative of restoration. In the first explicit reference to disability in the novellas, disability is seen as the product of damaging war. Likewise, the Volk has been fractured and its appearance is miserable: "Unser Volk, wie wir es jetzt sehen, besteht nur noch aus Kriegskrüppeln und elend aussehenden Kindern, Frauen und Greisen" (16). There is no apparent strength or wholeness here. The once (presumably) powerful soldiers are now Kriegskrüppel. Although this description indicates that all the people who have survived the war to date are both physically drained and demoralized, the greatest loss is overwhelmingly presented as having been suffered by male soldiers. The Volk, in turn, seems to have suffered most by the loss of the male soldiers. "Elend aussehende Kinder, Frauen, und Greise" are unflatteringly portrayed as the essentially weaker people upon whom yet more burden has been placed. This illustrates the degree to which the notion of able-bodiedness supports the structural paradigm of the German national identity. The paradigm collapses under the weight of disability. If the strength of the German soldiers is capable of stabilizing the German nation, it is even more apparent that their disabilities signal failure on a national level.

Although Frank's project criticizes the war effort by interrogating the pro-war rhetoric, one similarity to the very system that Frank ostensibly opposes is clear: youthful, male bodies are as highly regarded within Frank's narrative as they are within the pro-war propaganda touting German Schicksal. Lamenting the weakened state of the population, Frank writes: "Das ganze vergewaltigte Volk steht" (170). Here, Frank links the brokenness of the nation to sexual victimization. This image of a nation raped suggests a
nation feminized and emasculated. It is not a coincidence that disabled soldiers figure so prominently in this discourse of diminished sexual power. At the time of the novellas' appearance, physical disability was largely assumed to render sexuality impossible.

Another literary work from this period thematizes disability, sexuality and the First World War, Ernst Toller's *Hinkemann. Eine Tragödie in drei Akten* (1921; first performed in 1924). Eugen Hinkemann, a German soldier, has just returned from military service after a devastating wound: his testicles were shot off in battle. This invisible disability stands in stark contrast to the highly visible disabilities of Frank's *Kriegskrüppel*, yet in many senses, Toller's play aligns itself with people who have disabilities far more strongly than do Frank's novellas. Toller daringly explores a most personal and private disability, that of sexual ability, whereas Frank discusses the outward and more socially acceptable disabilities such as the loss of a limb, sight or hearing in terms of the public response they elicit. Where Hinkemann says of himself: "Ich bin ja eine heimliche Krankheit" (399), Frank identifies a soldier after multiple amputations as: "Der Rumpf (...) ein nacktes Symbol des Krieges" (169).

Toller's exploration of the concept of a "heimliche Krankheit" reveals the degree to which the paradigm of able-bodiedness as a cultural imperative has been internalized and also the degree to which this paradigm is engendered as male. Although the disability

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80 Toller (1893-1939) underwent a dramatic change in support for the war effort. Originally an enthusiastic supporter, unlike Leonhard Frank, Toller volunteered for military service. Discharged after a serious injury in 1916, Toller actively protested the war. After the 1918 revolution, he became a leading member of the Bavarian Council Republic and was later sentenced in 1919 to five years imprisonment for his political activities. There, he wrote both *Hinkemann* and *Masse Mensch. Ein Stück aus der sozialen Revolution des 20. Jahrhunderts*. 112
portrayed in the play will be at times contemplated as a private hardship, Toller also conveys the destabilizing impact of Hinkemann’s disability upon the cultural structure of masculine able-bodiedness. In drawing close to the character of Hinkemann, Toller reflects upon this crushing blow in distinctly personal terms.

Toller casts his Hinkemann as someone who fears, not as someone to be afraid of, and in doing so, gives readers more insight into the experience of disability itself than Frank. Frank aspires to such insight, I shall argue, in discussing the limited possibilities for employment and in his explicit statement that the disabled soldiers will experience difficulty in sexual activity. Yet it will become evident that Frank leads readers to believe that disability is something to be eradicated, or a problem to be solved. He does not invite the reader to share in the feelings that the soldiers might have with the same degree of intimacy that Toller uses. Toller’s audience is given insight into the devaluation of Hinkemann in Grete’s cruel criticism of her husband, “Mein Eugen (...) der ist ja gar kein Mann” (402). The audience is invited to fear loneliness and isolation along with Hinkemann as he relates his own story. Hinkemann must speak of himself in the third person, for the people to whom he speaks have already found the situation Hinkemann describes to be laughable. In order to avoid their mockery, Hinkemann further contributes to his isolation by detaching himself from the story he tells:

Toller makes the isolating repercussions of Hinkemann's injury abundantly clear and forces the audience to recognize even this invisible disability on its own terms. Toller thus calls into question the equation of narrowly defined masculinity with humanness. Frank, though striving toward public acknowledgment of disability, does so in terms of the public's interest in disability, and significantly less in the interest of recognizing the disabilities that the soldiers incur and the repercussions they will face. Frank instead calls readers instead to pity the soldiers in a portrayal that is on one level genuinely compassionate. Frank portrays the disabled soldiers as sacrifices for the common good, to whom the general public owes a debt of gratitude and by whom the public might be inspired. Yet unlike Toller's Hinkemann, the public has no charge to worry about what is ultimately good for the Kriegskrüppel. The public is in essence free to ignore them, because it is part of Frank's ultimate plan that they one day cease to exist, that disability no longer be inflicted upon them. Despite its overt compassion, Frank's text in fact shows an enormous fear of disability and a desperate conviction that disability is unacceptable for men building the German nation. Moreover, it shows that disability is simply unacceptable for men.

If only partially successful, Der Mensch ist gut does convey an attempt to override fear of disability with compassion for people who are disabled. To a great extent Frank laments the circumstances facing newly disabled soldiers and writes on behalf of those who might yet be disabled in war. Frank devotes an entire chapter to the Kriegskrüppel, portraying the harsh realities that soldiers wounded in war and those who underwent
amputation will face. An integral component of Frank’s orientation toward the future is the goal of undamaged bodies to be made manifest through lives driven by love. In short, as long as there are still people disabled in war, there is still political work to do. The characters of the Kriegskrüppel thus function as instruments of critique. The chapter on the disabled soldiers begins in the Metzgerküche (butcher’s workshop), where the surgeon performing amputations describes the operating room filled with “das, was von einem Menschen übriggeblieben ist. (...) die abgesägten Hände, Arme, Füße, Beine schwimmen in Blut, Watte und Eiter in einem meterhohen, zwei Meter breiten, fahrbaren Kübel” (121).

Frank’s point in this sickening description of the operating room is that soldiers wounded in war have been stripped of much of their humanity and reduced to animals in a slaughterhouse. The short, choppy paragraphs and abrupt descriptions in this segment parallel the hectic pace of the operating room as well as the dismemberment of the soldiers’ bodies. The surgeon cries out in despair: “Für was, für wen leiden diese Millionen ihre Schmerzen? Warum müssen Millionen Menschenbeine, Millionen Arme abgesägt werden? Für was wird gekämpft und ermordet?” (126). He believes that the soldiers have incurred their injuries in vain, for he views them as mere pawns in the government’s game. The soldiers themselves, he maintains, have been treated as though they were arbitrary.

81 I have deliberately avoided terms such as “amputee” and tried to minimize my use of “the disabled” because these terms reduce an individual to that which makes him or her different from the “norm.”
In the operating room the soldiers talk about how they will live their lives without the arms and legs that have been amputated. They mourn their lost limbs and “grüblen (...) [ab]; gestehen sich ein, daß es sich im Grunde ja gar nicht um das nicht mehr Tanzen-, Reiten-, Feilen, Schmiedekönnen handelt, sondern nur um das schöne Bein, einzig und allein um den prachtvollen, dicken Arm” (128).

The unnamed soldiers think about what sort of injury would be better or worse. Where one prefers blindness, another wishes he had lost his limbs instead of his eyesight (129). Frank considers all body parts and physical senses to be very important. He considers none to be expendable; only the war that leads to this debate is expendable. Again, he focuses intently on the words that describe the situation. They are increasingly meaningless and appear to be as arbitrary as the soldiers. The surgeon thinks:

Dieses Wort “Krieg” offenbart den gedankenlosen Menschen nicht den billionsten Teil von der unmeßbaren Menge Ungeheuerlichkeiten, die mit dem Worte 'Krieg' bezeichnet werden...Das Wort selbst ist schwach wie der Atemzug eines Säuglings; (...) 'Krieg' ist ein Wort von fünf Buchstaben. Und wenn es ohne e geschrieben würde, hätte es nur vier Buchstaben denkt der fiebernde Stabsarzt. (130)

Likening the “e” in the word “Krieg” to arms and legs that the surgeon busily amputates, Frank criticizes the moral weakness of war and shows the soldiers’ bodies to be pawns in an arbitrary game. Frank exposes the rhetoric of virtuous sacrifice for the nation to require the violent sacrifice of arms and legs through amputation. As though they were disposable letters in a word, Frank portrays the removal of their body parts to be violent and purposeless. The surgeon bitterly anticipates the widespread unemployment likely facing the Kriegskrüppel:

Elaborating upon the distressing realities that these soldiers disabled in war will face, Frank exposes the metaphors designed to entice young men into military service to be rhetorical devices that validate existing political and social structures. In his portrayal of the Kriegskrüppel, Frank criticizes a political program that does not meet the needs of individuals who fall outside the “norm,” in this case, “unbeschädigt”: undamaged.

The surgeon imagines an employee losing his job because his hands have been amputated: “Der Verstümmelte geht. Sein Schicksal ist das Schicksal der Kriegsbeschädigten” (159).

He then imagines in great detail the unfair working conditions and discrimination that these people will face. The surgeon acknowledges that people who are not disabled simply do not like to see “damaged” people. He speculates that customers will pay more, for example, to eat in a more expensive restaurant where disabled waiters are not employed (160). Disabled workers simply cannot keep up with non-disabled workers, he reasons, and he predicts that they will therefore lose their jobs. He states: “Das Mitleid mit den invaliden Vaterlandsverteidigern fliegt weg” (160).

Frank, through the character of the surgeon, positions himself as an advocate for soldiers facing this unfair situation. Frank’s knowledgeable explication of the social
barriers that disabled people could expect sets Der Mensch ist gut apart from mythologizing portrayals of disability in traditional popular narratives. His informed account links Der Mensch ist gut to a growing body of disability-centered activism. Carl von Kügelgen was one activist who worked to focus public attention on the needs of people with disabilities. Von Kügelgen’s essay, “Nicht Krüppel-Sieger!” was published in 1919, one year after Frank’s Der Mensch ist gut. In his essay, von Kügelgen describes the punishing and ostracizing term “cripple” and calls for widespread use of a less degrading term. Note in particular his anger at being measured against the norm:

Der Einzelne wird am Bilde der Volksmassen gemessen und, wenn Wesentliches fehlt, mit dem Ausdruck “Krüppel” gestraft, der hier ganz im alten Sinn des Minderwertigen gebraucht wird (quoted in Bernsmeier “Krüppel oder Körperbehinderter?” 177).

Transforming general concern such as Leonhard Frank’s for the disabled soldiers into political activism, von Kügelgen’s pamphlets treat disability as an individual experience and reject the notion that disabled people are less than whole. Von Kügelgen’s challenge to recognize disability as constituting a perspective in its own right, and not for what a disabled person lacks, distinguishes the emerging disability-centered political discourse from Frank’s idealistic world view. Von Kügelgen’s essay identifies Frank’s adherence to conventional notions, for Der Mensch ist gut in effect reifies able-bodiedness as an essential and indisputable norm. Frank upholds able-bodiedness as a universal standard. Although Frank speaks ostensibly on behalf of people with disabilities, he, albeit unwittingly, attributes value to certain disabilities based on their origin, elevating those
disabilities that result from war wounds above disabilities that are congenital or acquired through accidents or debilitating disease.\(^2\)

This hierarchy of disability existed during the Wilhelmine years\(^3\) and can be explained by examining the writing of an “expert” only a few years later. Hans Würtz directed the Central Research and Continuing Education Institution for Cripples’ Welfare in Prussia and the German Empire in Berlin/Dahlem and positioned himself as the leading authority on “cripple pedagogy” during the Weimar Republic. Würtz’s many publications include *Das Seelenleben eines Krüppels* (1921), in which he developed his theories on the nature of the “cripple’s” soul. He saw a direct connection between a person’s physical and mental abilities and concluded that physical disabilities would lead to a dangerous revolutionary mentality. Indeed, he believed that “the state of being crippled creates a defiant will, a defiant will hardens into the demonic” (quoted in Poore *Disobedience* 170). For Würtz, the science of orthopedics could humanize the cripple by intervening to prevent further development of the sociopathic personality. According to this logic, the war veteran would be exempt from public suspicion of revolutionary tendencies by virtue of the fact that his disability did not arise from potentially deviant origins but was “earned” through patriotic service.

\(^2\) I do not wish to imply that those people injured in war are in any way undeserving of the rights or the respect that Frank seeks for them. I wish instead to point out that Frank cannot be understood to speak for “the disabled” as a group, as disabilities have many origins.

\(^3\) This hierarchy has remained largely intact. Poore cites K.H. Seifert’s survey, “Einstellungen von Berufstätigen zur beruflich sozialen Integration von Körperbehinderten,” in Rehabilitation, 18 (August, 1979) p.163. She notes the “value judgements placed by people with and without disabilities on the various kinds of disabilities (where war veterans with amputations always come out on top and people with mental disabilities are always on the bottom).” (Poore *Disobedience* 166)
Such a hierarchy is present in the writing of Leonhard Frank. Clearly, Der Mensch ist gut cannot be understood to support the rights of disabled people per se, but instead those of a select group of people. The compassion Frank shows is great, and his advocacy on behalf of the Kriegskrüppel is sincere and unselfish. Indeed, he presents the Kriegskrüppel as victims of deceit, for the obstacles they face in getting jobs, walking, dancing, or having sex have been imposed upon them by the very people who promised them Ehre and the sanctity of an Altar. Frank seeks to reconcile these disabled individuals to their rights and sees as a source of reconciliation a changed political system that will not inflict disability upon its citizens. Despite his well-intentioned efforts, however, Frank in many ways reproduces the thought patterns that he overtly challenges. When Frank mourns the Kriegskrüppel’s lost limbs in order to criticize the government policies that caused disability, Frank upholds not only a normative and overly simple standard of able-bodiedness, but also the notion that able-bodiedness is a right. He faults the government for turning able-bodied men into Kriegskrüppel, because he knows that they will be treated as though they were “ordinary” people with disabilities, and surely, these soldiers deserve better. Arguing their blamelessness, Frank, albeit inadvertently, suggests that some people “deserve” their disabilities and thus upholds the mythology of punishment and blame as components of disability. Depicting disability as a product of damage, Frank upholds the notion that disability is derived from able-bodiedness and is not to be

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84 Frank seems to suggest that “able-bodiedness” is the natural consequence of simply having a requisite number of body parts, yet body parts alone cannot guarantee ability to perform tasks. A person might not have two arms or two legs, and yet be able to engage in the same activities as a person who has all four limbs.

85 See Hans-Jörg Uther’s discussion of disability as punishment in his study of German popular narratives.
considered an experience in its own right. When able-bodiedness is validated in this manner, it is impossible to speak of disability as anything but a problem or a flaw whose "solution" lies in its prevention or cure. Thus, while Der Mensch ist gut gives evidence of the movement of disability-related discourse into the political spheres for the purpose of acknowledging the existence of people with disabilities and affording them their political rights, it also exhibits remnants of the mythological and moralistic thinking that surrounded disability in earlier centuries.

The second of the novellas, "Die Kriegswitwe," raises a war widow's concern about the arbitrariness of the violence that killed her husband: "Er hätte ebensogut irgendein Handwerker, Kaufmann, Arbeiter, Beamter, Gelehrter sein können, ganz gleich was, die Kugel hätte ihn doch getroffen" (20). Her expressed concern is for the lack of reason or rationale behind the killing of her husband in particular. With her portrayal Frank continues to accuse the government of callous manipulation of human lives through thinly veiled rhetoric. Like Robert, the war widow also questions the effectiveness of government-imposed metaphors to alleviate suffering. She succumbs to the metaphor, however: "Ich habe meinen Mann auf dem Altare des Vaterlandes geopfert..., wie alle andern Kriegswitwen auch" (22). Because the woman will not see through the facade, Frank personifies pain as an instrument of critique, much in the same way that disabled bodies are an instrument of critique:

'Der Altar steht allerdings nicht in einer Kirche, sondern ist ein mit Elektrizität geladener Stacheldrahtzaun, in dem dein Mann hängengeblieben ist,' versuchte der Schmerz zu

86 Both Helmut Bernsmeier's Das Bild des Körperbehinderten (1980) and Hans-Jörg Uther's Behinderte in populären Erzählungen (1981) describe historical notions of disability in Germany and in western Europe.
flüstern, 'also müßte man eigentlich sagen: geopfert im Stacheldrahte des Vaterlandes' (22).

The metaphors exposed by such personification have a history, Frank suggests. When the widow is told “er starb den Heldentod für die Nation,” she reacts with a feeling of pride. The personified pain works to chip away at her pride and expose, if not to her, then to the reader that she has been twice wronged: once through the loss of her husband to death on the battlefield and again through the deceit that would have her describe his death as heroic. In this manner Frank articulates the power of pro-war rhetoric and the stronghold it has established in this particular woman’s mind. He does not fault her personally for having faith in the war effort. Instead Frank attributes her misguided faith to supporters of the “darkest” traditions that glorify war:

So undurchdringlich war die einzementierte Wortplatte-von den noch im dunkelsten Geist alter Jahrhunderte Stehenden einzementiert in das empfängliche, gedankenlos-gläubige Gehirn des Volkes-daß der noch undurchlittene Schmerz nicht eine Sekunde lang in ihr Herz vordringen konnte (23).

Although Frank does not identify exactly who is responsible for these traditions, he holds the words that describe war to be clearly social constructions; they are subject to the labor of being “einzementiert.” The novellas operate on the assumption that human lives are structured around narratives, and Frank urges readers to reflect on the quality of the metaphors that literally order their lives.

Despite his pleas for concrete and personal language, however, Frank makes his strongest points in a universalizing and conceptual language. His characters are Expressionist archetypes and are also reminiscent of classical Ideenträger. They have no
names and no personal histories, and most importantly, their stories elevate ideology above character development. Frank's figures are the "simple people" of the novellas' titles: "Der Vater," "die Kriegswitwe," "die Mutter." They are defined in familial relationships and are upheld as universal or timeless characters. Frank criticizes the Imperial German government and the First World War by using an "everyman" type of character. This device is particularly apparent in Frank's naming of the soldiers injured in the war: "der Irrsinnige," or "der Blinde." Despite the narrative's efforts to value the soldiers' humanity over their use-value as cannon fodder, this identification in effect strips them of their humanity by reducing them to their disabilities. Such essentializing undermines Frank's efforts to recognize the humanity of individuals, an effort that is evident in many of Robert's speeches. In one example, Robert says:

Wir können erst dann Frieden auf Erden verwirklichen, wenn wir aufhören, die großen Nichtigkeiten in den Mittelpunkt des Lebens zu stellen, wenn wir keine entseelten, gewohnheitsmäßig funktionierenden ...Automaten mehr sind (43).

Frank fears the human being is becoming too much like industrial machines and he expresses great concern that human beings will soon abandon their souls (44). This language links Der Mensch ist gut to the historical era in which it was written. Frank's critique of technology, consumerism, and mass culture addresses contemporary concerns of writers and other artists in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Led by artists born in the generation from approximately 1880-1895, the Expressionist movement apprehended the growing fears of bourgeois-imperialist society and transmitted them through art. Not only reactions to the war, but also an overwhelming sense of crisis and
disillusionment guided the movement. Bold and often shocking images of war, violence, apocalypse, deluge, a day of judgment, and revolution appeared in writing, painting, sculpture, music, theater, and film. Generational conflict and misunderstanding were common artistic motifs, and the Expressionist artist often announced the dawn of a new era in manifestos and proclamations. Increasingly mistrustful of militarism and patriotism, Expressionist artists hoped to prevent a catastrophic collapse of society by calling for a new type of individual. According to Kurt Pinthus: “Die Welt kann nur gut werden, wenn der Mensch gut wird” (quoted in Metzler). Der Mensch ist gut, however, offers a variation on this theme. In the novellas Frank posits a return to an originally good condition. Instead of a new individual, Frank envisions a restored individual, one who turns away from the social conditions that endanger him. Thus he does not advocate revolution toward a new world order as most Expressionists did.\textsuperscript{87}

Strongly influenced by the Expressionist movement, Frank creates characters for a new paradigm, a new type of Mensch motivated by love and not by the “Lügenideale: Macht, Gewalt, Erfolg, Autoritätsglaube, Heldentum, Weltherrschaft, Vaterlandsverteidigung,” for these things provide false hope (46). Even if attained, Frank suggests, they will prove neither satisfying nor morally good. The narrator seeks to stop moral degradation by proclaiming: “Der Mensch ist gut. Er ist gut. Geht hin (...). Und verkündet den Satz des neuen Zeitalters: ‘Der Mensch ist gut’“ (53).

An important segment of the narrative describes the train ride away from the front. Here, the narrator weaves in and out of the thoughts of the soldiers, alternately observing

\textsuperscript{87} Among those Expressionist artists were Edvard Munch, Georg Trakl, and Georg Kaiser. 124
what they do and describing what they feel or think: “Die Blinden...fühlen die Sonne und
sehen die Finsternis (...) Niemand weiß den Grund...weshalb die Irren...jetzt ganz still auf
der Bank sitzen. ...Schweigend. Blicklos. ...Ernste Puppen” (137). The hospital train, or
Lazarettzug, assumes the qualities of a figurative train or parade of the pacifist movement.
Both the literal and figurative “trains” are headed for Berlin, which as the seat of the
government, is depicted as both a literal and ideological destination. The narrator claims to
see from the train window the dawn of a new era: “In dieser Sekunde geschieht der neue
Anfang (...); draußen (...) rollt der Sekunde entgegen” (163).

This new era is sorely needed, Frank suggests, because of the unequal distribution
of wealth. Interpersonal and international relationships decay upon acquisition of wealth
(47). Frank suggests that the desire for wealth distracts people from humane engagement
with one another and that the accumulation of wealth creates artificial barriers between
people. The pursuit of money and material luxuries distracts both individuals and nations
from realizing what Frank terms “Zivilisation”; further, he deems human beings “Wilde”
who choose to disregard love in pursuit of money (49). Robert’s spontaneous speech to an
angry crowd posits the desire to accumulate wealth as a European problem, not just a
German phenomenon: “Der Geist Europas, die Menschlichkeit und die Liebe sind im Geld
erstarrt. Und das bedingt mit entsetzlicher Sicherheit das Ende, die Zukunftlosigkeit, den
Untergang des europäischen Menschen” (47).

As in the above examples, Der Mensch ist gut touches upon both the pacifist and
socialist movements in Europe without explicitly aligning itself with either one. Frank’s
goal is to arrest the moral degradation of the human being in Europe by engaging the
individual in rigorous reflection upon his role in the larger society. Glaubrecht notes:

[Frank] versucht, die Menschen zu revolutionieren durch
den Appell zur Rückkehr zu Liebe und Güte, zur reinen
Sehnsucht der Kindheit und Jugend. Diese Revolutionierung
soll von den Einzelnen ausgehen, so wie es in den Novellen
mit dem Umschwung der Einzelnen beschrieben worden ist.
Auf diese Weise war Leonhard Franks Wille, über das
Literarische hinausgehend, auf eine reale, politische
Umordnung der Gesellschaft gerichtet. Ein bestimmtes
Gesellschaftsmodell hat er allerdings nicht vorgeschlagen.

(74)

The absence of a specific model ultimately suggests that Frank’s goals are
unrealizable. It is evident that Frank would like to uphold individualism as a meaningful
concept, yet it is equally evident that he is simply not equipped to do so. Although he
attempts to demonstrate that each individual soldier matters, he is simply not able to do
so. The age of the mass society and the focus on the Volk prevent Frank from ever
reclaiming the individual as a viable entity. The best Frank can do is to write of the
goodness of an idealized concept of a Mensch.

88 My use of the masculine pronoun “his” is intentional. As I have discussed in this
chapter, Frank has cast war, war injury, and the aftermath of war to be overwhelmingly
male realms. With the exception of the war widow, all the main characters in the novellas
are male. Indeed, the focus of Frank’s attention is the welfare of the male soldiers and
their ultimate place in German society.

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Clearly, it was not Frank's intention to support a political program. His focus is primarily on the individual within a social totality and on lessening the antagonism between the individual and the social whole. The revolutionary spirit of the text is derived from the societal implications of the development of the good individual. In other words, Frank seeks a society that will allow the individual as he has conceived him to exist. The efforts of contemporary pacifists and socialists are most readily accessible to Frank, and he aligns himself with them more for ideological reasons than for programmatic political goals. Only rarely is any mention made of specific historical events or people. The following example contains the text's only reference to Karl Liebknecht, one of the early organizers of the German communist party: "Die Bekenner der Wahrheit verlassen die aufspringenden Zuchthausstellen, finden den Zug, geführt von dem Einen, dessen Namen die ganze Menschheit kennt und ehrt: Liebknecht!" (169).

This incidental reference how little importance Frank places on organized political action. Glaubrecht notes:

> Die politischen Forderungen treten im Grunde völlig hinter das Interesse an der Problematik der privaten Selbstwerdung zurück. Weil es aber Franks Überzeugung ist, daß innerhalb der bestehenden Gesellschaft eine solche Ich-Werdung nicht möglich ist, erscheinen diese Menschen als Revolutionäre. (78)

More frequently, Der Mensch ist gut explores through its primary characters some of the impulses behind the organization of both the pacifist movement and the communist party. The surgeon, for example, disillusioned by the war and exhausted by his work, commits his energy to the pacifist movement as a last resort: "Ich habe drei Jahre lang

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89 Neither Rosa Luxemburg nor the Spartacus Party is named in the novellas.
As the movement gains momentum, the surgeon considers how he might participate. Hearing the national anthem, “Deutschland, Deutschland über alles,” he suddenly thinks of new lyrics. The disabled soldiers appear in his new verse as a powerful and enlightened force: “Die gewaltgen Krüppelheere/Brechen in den Lichtkreis ein” (156). Thus, although originally instrumentalized in the novellas as the impetus for the pacifist movement, the soldiers disabled in war are finally presented as having made a valuable contribution to the German nation beyond having fought in the war. These soldiers will indeed play an integral role in bringing about the envisioned era: “Der Anblick der hundertausend Krüppel reißt die Untertanen hoch ins Menschentum” (170).

In keeping with the restorative project of the novellas, the narrative voice is aligned here with the healing and repairing figure of the surgeon. The narrator/surgeon envisions a brotherly community of the disabled bringing in the new age: “Tragen das Ziel in sich. Sind selbst das Ziel: denkende Seelenträger” (166). The narrative ends with the triumphant assertion that love has prevailed: “Minuten später telegraphieren die vor den Morse-Apparaten sitzenden Beamten...den Aufstieg der Liebe ins Land” (171). The tangible and corporeal images that Frank has used throughout the novellas to make his most critical remarks finally give way to a dissatisfying non-image, that of the “Aufstieg der Liebe ins Land.” Frank begins to present the final event in terms that readers may visualize, namely the telegraphic transmission, however, that description ultimately dissolves into a vague abstraction: the rise of love (den Aufstieg der Liebe). Should
readers assume that the war has ended? That a political peace has been established? What has become of the disabled soldiers? Frank does not offer answers to these questions. Although *Der Mensch ist gut* consistently challenges the immediate political situation of the First World War, the novellas never present a viable post-war scenario. The ostensibly happy ending, however, suggests restoration, reconciliation and removal: the restoration of a Christian social organization based on sacrificial love; the reconciliation of individuals to the social whole, where antagonism previously reigned; and finally the removal of the violent conditions of war that inflict damage on human bodies.

Reminding readers of the activist impulses behind the novellas and Frank’s own blurring of literary and non-literary forms, Glaubrecht writes:

> Das Schlußbild zeigt, daß der Zyklus eine einzige aktivistische Vision des Autors ist, in der das Leid des Krieges, die erlöste Welt und der Weg zu ihr—die ‘Revolution der Liebe’—sich aus den Einzelvisionen der handelnden Personen und des Erzählers zu einem Bild ordnen, das als Aufruf direkt wirken soll. (171)

The proclamation of revolution and the theme of entrance into a new age are also focal points of Frank’s expressly journalistic essays, yet because of striking similarities in tone and content, many passages from these essays might easily have appeared in *Der Mensch ist gut*. In a July 1919 article in the Swiss journal “Friedens-Warte,” Frank writes of equality:

> Gleichheit für alle Menschen auf der Erde! Materielle Gleichheit, die die Voraussetzung für alles andere ist: die Recht, Freiheit und Brüderlichkeit in sich trägt. Das ist die alte Forderung des Volkes, die alte Menschheitsforderung. In ihrem Zeichen wird die kommende Zeit stehen. Und nicht seine erst durch den Krieg entstandene Zwangseinsicht

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Frank takes up the theme of the good human being in the article’s final prediction about
the consequences of ending the war. Note that he now characterizes former proponents of
the war as disabled:

Dann erst wird man nicht mehr gelähmt stehen müssen: vor
dem Menschen in seiner Schuld und Not, der nur das wissen
durfte, was ihm an Wissen zugeteilt, zugemessen wurde,
dem der ganze Inhalt seines Bewußtsein aufgezwungen
wurde, vor dem Menschen, dem nicht verstattet war, gut zu
sein. (187)

Writing in October of 1918 in the same journal, Frank makes a special appeal to Kaiser
Wilhelm to abdicate, citing the imminence of the new age:

Ihr Verbleiben bedeutet einen schlechteren, einen
demütigenden Frieden, bedeutet unberechenbar großes
Unglück im neuen Leben des deutschen Volkes, das bereit
ist zum Aufbruch in die neue Zeit: zum Aufbruch zu sich
selbst. Deshalb lasse ich das deutsche Volk aus meinem
Munde sprechen, das zerlittene, todwunde, todmüde, bange
deutsche Volk, das Sie auffordert: Treten Sie zurück!

As in his novellas Frank relies on highly symbolic, emotionally charged language to make
his point, and as in his novellas Frank also avoids specificity. In this appeal Frank seems to
address a much more conceptual “Kaiser” than the specific person, Kaiser Wilhelm II.
The Kaiser mentioned in this appeal functions more as a metaphor; his remaining in place
conjures a dam that holds back the entrance of the new age.

Because the disabled soldiers of Frank’s novellas figure so prominently in the
realization of his overarching goal, readers may conclude that the disabilities portrayed in
the novellas function simultaneously as symbols of loss and, to a lesser degree, as a means
of affecting political change. Frank must be credited for expanding disability-related discourse to recognize disability as a position of critical insight and power. In the same manner Der Mensch ist gut clearly strives to restore the human dignity of the disabled soldiers. This particular pairing of disability and politics in Der Mensch ist gut marks a significant shift in disability-centered public discourse. While Der Mensch ist gut in many respects exhibits a long-standing tendency to mythologize disabilities or ascribe larger social meaning to their appearance, the novellas are as well an early effort to speak on behalf of people with disabilities and to assert their humanity. It is not clear from the novellas, however, how Frank imagines the disabled soldiers will live after the arrival of the new era. This is where Frank’s portrayal falters. He may have succeeded in recognizing their contribution to the new age, yet he has arguably accounted only for the prevention of additional war-incurred disabilities. Ultimately, Frank does not question the overarching notions of wholeness and brokenness that virtually define disability in Germany during the first decades of the twentieth century.
CHAPTER 5

RESISTANCE AND REHABILITATION:
THE FUNCTION AND PORTRAYAL OF DISABILITY
IN GÜNTER GRASS’S DIE BLECHTROMMEL

This chapter focuses on disability as insight in Günter Grass’s Die Blechtrommel (1959). The novel’s main character and narrator, Oskar Matzerath, has several potentially disabling physical and mental conditions that he acquired in both conventional and unconventional ways. His dwarfism is self-imposed, his hunched back appears as he ages, and his mental stability is doubted throughout the course of the novel in descriptions of Oskar’s seeming inability to learn, his cruelty and sadistic behavior, and his reliance on drumming, screaming, and shattering glass in place of conventional language. These disabling conditions are at times visible to the people around Oskar, and at other times they are not readily apparent through sight but must be (or are) presumed as other characters interpret Oskar’s actions and respond to them. Readers of Die Blechtrommel must also interpret Oskar’s narrative and his actions in light of the visibility and invisibility of his disabilities. Examination of real experiences of disability in Germany in the years presented in the novel, from 1899 through the 1950s, will reveal the extent to which Grass uses the cultural referents of disability and rehabilitation to structure the novel.
Throughout this chapter I shall attend to these referents to show that disability not only appears as a theme in the narrative, but it also provides the framework in which Grass contemplates the making of German culture and history. I shall demonstrate that Grass uses a model of disability and rehabilitation to express his main points about continuities between Germany's past and future.

The rest of this chapter will examine the ways in which Oskar Matzerath mediates the making of German culture by claiming disability as his position of critical insight. Although I shall argue that Oskar's disabilities may be understood in conjunction with Germany's participation in two world wars, my reading of the novel is complicated by the fact that Oskar's disabilities do not stem from war wounds as do, in part, those of Tellheim, Francoeur, or the Kriegskruppel from the previously discussed literary works. I have selected Die Blechtrommel in part because of this very complication. Whereas the wounds of the previous soldiers were readily visible and could easily be interpreted in terms of loss and compensation, Oskar Matzerath's disabilities cannot be attributed to loss, as in the loss of a limb. Neither is there any public or state obligation to "compensate" Oskar for a "sacrifice," for he has not served in any military capacity. Instead, the disabilities presented in the novel require accommodation. As I shall show in this analysis, Oskar requires his family, his friends, and indeed his culture and nation to meet his needs. This becomes a central conflict in the novel as it becomes apparent that Oskar does little in return for accommodation that would be recognized as necessary. He repeatedly presents himself to be a burden to people around him; in fiscal terms alone he is a liability to the social whole. On what basis, then, can he claim accommodation? This
question points to yet another complication that Grass has built into the narrative: Grass uses a model of disability and rehabilitation to critique the societies that are inhospitable to Oskar, yet Oskar also does not fit into the rehabilitation scheme that is available. Oskar’s multiple and shifting positioning as an outsider is critically important to the novel, both as a narrative strategy and as a substantive point. I submit that Grass created Oskar to slip among discourses and institutions, a slippage that happens in the novel across social boundaries and over time. In every instance, I shall argue, Oskar’s multiple disabilities create his particular position of insight.

Particular points of inquiry in the novel include the emergence of National Socialism and the ways in which Nazi logic of inferior and superior races redefined the value of the human being and permeated the petit-bourgeoisie (Kleinbürgertum). Additionally Grass examines the growth of an achievement-oriented consumer culture in the Federal Republic of Germany after the end of the war. Grass further address the notion of confronting the German past and the possibility for Germans to “come to terms” (Vergangenheitsbewältigung) with the crimes of the Holocaust. By revealing that social trends resist political periodization, the novel exposes continuities in attitudes and practices from the period of National Socialism well into the post-war period. Through Oskar, Grass analyzes the attitudes of the German Kleinbürgertum, resulting in a particularly strong indictment of the Kleinbürgertum’s self-serving participation in National Socialism and in the increasingly materialistic, anti-humanitarian practices of the Federal Republic. Specifically Grass problematizes the (mis)appropriation of religious

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90 The Holocaust is, however, not named as such in the novel.
symbols, including Christian images of sin, guilt, and suffering, and this is where Oskar's disabilities become particularly powerful instruments of resistance and critique.

Analyzing Die Blechtrommel as an investigation of these social and political discourses, I shall point out the ways in which disability functions as an organizing principle. The novel reveals that diverse concepts and practices of defining and treating disability helped shape not only the German nation of Adolf Hitler but also the German nation which emerged after the collapse of National Socialism. As the narrator and main character of Die Blechtrommel, Oskar exhibits several of the physical and social characteristics that, under National Socialism, would logically mandate his death; in a similar fashion, Oskar also offends the burgeoning self-image of the newly founded Federal Republic. To be sure, Oskar does not represent the same type of problem for the Federal Republic that he posed to National Socialism, however studying his character within both political frameworks allows us to see how ahistorical, ill-defined notions of able-bodiedness configured both nations' self images.

Narrating the novel in both first and third person voices, Oskar chronicles and reflects upon twentieth-century German politics and culture as they are played out in the lives of three generations. Oskar's narrative details the social fabric of the Kleinbürgertum and allows for productive analysis of the continuity and discontinuity of social discourses in German history. His perspective is shaped by three dimensions: it may be assessed in terms of Oskar's position in time, in terms of his physical position of his short stature, and in terms of his perceived mental illness. All these dimensions inform what Oskar narrates, and all should be taken into account when interpreting his story. They all work together to
influence the believability and reliability of his account. His narrative is largely retrospective, yet he begins in the present: "Zugegeben. Ich bin Insasse einer Heil- und Pflegeanstalt" (5); and he ends in the present with an eye toward the future: "Denn was mir früher im Rücken saß, (...) kommt mir nun und fortan entgegen: (...) Ist die Schwarze Köchin da? Ja- Ja- Ja!" (731). Oskar begins his narrative with an admission that he is a patient in a mental institution. The admission immediately conveys Oskar’s awareness that his mere stay in a mental institution will work against the appearance of reliability. Knowing that he may not be believed, he nonetheless weaves a seemingly fantastical tale that fuses his own life story with the history of twentieth-century Germany, which he explores as a vast and often incomprehensible tale. He describes his physical disability relatively early in the narrative, presenting his dwarfism to be an act of resistance. At the age of three, he writes, he willfully stopped growing so that as an adult he would not be forced to work in the family store. He did not want to follow in his father’s footsteps because he did not want “his shadow” to be measured against that of his parents’ generation:

Um nicht mit einer Kasse klappern zu müssen, hielt ich mich an die Trommel und wuchs seit meinem dritten Geburtstag keinen Fingerbreit mehr, blieb der Dreijährige, aber auch Dreimalkluge, den die Erwachsenen alle überragten, der den Erwachsenen so überlegen sein sollte, der seinen Schatten nicht mit ihrem Schatten messen wollte (60).

It must be noted from the outset that Oskar’s narrative and self-portrayal are highly ambiguous. As both narrating and narrated subject, Oskar carries self-reflection to an extreme and acts in contradictory ways. I hope to demonstrate, for example, that at the
very moments when the novel seems to call for a rejection of symbols, Oskar himself is instrumentalized as a symbol; at the moments when Oskar seems to advocate humane and life-affirming actions, he engages in violence and destruction. Thus readers cannot conclude that Oskar is either a victim of violence or a perpetrator of it. Readers must conclude that he is both, but not at the same time or in the same way. How then does Grass use disability in his novel? To what end does disability function? The contradictions that I shall reveal render answers to these questions elusive unless readers are willing to conclude from the novel that culture, history, indeed nations and bodies are produced through tension of competing discourses. Grass’s use of the discourse of disability shows this productive tension. The following is a brief overview of how this tension unfolds: Oskar is disabled, which Grass shows to signify his relative uselessness to society, therefore potentially threatening his very life under National Socialism and in the Federal Republic. Yet Grass shows Oskar to constitute a threat to the people around him through his random destruction and shattering of glass. Grass needs the discourse of disability to show that other discourses discount disability and seek to eradicate it. But if that constituted Grass’s main point, he would have made a much stronger case by using a more respectable and likable character with whom readers could more easily identify. The supremely unlikeable and destructive Oskar asserts himself as a necessary voice of social and political opposition in the twentieth-century German nations; ironically, his multiple outsider statuses make the biggest contribution toward assuring his recognition as an integral member of German society.91

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91 Here I use the word “recognition” not only to act as an advocate for Oskar, but also to address the need for the social whole to recognize Oskar’s importance to the totality.
The picaresque structure of the novel (*Schelmenroman*) has been widely and appropriately discussed, for the *Schelmenroman* qualities are an important facet of this novel’s ability to engage in social and political critique. This *Schelmenroman* provides a counterpoint to the teleological *Bildungsroman* and reflected the state of artistic production at the end of the war, when literary and intellectual foundations were shattered. Linear development is problematized in the novel, both in terms of narrative and in terms of the novel’s major theme, the question of continuity or discontinuity in German history. Through the anti-hero Oskar and the use of satire, *Die Blechtrommel* deliberately disrupts narrative conventions. Oskar is an outsider, and like any good picaresque novel hero, he satirizes society from his view from below (or without). His disabilities play an important role in affecting this satire. His shortness leads those around him to conclude that he is a child, and his stubborn screaming and refusal to stop drumming only confirm this. Yet Oskar’s drumming and shattering glass are not simply evidence of his disabilities, they are modes of both expression and perception. Schwann notes, “trommelnd versetzt er sich in die Gedanken anderer Menschen und durchschaut sie.” The breaking of glass “gestattet gelegentlich (z.B. beim Zersingen von Brillengläsern) eine neue Optik” (21). In those sections of the novel that describe the growth of the Nazi movement, Oskar’s drumming and glass-shattering songs are not held up as an alternative to more conventional speech. Instead they are an attempt to problematize the very way that

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92 See Ryan, 56; Neuhaus 130; and Brode, 90.
meaning was produced in language at a time when language was purposefully distorted to fall in line with Nazi logic.⁹³

This anti-hero does not only offer opposition to Nazi values, but he also exposes selfishness, greed, and immorality during the National Socialist period and into the post-war years. Werner Schwann writes: “Da man ihn auch geistig für zurückgeblieben hält, benimmt man sich in seiner Nähe so ungeschickt, wie man in Wahrheit ist” (22). Oskar causes the citizens of the Danziger Kleinbürgertum to act unselfconsciously in his presence. The different selves they promote in the presence of “adults” stand in stark contrast. It is in the duplicitous actions of the people of the Kleinbürgertum that Grass locates important roots of National Socialism. He does not implicate this social milieu alone, however he shows that the self-serving values and actions of these people provided fertile ground for Nazi politics, without which National Socialism might not have taken such strong hold. Oskar Matzerath, through his visible and invisible disabilities, allows this point to be made. Some attention to historical events is necessary, however, before turning to a more detailed analysis of the novel. What follows is a somewhat detailed summary of the rationale and medical practices regarding disability in Germany from the end of the nineteenth century throughout the 1950s. I include this information in order to emphasize the specific social structures and issues that Grass confronts in Die Blechtrommel; additionally I offer the following overview of documented events in order to establish the historical referents of disability that Grass puts to use in the novel.

Disability in Germany From Nazi Eugenics to Work-oriented Rehabilitation

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⁹³ Oskar points out the crass manipulation of words, likening Nazis to butchers: “Es sind dieselben Metzger, die Wörterbücher und Därme mit Sprache und Wurst füllen” (246).
Concepts of racial "superiority" and "inferiority" began to circulate in Europe in the nineteenth century but found increasing support in Germany as the principle tenet of National Socialism. The publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 introduced biological determinism into scientific and social discourses. Alfred Kelly notes that "the direct influence of Darwin himself was small. (...) Instead, Darwin's thought was mediated by a host of scientific popularizers, who, from the 1860s on, produced a flood of lectures, magazine articles, and best-selling books" (5). The enormous popularity, and more importantly, the diverse conclusions drawn under the name of "Darwinism" both in Germany and abroad were perhaps this theory's most striking feature.94 In this chapter I shall address the clichéd appropriation of Darwin by emerging National Socialists.

Strict biological definitions of race and the idea that some races are superior to others became the organizing principles favored by many right-leaning practitioners in science, medicine, and law. Some medical practices were reasoned to support the superiority of a race. Sterilization and medicalized killing were instrumentalized in the service of Nazi logic, within which any number of attributes could render a person "inferior." Those people could be placed in this category who were Jewish, Black, Roma or Sinti, Jehovah's Witnesses, Communist or otherwise politically opposed to National Socialism, homosexual, and mentally or physically ill or disabled. Intertwined among notions of superiority and inferiority were concepts of health and sickness. Poore points out that the Nazi regime's conception of health was predicated on an unmitigated parallel

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94 Kelly notes that Darwinism took a stronger hold in Germany than in the country of Darwin's origin, England (21).
between the body and the mind, and she describes how this simple relationship was projected intact onto the concept of the body politic:

[It is clear] that the ideological short-circuit of drawing direct parallels between body and mind fit into a larger opposition being set up between health and sickness. And, indeed, this was not viewed merely as the health or sickness of the individual patient, but in a much more encompassing sense as the health or sickness of the Volk and the nation (176).

These concepts were increasingly held to be objectively definable. Promoted through propaganda, this supposed objectivity was instrumentalized by scientists, bureaucrats, political leaders, doctors, and educators in a wide variety of contexts and with a wide variety of aims as they instituted the policies and programs that culminated in the Holocaust.

People with physical and mental disabilities were among the first to be killed by Nazis. Despite the attempts of a few educators and doctors such as Hans Würzt to apply the findings of social science in the service of people with disabilities, extremists such as Alfred Ploetz, Ernst Rüdin, and Julius Friedrich Lehmann, versed in the language of Social Darwinism, found a foothold in conservative circles eager to “strengthen” the German Volk. Although it was not solely linked to racist political movements, Social Darwinism

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95 See my discussion of Hans Würzt in chapter four.
96 Robert Proctor writes that Alfred Ploetz first coined the term “racial hygiene” and advocated the withholding of medical treatment for “the weak” (15). Ernst Rüdin was a psychiatrist who founded the Society for Racial Hygiene (Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene) in 1905; Julius Friedrich Lehmann was a Social Darwinist who became one of Germany’s leading medical publishers. Lehmann founded several journals, including Deutschlands Erneuerung in 1917 and Volk und Rasse in 1926. In 1918 he assumed the editorship of the journal Archiv für Rassen- und Gesellschaftsbiologie, at which time “the political Right began (...) to forge an alliance with the radical hygiene movement” (Proctor 26).
combined in complex ways with racism and anti-Semitism, already deeply rooted in Germany. Social Darwinism was also used to justify deeply held prejudices against Jews, women, and people with illnesses or disabilities, for within the logic of Nazism, all these identities were "inferior." Doctors were among Social Darwinism's chief proponents and Jewish doctors among its primary victims. Michael Kater notes that the

the pseudo-scientific, racist mold of German anti-Semitism

(...) claimed, among other monstrosities, that Jews were bent on poisoning the blood of Gentiles through an infusion of their own. Thus, Jewish male doctors were viciously charged with sexual predation against non-Jewish female patients (Aly Cleansing x).

Eugenics, or racial hygiene, was a new science that arose to confront the

"problem" of racial "degeneration." A number of Rassenhygieniker, theorists espousing a notion of racial hygiene, proclaimed the concept of the "survival of the fittest" to be an imperative, that is, that those who are physically stronger should survive those who are weaker. This was a crude misappropriation of Darwin's theory. According to Kelly,

younger Social Darwinists concluded that man was a prisoner of heredity. (...) With the collapse of environmentalism, the road was open to the newer radical Social Darwinism. No longer was there any reason to improve society; all effort had to go into preserving the "best" germ plasm. Here was the intellectual foundation for eugenics. (106)

The science of racial eugenics arose as the authority for medical and political policy that mandated the eradication of disability.97 Within Nazi logic disability was held to

97 Eugenics was not limited to Germany at this time but was practiced in many other countries, including in the United States. Thomson notes that "eugenics, the 'science of improving the stock,' was a respected field that successfully promoted mandatory sterilization laws in the United States as well as the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924,
be a function of race and was denounced by the Nazis as detracting from the strength of the German race. The pronounced “differentness” of a disabled person with respect to his or her non-disabled peers received great attention from scientists whose studies “proved” to government policymakers that people with disabilities have a degenerative effect on the societies in which they live. The study most frequently cited, Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche’s 1920 report, “Die Freigabe der Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens. Ihr Maß und Form,” concluded that the lives of disabled people were “absolut zwecklos. [...] Für ihre Angehörigen wie für die Gesellschaft bilden sie eine furchtbare schwere Belastung” (quoted in Bernsmeier, Arbeitstexte 71). Binding and Hoche’s work provided the scientific rationale for the Nazi campaign to rid the German population of the “burdensome” disabled and so protect the Volk from this so-called degenerative element.98

Plans for the removal of the “life unworthy of life” were embraced and executed with nationalistic and opportunistic fervor. The ideological goals of National Socialism often coincided with baser motives of greed and careerism. Christian Pross writes that “the abundant availability of human guinea pigs among people labeled as inferior or subhuman was exploited by doctors as a unique opportunity for scientific research” (Aly 2). Keeping this opportunism in mind, it is important to remember that diverse motivations both of which reflected fears that the ‘best’ people would be outnumbered by their physical or mental ‘inferiors’” (Extraordinary Bodies 35).

98 Other social studies and a variety of fictional works advanced this notion. I. Malbin publicly agreed in “Historische Betrachtungen zur Frage der Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens” [Archiv für Frauenkunde und Eugenetik 8 (1922): 127-141]. In 1922, Ernst Mann published a novel, Die Erlösung der Menschheit vom Elend, “portraying the destruction of the poor as a means of eliminating poverty” (Proctor 179). Ich klage an, a film version of Helmut Unger’s Sendung und Gewissen, portrayed a young husband’s decision to give his terminally ill wife poison. The husband, a physician by profession, is not found guilty of murder, but is instead found to have acted in the spirit of love.
led to the drive to eliminate undesirable elements from the German Volk. In other words, it was not unquestioning faith in the Nazi logic of superiority and inferiority that allowed so many people to inflict so much harm on the disabled and otherwise “inferior” people. It was instead careful, calculated management of pseudo-scientific theory. Disabled people figured prominently in this framework, and in this increasingly anti-democratic state their opportunities for recourse were virtually nonexistent.

Theories of racial hygiene called for restrictions on intermarriage between the disabled and the able-bodied and mandatory abortions and sterilization in the event that a child was likely to be born with a disability. Fluctuations in the political and economic climate often affected the implementation of the marriage restrictions and sterilization policies. People with disabilities were at particular risk during times of economic hardship. During the economic depression of 1929, for example, there was increased propaganda for the sterilization of “unnecessary eaters” (Aly 2). Robert J. Lifton writes that “political currents and whims also affected the project in various ways; and despite its high priority, there were undoubtedly periods of diminished enthusiasm for sterilization” (27).

The capacity for work became the concrete measure of this abstract theory of racial superiority. A person’s ability to work was the most critical factor in determining his or her “usefulness” and consequent “worthiness to live.” Doctors at a small office in Berlin began to determine psychiatric patients’ ability to work. The address of this office,

99 These theories were codified into the 1933 Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring (Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses) and the Nuremberg Laws of 1935: the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor (Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre) and the Law for Protection of the Genetic Health of the German People (Gesetz zum Schutze der Erbgesundheit des Deutschen Volkes).
Tiergartenstrasse 4, provided the cover name “T-4” for the national organization of killing psychiatric patients and the eventual operation of mass murder in concentration camps. Götz Aly describes how a survey of mental institution directors began the “processing” of psychiatric patients “for wartime economic purposes” on October 9, 1939. Asylum directors were sent questionnaires asking

for information on each patient’s type of illness, length of stay, and ability to work. Asylum directors were not informed of the purpose of these questionnaires. Later, on the basis of the completed questionnaires, three of the approximately thirty medical advisers at T-4 decided which patients would live and which would die. A few weeks later, the asylums received lists of patients they were to prepare for transfer, supposedly at the behest of the Reich Defense Commissar (Aly 22).

The foundation for general consent, if not express public support for euthanizing psychiatric patients had already been established for many years. Aly notes that as early as 1920, questionnaires had been sent by Ewald Meltzer to the male parents and relatives of psychiatric patients in order to learn of their opinions on Binding and Hoche’s report.100 Some parents expressed concern. However, most replied by saying that their doctor alone had the authority to decide whether their child’s life should be “mercifully” shortened. Many others expressed irritation at the questionnaire and said that they did not want to be consulted in decisions to euthanize, should the situation arise (Aly 29). This survey thus yielded terrifically useful information: Meltzer could conclude from the parents’ responses

100 Meltzer was director of the Katharinenhof, the Saxon State Home for Non-Educable, Feeble-Minded Children in Grosshennersdorf. Hitler’s personal physician, Theo Morell, cited the results of this questionnaire in the draft of a law legalizing the “extermination of worthless life” (Aly 29).
that there would be broad consent for euthanasia, and that this consent would be expressed through silence.\footnote{This problem appears in \textit{Die Blechtrommel}. Although Alfred Matzerath is reluctant to "send Oskar away" he raises no formal objection and finally concedes (475).}

Aly writes about the goal set by the advisers of T-4. Between sixty-five and seventy thousand people were to be killed. Aly summarizes its success: "This target figure had been exceeded by 273 persons before the program was suspended, as it was termed, in August 1941" (23). The "suspension" of T-4 was more correctly a time of transition to the mass killings known as the "Final Solution." The actual logistical work of medicalized killing had been perfected enough to apply it on a massive scale. The widely accepted justification for killing "life unworthy of life"; the well-connected network of doctors, local hospital administrators, bureaucrats, asylum directors, insurance companies, and educators; and the silent consent of parents, relatives, and citizens of Germany, T-4 paved the way for the ultimate murder of millions more people in concentration camps.

After the end of the war and the liberation of the concentration camps, the legal implementation of the Nazi policies of eugenics ended. Ernst Klee, however, has uncovered substantial documentation to show that certain hospitals and asylums continued to kill patients several weeks after the capitulation and the end of the Third Reich (\textit{Euthanasie} 452). Klee's analysis further contends that the primary reasons for ending euthanasia in December 1946 were economic in nature: the cost of killing patients in institutions and the costs of eventual law suits brought by surviving family members outweighed the "benefits" of the hospitals' reduced patient load. Klee concludes, "die Euthanasie war kassentechnisch bewältigt" (456). The morality of these medicalized
killings was largely left unaddressed. In fact, strikingly little public discussion or even simple acknowledgment of these practices took place. In 1947 psychiatrists Alexander Mitscherlich and Fred Mielke published documentation of the Nuremberg doctors' trial of 1946-47 at which several prominent Nazi doctors were accused of crimes against humanity. Yet despite its wide distribution among doctors of the West German Chamber of Physicians (Deutscher Ärztekammer), the public did not learn of Mitscherlich's findings. Christian Pross writes: "In the three decades following the repression of Mitscherlich's documentation, there was virtual silence. Little was published, and what was published got little public attention" (Aly 6). During the years surrounding the German student movement in the late 1960s there was a call to examine what had taken place during the Nazi years. The inquiry into actions of Germans during that period often met with strong protest, yet some close examination of Nazi crimes was possible. It was during this time that Klaus Dörner published his study of Nazi doctors, "Nationalsozialismus und Lebensvernichtung." Here, Dörner estimates that Nazi doctors killed between 100,000 and 125,000 people with physical and mental disabilities (146).

In the abrupt turnabout from National Socialism toward a consumer-driven, achievement and performance-oriented society (Leistungsgesellschaft), political attention to disability focused primarily on the establishment of a social network. In the early years of the Federal Republic, treatment of disabled people focused on issues of health care and social benefits as well as the development of an extensive program of work-oriented rehabilitation. In the process of developing the national network of insurances and benefits known collectively as "soziale Leistungen," the Federal Ministry of Employment
Bundesarbeitsministerium) in Bonn developed its concept of "Rehabilitation statt Rente." According to Udo Sierck, this operational philosophy

war die Antwort auf die steigende Zahl von
Berufskrankheiten, Arbeits- und Verkehrsunfällen, sollte
aber auch angesichts des Aufbaus der Bundeswehr, eines
befürchteten Absinkens der Geburtenzahl sowie der
Verlängerung der beruflichen Ausbildungszeit dem Mangel
an Arbeitskräften begegnen sowie ein Anwachsen der
"Rentenneurosen" unterbinden (Arbeit 10).

Nursing homes and sheltered workshops for people with disabilities adhered to the widespread belief in the therapeutic value of work and operated on the notion of "Arbeit als—und statt—Therapie" (Sierck 9). This was a different concept of work than that which had prevailed during Hitler's rule. For many people with disabilities, however, this concept of work was only slightly less problematic. Sierck points out that work was not conceived as an enjoyable activity that might lead to self-fulfillment or pride, but instead work was viewed as a method of controlling behavior. Even after the war, then, people with disabilities were viewed in terms of deviance and dangerousness that put society, that is, "normal" people at risk. In addition to the enduring linkage of disability to the threat of crime, an additional, even more abstract threat precipitated the growth of rehabilitation centers: "Fehlende Berufschancen drohten ein Unzufriedenheitspotential zu schaffen, das die Glaubwürdigkeit der Sozialpolitik gefährden konnte" (Sierck 11). Thus the public confidence in the Federal Republic's economic growth rested, at least in part, on putting disabled people to work. It was reasoned that work-oriented therapy would benefit the public as a whole. Sierck writes:

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102 When Sierck writes of "the disabled" in the late 1940s and early 1950s, he refers to the people who were identified as such by the Federal Office of Statistics (Statistisches...
Die Idee von Tätigkeit als Selbstverwirklichung spielt keine Rolle. Der Aspekt der Produktivität stand einseitig im Vordergrund. Die Arbeit wurde für die Erziehung zu Ordnung, Sauberkeit, Disziplin, zur Gewöhnung an Leistungsfähigkeit und -bereitschaft genutzt. Sie ging einher mit dem Versuch, abweichendes Verhalten zu unterdrücken und an die geltenden sozialen, moralischen und politischen Werte anzupassen (9).

Noteworthy are the ways in which the goals of postwar rehabilitation parallel the ideals of National Socialism: the suppression of deviant behavior; education toward orderliness, cleanliness, and discipline; and the measurement of a person's perceived usefulness to the larger society. To be sure, the actual physical liquidation of people with disabilities was no longer sanctioned after the war and the language of degeneration had softened, but a drive toward normalization had survived intact. Whereas under National Socialist work projects the “value” of the laborer was extracted, workers in the emerging Federal Republic were necessary for the production of material goods in the increasingly consumer-oriented culture. Sierck argues that exploitation of disabled workers continued from the Nazi period into the Federal Republic with only modest shifts in the focus of their work and with somewhat clearer shifts in the rationale behind putting disabled people to work. Referring to the periods before, during, and after the war, Sierck writes that it represented “ganz im Sinne der Philosophie Henry Fords (...) einen höchsten Grad der Verschwendung, die behinderten Menschen der Allgemeinheit ‘zur Last’ [zu] legen” (85). Assembly lines may have produced different items for different ends, but the

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103 While National Socialists carried these notions to their most terrible extreme, these strategies of social control are by no means unique to the Nazi period.
exploitation of disabled workers for the benefit of the larger society remained for Sierck disturbingly constant. I shall argue that Oskar Matzerath views the problem of labor in much the same way throughout Die Blechtrommel and that he resists exploitation by means of the very disability that would render him most likely to be exploited.

Günter Grass and the Writing of “Die Blechtrommel”

Read in light of these practices and with a critical awareness of the historical and cultural construction of disability, Günter Grass’s Blechtrommel offers insight into Germany’s Nazi past and into the development of postwar Germany. Die Blechtrommel reflects on the capacity for democracy in general to encompass all the members of a social whole, even, and perhaps especially, those members who are in the minority or are for some reason less productive or less desirable. Throughout the novel Grass comments on Germany’s potential for rehabilitation from Nazi totalitarianism into a democratic state that values its citizens. First published in 1959 when the author was only thirty-two years old, Die Blechtrommel shows an insider’s familiarity with the petit-bourgeois milieu of Danzig and the seductiveness of National Socialist propaganda. Grass was born in Danzig in 1927, the son of a small business owner. As a youth Grass took an active role in the youth organization, Hitlerjugend, and felt within himself an “opferbereite Weihestimmung” (Neuhaus 12). By age fifteen he had joined the military. Grass said in a Time magazine article in 1970 that he “bis ganz zum Schluß 1945 gedacht [habe], daß unser Krieg richtig war” (Neuhaus 12).

Grass was wounded near Cottbus in April of 1945, whereupon he was brought to a military hospital in Marienbad (then Czechoslovakia) and finally interred in an American
military prison in Bavaria. According to Grass's own statements and to biographical scholarship, Grass came away from his imprisonment with a new awareness of the destruction brought about by National Socialism and with an increasingly deep conviction that it was necessary to confront the crimes of participation in Nazi efforts. "Als Neunzehnjähriger begann ich zu ahnen, welch eine Schuld unser Volk wissend und unwissend angehäuft hatte, welche Last und Verantwortung meine und die folgende Generation zu tragen haben würden" (Neuhaus 12; Brode Grass 17). Die Blechtrommel, like Grass's other novels and poems, addresses the burden of responsibility for National Socialist crimes and the responsibility to ensure that no such anti-democratic regime comes to power again.\textsuperscript{104} In 1958, after reading from the nearly-finished manuscript of Die Blechtrommel, Grass was awarded the prize of the \textit{Gruppe 47}.\textsuperscript{105}

\textbf{Disability and the Figure of Oskar Matzerath}

The vocabulary of Disability Studies allows for a critical reshaping of the interpretive framework with which to approach Die Blechtrommel. Focusing on the confluence of social discourses, a Disability Studies perspective will illuminate the ways in which bodily difference, individual rights, social welfare, and sexuality work together to structure the novel. Such a focus also allows for a more nuanced assessment of Grass's portrayal of how the "different" person fared in Nazi Germany and in the first decades of

\textsuperscript{104} Cf. Ernst Jünger and other German authors who wrote romantic accounts of their war experiences. Grass does not glorify the ideology behind or the actual fighting of the Second World War in any way. Nor does he detail the experience of battle in order to expose the horrors it entails, as does Erich Maria Remarque.

\textsuperscript{105} The \textit{Gruppe 47} was a literary group formed in 1947. Writers and eventually publishers and critics met at the invitation of Hans Werner Richter. Members of the group included Heinrich Böll, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, and Günter Eich.
post-war Germany. Further, a Disability Studies approach will shed light on the responsibilities Grass holds Germany to have with respect to people who cannot succeed in the achievement-oriented post-war German *Leistungsgesellschaft*. Finally, examining the representation of disability in the novel in terms of its social construction will allow readers to view Oskar's disabilities as his particular position of insight and social critique. As I have stated earlier, Oskar Matzerath is a highly ambiguous character. By examining his portrayal through a Disability Studies approach it will be clear that although Oskar's portrayal at times reverts to a typical metaphor for moral weakness and uncontrollability, at many other times Oskar has a much broader function as a mediator of culture and history. To consider one of these aspects without the other would yield a fairly limited interpretation of his character. Consequently the following section addresses the multiple functions of his portrayal.

The figure of Oskar Matzerath has often been understood as a metaphor for the stunted ethics of Germans during the Nazi rise to power and the period of Nazi rule.\(^{106}\) This potentially metaphoric quality is found in the characteristics that mark Oskar as “disabled.” Only three feet tall and, later in his life, hunch-backed, Oskar can indeed be partly understood for the attitudes that these characteristics evoke. Many of his personal characteristics are drawn from a stockpile of stereotypes that are highly specific to the disabled: Oskar Matzerath is obnoxious and loud, misshapen and uncontrollable. Supremely annoying and unattractive, Oskar is in every respect burdensome to those

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\(^{106}\) See for example Hanspeter Brode's comments later in this chapter and Hildegard Emmel (341).
around him. Understood for his metaphoric qualities, Oskar indeed represents a social
problem: how shall “society” deal with so disruptive a person?

Visibility is a key issue when considering Oskar’s disabilities. Oskar relates that his
growth was “nicht mehr zu übersehen (...) ausbleiben[d]” (76). The size of his legs
prevents him from keeping up with other children his age or from ever assuming the
walking pace of an average adult. His shortness makes it difficult for him to reach objects
on high shelves, such as the tin drum he finds during the attack on the Polish post office:

Ich versuchte erst gar nicht, die Trommel mit eigener Kraft
vom Gestell herunterzuziehen. Oskar war sich seiner
beschränkten Reichweite bewusst und erlaubte sich in Fällen,
da seine Gномenhaftigkeit in Hilflosigkeit überschlug,
Erwachsene um Gefälligkeit anzugehen (276).

Stigma is a common experience for Oskar. Other children view him as an outcast
who is to be pitied: “Natürlich sahen die beiden in mir das anomale, bedauernswerte
Zwerkenkind, kamen sich selbst gesund und vielversprechend vor” (257). The people who
know him well perceive him to be incapable of taking part in a variety of routine activities.
Acquaintances assume even the adult Oskar to have only a child’s capacity for reason. He
is not expected to take part in civic activities such as voting or holding a job. He is also
not expected to have an adult knowledge of or capacity for sexual expression. Oskar is
aware that he is perceived to have little understanding of sex, noting that

schließlich, wenn beide Frauen achgottachgott gesagt hatten
und sich verlegen in den verrutschten Frisuren erstelten, gab
Mama zu bedenken: ‘Ob Oskarchen auch wirklich nichts
davon versteht?’ ‘Aber wo doch,’ beschwichtigte dann das
Gretchen,’ ich geb’ mir ja soviel Mühe, aber er lernt und
lernt nich’, und Lesen wird er wohl nie lernen’ (105).
And in reference to the affair between Agnes and Jan Bronski, Oskar notes:

Sie sprachen vor mir ganz ungeniert und ihre Reden bestätigten, was ich schon lange wußte: Mama und Onkel Jan trafen sich fast jeden Donnerstag in einem auf Jans Kosten gemieteten Zimmer (...) um es eine Dreiviertelstunde lang miteinander zu treiben” (115).

A few words about Oskar’s mental capacity are in order. His original disability is not considered by those around him to be mental illness, although his behavior is so often unconventional and socially unacceptable that mental illness is suspected. Oskar often faces punishment as a result. This happens when Oskar shatters glass and after Oskar has run away from home: “ein Beamter vom Gesundheitsministerium kam, sprach vertraulich mit Matzerath, aber Matzerath schrie laut (...) Ich kam also nicht in die Anstalt” (426).

Not to be forgotten is that Oskar narrates Die Blechtrommel from an asylum. His stay in a mental hospital is a result of the suspicion of criminal activity. Although this portrayal recalls the notion that criminality is linked to unusual bodily characteristics, the linkage here is not unfounded. Added to it is a grotesque twist: Oskar is suspected of crime because he has in his possession a dismembered woman’s finger (695). Thirty years old at the time he begins his narrative, Oskar likens himself to Jesus Christ. On the occasion of his arrest for possessing the finger Oskar even identifies himself as Jesus Christ: “‘Ich bin Jesus!’ dasselbe, da er sich der internationalen Kriminalpolizei gegenüber sah, auf französisch, schließlich auf englisch: ‘I am Jesus!’” (729).

Oskar’s physical traits may be understood in a number of ways. To a modest extent, Grass does use them to represent the stunted ethics of Germans during most of the twentieth century and the terrible repercussions of National Socialism. They serve as
punishing reminders of the damaging effects of Nazism. Seen this way, the “disabilities” of Oskar Matzerath are not new portrayals of disability. They recall the tradition of viewing disability as a sign of some larger social ill, a punishment for wrongdoing, or an act of fate. Oskar summarizes the burden he represents to his parents: “sie nannten mich, Oskar, ein Kreuz, das man tragen müsse, ein Schicksal, das wohl unabänderlich sei, eine Prüfung, von der man nicht wisse, womit man sie verdiene” (96).

In other instances, his disabilities are held up as frightening examples of what might happen under terrible circumstances, in this case the state-sanctioned racism and violence of Nazi Germany. These “disabilities” are mutations of the “whole” or undamaged person that Oskar might have become. Here the “whole person” refers to a person who is accepted by the larger society. As a dwarf, Oskar is certainly not accepted.

Another way to interpret Oskar’s physical characteristics is to see them not only as the result of widespread social ills, but also as the characteristics of someone who would perpetrate those ills. Several passages present Oskar as having complied with the programs and goals of National Socialism. In the chapter dealing with the events of Kristallnacht, the Night of the Broken Glass, Oskar is shown to be most concerned with his supply of tin drums: “Ich sorgte mich um meine Trommeln” (245). This act in and of itself does not constitute genocidal violence. It is, however, consistent with Grass’s portrayal of the self-centered Kleinbürgertum that is willing to regard one of its own, in

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107 Even as Oskar may be understood as the embodiment of social and political sickness, it is important to remember that Oskar is nonetheless not portrayed to be sick. He is portrayed to be physically disabled: short and hunch-backed.
this case, Sigismund Markus, as less important than itself. After the passages detailing
the defense of the Polish post office, Oskar summarizes his part in the actions that led to
Jan Bronski’s death at the hands of the SS: “Ich selbst, der Trommler Oskar, brachte (...) Jan ins Grab” (299). Other passages present Oskar as using his physical stature to avoid
being held accountable for acts of violence or vandalism: after the youth gang known as
the “Stäuber” desecrate the Herz-Jesu-Kirche, Oskar acts as though he were only an
innocent three-year old who was wrongly brought into this gang activity: “So (...) ließ sich [Oskar] widerstandslos, die Rolle eines greinenden, von Halbwüchsigen verführten
Dreijährigen spielend, in Obhut nehmen” (468).

Many critics have argued that Grass implicates Oskar as a perpetrator of National
Socialist crimes. During the novel’s second book, which deals with the Second World
War, Oskar relays the large and small ways that he and the people around him advance the
cause of National Socialism. The gradually right-leaning activities of Oskar’s family
members and neighbors are described against the backdrop of international historical
events. These events are clearly indicated throughout the narration and are usually
conveyed through casual reference to a radio or newspaper report. The very clear
distinction between the background and the foreground of the novel illustrates that
Oskar’s family and neighbors were not motivated ideologically to comply with Nazi

108 Ruth Klüger criticizes Grass’s portrayal of Sigismund Markus: “Wie der typische Jude
der Nazi Presse ist auch Markus unattraktiv, doch voll Begierde nach einer arischen
Frau.” In addressing this point Klüger identifies a structural connection between the
Kleinbürgertum’s view of Markus and Grass’s portrayal of him: “Es ist von da nur ein
Schritt, auch das Ausmaß der Judenvernichtung durch ein klägliches Opfer sentimental zu
verzerren und sie dadurch aufs Erträgliche zu reduzieren” (23).
109 Among those critics who draw this conclusion are Brode (89) and Emmel (343).
politics. Instead, they were more concerned with their own lives and their daily needs. Grass portrays the attitudes of the *Kleinbürgertum* through his portrayal of Oskar, his family, and his neighbors. Games of *Skat* and the family photo album are given a great deal of attention, but national and international political events and military invasions are mentioned only in passing and are not shown to have immediate consequences for the family, nor is the family shown to have an intimate interest in such events. Detlev Krumme notes that “das Eingreifen der großen Politik in den Alltag der Kleinbürger von Langfuhr geschieht beinahe unmerklich; (...) auch in der privatesten Sphäre kommt es zu kleinen Veränderungen, die zunächst nicht weiter von Bedeutung zu sein scheinen” (111). The emergence of Nazism and the gradual acclimatization to life under Nazi rules are portrayed in the actions of Oskar’s family. Krumme notes that “Hitler etabliert sich, er verbiegt und usurpiert die ideellen Wertvorstellungen des deutschen Kleinbürgertums, und er wird—hier und da vielleicht widerstrebend, wie Agnes zeigt—akzeptiert” (112).

Other critics have argued that Oskar’s dwarfed body may be understood as a caricature of Adolf Hitler. Brode writes, for example: “Nachdrücklicher noch ist die Zentralthematik des Buches zu beachten, sie verweist eindeutig auf den Naziführer. Hitler wurde, vor allem von der gegnerischen Propaganda der letzten Weimarer Jahre, stets als ‘Trommler’ tituliert” (Grass 79). Krumme considers this possibility as well:

Ähnlich Hitler, der bislang brave und biedere Bürger zu Verbrechen verführte, indem er die entsprechende Stimmung des Hasses und der Pogrome mit seinen Reden schürte, verführt Oskar Passanten zum Stehlen mit seiner Stimme, nämlich, wenn er Schaufensterscheiben zersingt und den Vorbeigehenden damit den Zugriff zu den Auslagen möglich macht (119).
Yet to view Oskar solely as a miniature Hitler is a problematic reading that disregards the many discursive aspects of disability that Grass incorporates into the novel. To understand Oskar exclusively as a metaphor for the immorality of Nazi Germany is to suggest that Grass projects all of Germany onto one human body. Within this logic, the deformity would then indicate the criminality, much as the people around Oskar link his physical stature with his mental capacity. The narrative guides readers toward this possibility, but many other aspects of the novel lead readers to reject this view. To be sure, Grass does portray those aspects of Oskar that ally him with Nazi goals, yet more significantly, he also portrays Oskar as a potential victim of Nazi goals. At one point in the novel, Alfred Matzerath agrees, if reluctantly, to “euthanize” Oskar. Earlier in the novel, only the memory of Agnes, Oskar’s mother, stood in the way of Alfred’s consent to euthanize. Oskar describes the route he might have taken toward a “merciful death” from “sofort wirkende Spritzen” and concludes that “nur der Schatten meiner armen Mama (...) verhinderte mehrmals, daß ich, der Verlassene, diese Welt verließ” (445). Oskar’s killing is averted only by the German attack on the Polish post office in Danzig, which ultimately prevents Alfred’s letter of agreement from being sent to the appropriate authority.

The possibility that Oskar might become a victim of medicalized killing allows the reader to comprehend the Nazi linkage between disability and race. The logic behind Oskar’s potential elimination would have addressed the perceived genetic cause of Oskar’s dwarfism. It would have been reasoned that dwarfism was a “flaw” that compromised the integrity of the German blood. It is important to remember, however, that this is not the overt reason that Alfred Matzerath uses, but simply the rationale propagated by Nazi
officials and legitimized by the lack of public opposition. The institutionalization of medicalized killing provided a convenient means for eliminating a human burden without burdening the conscience. Although Alfred Matzerath ultimately gives in to the request to euthanize Oskar, he does so not out of his own commitment to the ideology of “purifying the race.” Instead it is Alfred’s second wife Maria who regards Oskar as useless and reasons that euthanizing Oskar would simply be a way to remove one burden from their daily routine: “Aber siehst ja: is nich jeworden, wird überall nur rumjestoßen und weiß nich zu leben und weiß nich zu sterben” (444). At first, Alfred refuses to send Oskar away, but he is finally persuaded by a civil servant to reconsider. Whether Alfred agrees out of his own conviction is doubtful:

Zehn Tage lang überlegt sich Matzerath, ob er den Brief unterschreiben und ans Gesundheitsministerium abschicken sollte. Als er ihn am elften Tag unterschrieben abschickte, lag die Stadt schon unter Artilleriebeschuss, und es war fraglich, ob die Post noch Gelegenheit fände, den Brief weiterzuschicken (475).

Chance, then, has rescued Oskar from medicalized killing. However Grass shows that the societal condoning, if not mandate for “euthanasia” was still vitally present. According to Volker Neuhaus, “Maria, die mit dem Argument, ‘das macht man heut so’ (444) Oskar den ‘Euthanasie’-Ärzten ausliefern will, begreift nicht, daß dieses ‘man’ nichts anderes ist als viele Marias” (Romane 138). In this way Grass shows the Kleinbürgertum hardly to reflect upon the actions that they took, yet to contribute substantially to National Socialist projects. It is precisely the lack of reflection that Grass indicts; it is further this lack of reflection that Oskar’s entire narrative seeks to remedy.
Also contributing to this discussion of race are Oskar’s own concerns about
genealogy and heritage. Oskar claims not to know whether his father is Alfred Matzerath,
“ein gebürtiger Rheinländer,” or Jan Bronski, a man of Kashubian descent who ultimately
declares his allegiance to Poland: “er wechselte zur polnischen Post über” (41-42; cited in
Krumme 114). No other family members show such a concern about paternity. For them,
Alfred Matzerath is unquestionably Oskar’s father. At times Oskar is willing to accept Jan
as his father, at other times, Alfred. His shifting back and forth between Jan and Alfred
probes the very composition of race and lineage and asks exactly what importance family
heritage should rightfully have. Judith Ryan describes how

the two polarities, German and Polish, tough and weak,
combine with the uncertainty about Oskar’s paternity to
create a grotesque parody. (...) It implies that the rise of
nazism is less clearly continuous with earlier developments
in German cultural tradition (...) and despite its Polish
setting, it throws the emphasis on a more characteristic
example in terms of social class. (59)\(^\text{110}\)

Oskar’s concern for identifying his father both mimics and subverts Nazi attention
to race and lineage. Oskar creates his own disability to work against the Nazi
understanding of disability and race. Oskar does not represent evidence of a genetic flaw,
instead his disability was acquired by choice, actively interrupting the Matzerath lineage
that Oskar at age three has already deemed in need of adjustment. By refusing to grow

\(^{110}\) Ryan’s study reads Die Blechtrommel as an answer to Thomas Mann’s Doktor Faustus
(56). She argues that the debate over Oskar’s paternity is specifically a parody of “Mann’s
elaborate dualisms” (59). Although Mann’s novel is beyond the scope of this analysis, it is
helpful to include Ryan’s comparison here. She sees in the social analysis of Die
Blechtrommel a counterpoint to Mann’s “mythic conception of history” (56).
into Alfred Matzerath's "shadow," Oskar attempts to step out of the family line. In doing so he steps into a new framework and draws attention to the workings of his social class.

**Disability as Resistance to Fascism**

Despite the attributes named earlier that link Oskar to the perpetrators of Nazi crimes and those that portray him to be a victim of Nazi crimes, Oskar's physical characteristics overwhelmingly shape Oskar's resistance to the ideology of fascism, including the activities of his own family members that ultimately advance National Socialism. Oskar makes good use of his "outsider" perspective. In one instance Oskar's height allows him behind the stage of the Nazi rally, where he concludes that anyone who looks from this vantage point will be "gegen jegliche Zauberei, die in dieser oder jener Form auf Tribünen zelebriert wird, gefeit" (139). Here it becomes evident that the figure of Oskar Matzerath is more than a symbol. Oskar does not merely embody resistance to National Socialism, he enacts resistance with his body and in the ways in which he expresses himself. He uses his shortness and the false perceptions that people have of him as a means of subversion. In one of many examples, Oskar is able to turn the Nazi rally into an orgiastic, apolitical dance festival. He escapes any blame for disrupting the rally, noting, "sie fanden mich nicht, weil sie Oskar nicht gewachsen waren" (143). Here the tables are turned, and it is the dwarfish Oskar who dwarfs the authorities.

To suggest that Oskar is best understood as a metaphor for the destruction of National Socialism is to ignore the role of disability in the novel. Grass clearly portrays the social construction of Oskar's disability and his attention to the cultural determinants of disability preclude a purely metaphorical understanding of Oskar. Consider the following
facts of the novel. Oskar draws attention to his disability as it presents obstacles for him, correctly assuming that most people around him will seek to change him before they will attempt to accommodate his needs. He shows deep awareness of what he can expect as a person with a physical disability. Throughout his youth, he knows he will be taken to doctors so that a medical explanation and cure for his shortness might be found. Aware that his differentness will pose a significant problem for the people around him, Oskar prepares himself for the labels that will be applied to him:

Von Anfang an war mir klar: Die Erwachsenen werden dich nicht begreifen, werden dich, wenn du für sie nicht mehr sichtbar wächst, zurückgeblieben nennen, werden dich und ihr Geld zu hundert Ärzten schleppen, und wenn nicht deine Genesung, dann die Erklärung für deine Krankheit suchen (65).

Oskar is portrayed throughout the novel as aware of doctors’ self-serving interest in treating him. As in the above example, Oskar points out that doctors stood to gain financially from treating him, and in other instances, doctors sought prestige within their profession by writing scholarly articles describing his condition: “Meine schon damals hellwache Skepsis ließ mich das Werkchen des Dr. Hollatz als das werten, was es, genau besehen, darstellte: als das seitenlange, nicht ungeschickt formulierte Vorbeireiten eines Arztes, der auf einen Lehrstuhl spekulierte” (78).

Oskar’s later comments reveal that he knew that doctors and insurance agencies were among those institutions carrying out the Nazi plan of eliminating “inferior” people who supposedly compromised the integrity of the German race. Very soon after
Germany's capitulation, Oskar becomes ill and needs a doctor. He points out that the concept of the "patient" had become greatly distorted under Hitler:

Es war schwer, einen Arzt zu finden. Die meisten Ärzte hatten die Stadt rechtzeitig mit Truppentransporten verlassen, weil man die Westpreußische Krankenkasse schon im Januar nach dem Westen verlegt hatte und somit der Begriff Patient für viele Ärzte irreal geworden war (506).

With this comment Oskar alludes to the potential that the Nazi attitude toward people with disabilities would continue after the war. The risk of "euthanasia" might not have disappeared simply with the collapse of National Socialism. Oskar put himself at enormous risk by adopting the physical form of the people most likely to be killed by the Nazis. His decision not to grow in order to resist the threat of Nazism is an act of reclamation. Oskar reclaimed the value of his body at a time when his body was particularly devalued by the majority of people around him. Yet the power of Oskar’s body is not sufficiently described in activist terms alone. Oskar’s body also has structural significance in the novel. Instead of rendering metaphors of bodily difference as merely unfair or inaccurate, Die Blechtrommel reflects a more critical awareness of the potential for reifying Nazi attitudes toward the body. The novel shows the Nazi model of the human body to be a mere corruption of Christian notions of bodily wholeness and brokenness, which themselves are called into question in the novel.\textsuperscript{111} Grass's portrayal of Oskar's body is a much more highly refined reflection upon the capacity of the human body to present or to

\textsuperscript{111} Recall here Kokoska's list of bodily impairments that were set against "whole" or "healed" ideals described in chapter one. Remember as well the type of bodily wholeness that Leonhard Frank constructed as the image of the "guter Mensch" described in chapter four.
misrepresent—to hide, mislead, or distract people from knowing the truth about a person. Oskar’s body subverts expectations: he is a young man “der es nicht nötig hatte, von Jahr zu Jahr größere Schuhe zu tragen, nur um beweisen zu können, daß etwas im Wachsen sei” (64). He forces these misconceptions and uses them to his advantage: “Den Unwissenden spielen, hieß jedoch für mich, mit meinen rapiden Fortschritten hinter dem Berg zu halten” (103). Oskar’s truth is his insight and refusal to compromise, even to the point of selfishness. He breaks cultural taboos and calls all social norms into question, mostly by means of examining and exposing how routinely cultural rules are broken and ostensibly sacred religious ideals are distorted. Through his body, through his drumming and screaming, and throughout his entire narrative, for example, Oskar mocks false religiosity. Oskar knows that his parents see in him a burden, yet he does not give much credence to their suffering: “Sie nannten mich, Oskar, ein Kreuz, das man tragen müsse, (...) Von diesen schwergeprüften, vom Schicksal geschlagenen Kreuzträgern war also keine Hilfe zu erwarten” (96). Here again Oskar criticizes the tendency of those around him to exaggerate their own difficulties and act in decidedly un-charitable, or, in Oskar’s sense, only too-Christian ways.  

Oskar’s vantage point ultimately gives him enormous insight into the social structures which define him, although he does not use this insight to attain social acceptance. Socially Oskar does indeed remain marginalized, however this seems to be acceptable to him. His marginalization has more to do with his behavior than with his

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112 By this I refer to the binary Christian concepts that would oblige healing and recovery. Oskar is suspicious that efforts to heal him might in fact endanger him. See my discussion on the previous page.
physical stature, for his incessant drumming and glass-shattering screams are unnerving to everyone but Oskar. Oskar tells the reader, matter-of-factly, “ich war in der Lage, Glas zu zersingen” (68). He cannot remain in school because of his drumming and glass-shattering cries (92). The only other people he meets who are as short as he is are the very marginalized people of the circus troupe, Bebra’s “Lilliputanergruppe” (131). Oskar knows that because of his three-foot tall body he is perceived to be a child and assumed therefore not to be capable of reliable narration. He has learned this from other dwarfs.

Roswitha, a member of the *Lilliputanergruppe*, describes the risk that all dwarfs face and the work that they have to do on their own behalf: “Es ist nicht leicht, in unserer Größe auszuharren. Human bleiben ohne äußeres Wachstum, welch eine Aufgabe, welch ein Beruf!” (204). For the *Lilliputaner*, remaining human is their work. This stands in stark contrast to the work-oriented therapy that they would otherwise undergo if they wanted legitimization of their importance to the larger society. If remaining human is a status toward which they must work and not a status that they may presuppose, then what differentiates the emerging German nation from the defeated National Socialist nation with regard to people perceived as “different”? The potential for post-war Germany to develop as a humane nation is seriously questioned. Through Bebra, Roswitha, and Oskar, Grass shows that people who were marginalized during National Socialism are still marginalized in the Federal Republic. Grass both exposes and instrumentalizes this marginalization to assess the progress of German history. Here Oskar shows that this trend continued from the pre-war into the post-war period. When Oskar aligns himself with these people he underscores the degree to which the German nations portrayed in the novel are
continuously predicated on a notion of able-bodiedness. The need to articulate resistance
to this notion is expressed in Bebra's words in the following passage and in Oskar's words
and actions throughout the course of the novel:


**A Disabled Account**

*Die Blechtrommel* contains not one but two narrative voices. Oskar frequently narrates in the first person voice. He also frequently uses the third person voice to tell his own ("Oskar's") life story. This splitting of narrative voices should not be read as evidence of psychological disorder. Instead, the splitting should be understood as a "doubling" or dual positioning of narrative authority. Oskar is a disabled person who is more often than not at great risk because he is perceived by the people around him to be burdensome or at times even dangerous. The qualities of his body put his entire life at risk, and I submit that Oskar uses the third person voice to act as his own advocate. Who else will be an advocate for Oskar on terms that Oskar sets? His third-person narrative lends an objectivity to his account that the first-person narrative does not.

The length of the narrative and the attention Oskar gives to seemingly mundane events work to counter the silence that is for a person like Oskar so dangerous. Remember
here the silence in Germany surrounding euthanasia. Oskar is a potential victim of
euthanasia, and so he must literally speak in order to save his life. His drumming and glass-
shattering cries may therefore be understood to break the pervasive and oppressive silence
surrounding the grossly anti-democratic Nazi movement. Oskar must demonstrate that his
body needs to be saved. The readers already know that Oskar’s body signaled resistance
to National Socialism; the shattering of glass has to take place before Oskar’s body can be
saved: “solange ich Glas zersang, existierte ich, solange mein gezielter Atem dem Glas
den Atem nahm, war in mir noch Leben” (445).

Disability as Resistance to Post-War Denial

During the third book of the novel, which deals with the first nine years after the
war, Oskar breaks another taboo and again resists marginalization by speaking about
National Socialism, the war, the guilt that he feels for his actions during the war. He calls
readers to awareness of the continuation of Nazi attitudes well into the post-war period.
This breaks the cultural taboo against examining the war years closely or speaking about
how widely Adolf Hitler was adored and trusted. After the war Germans concentrated
almost exclusively on rebuilding the infrastructure and the economy of Germany. The
concept of the “Zero Hour” ( Stunde Null) suggested that Germans could make a clean
start in building a nation without having to reconcile the recent past. Few people
advocated reflecting upon National Socialism and the everyday person’s participation in it.

113 The viability of the Stunde Null concept is highly debatable. It found literary expression
in Trümmer- or Kahlschlagsliteratur, referring to rubble and “clearing of the thickets”
respectively (Metzler 536).
This phenomenon was described in psychological terms as a “defense mechanism” in Margarethe and Alexander Mitscherlich’s 1967 study Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern. The Mitscherlichs warned against overzealous attention to the rebuilding of Germany, going so far as to declare it an unhealthy “fetish.” Brode notes the public pressure to speak only of the present and the future: “Wer die kollektiven Tabuzwänge nicht mitvollgozen hat, wird im Nachkriegsmilieu unbarmherzig beiseite geworfen und marginalisiert” (65). Oskar Matzerath breaks this taboo with his reflection upon the past, resisting the fixation on reconstruction and economic progress that swept the rest of the nation. He says, “Ich begann zu trommeln, der Reihe nach, am Anfang war der Anfang (...)” whereupon he lists over twenty memorable events from his life and from the lives of his relatives (625). He is able to cry over his losses and does not require the onion-slicing of the “Zwiebelkeller” to set his tears in motion. In the “Zwiebelkeller,” the juice of the sliced onions “schaffte, was die Welt und das Leid dieser Welt nicht schaffte: die runde, menschliche Träne. Da wurde geweint” (650). Oskar criticizes this staged attempt at Vergangenheitsbewältigung, revealing it to be inauthentic and ineffective. Oskar says that he “gehörte zu den wenigen Glücklichen, die noch ohne Zwiebel zu Tränen kommen konnten. Meine Trommel half mir” (655). Oskar even mocks the people who claim to forget what happened in those years: “Unwissenheit (...) [kam] damals in Mode” (300) or those who try to present themselves as resistors: “Wiederstandskämpfer (...) Das Wort ist reichlich in Mode gekommen” (145). This willingness to reflect upon the recent past sets Oskar apart from the people around him. Apartness is what Oskar knows, and through Oskar Grass shows that this apartness is necessary to the rehabilitation of Germany after the war.
Although Grass cautions against overzealous attempts to “rehabilitate” the nation in the form of the “economic miracle” or *Wirtschaftswunder*, he does write about a more comprehensive rehabilitation of Germany. Grass seeks a different type of rehabilitation, one that is not geared toward creating the German *Leistungsgesellschaft* that will ultimately exclude people like Oskar. Grass warns that the refusal to reflect upon the war will ultimately damage the German nation, and he does this through the disabilities of Oskar Matzerath.

Oskar does not pursue the type of rehabilitation that was widely recommended for people with disabilities after the end of the war. Oskar does not find successful integration through work. He works for a short time as an apprentice to a gravestone engraver, but “die Währungsreform machte aus mir einen Narren, zwang mich, Oskars Währung gleichfalls zu reformieren; ich sah mich fortan gezwungen, aus meinem Buckel wenn auch kein Kapital, so doch meinen Lebensunterhalt zu schlagen” (566). He becomes an artist’s model and his disfigurement symbolizes for the art professor the destruction wrought by the Nazis:


Krumme concludes from this scene that “die ‘unbewältigte Vergangenheit’ damit zu dem grotesken Gnom und Krüppel abgeschoben [wird]” (121). The invocation of Christian symbols of crucifixion complements the action of ascribing to Oskar’s hunched back the
insanity (*Wahnsinn*) of the century and slaughtering him like a sacrificial lamb. Oskar shows that this cannot be done, nor would it provide the healing that is sought. According to Oskar, the art students “bekamen dennoch meinen Buckel nicht aufs Papier” and “weder den sechzehn Schülern (...) noch dem Professor (...) gelang es, ein gültiges Bildnis Oskars der Nachwelt zu bescheren” (569). Despite small improvements in their illustrations, Oskar recognizes “die jungen Leute zeigten sich trotz der Währungsreform immer noch vom Krieg beeindruckt” (570). Here, he indicates that more intensive work is needed in order to come to terms with the war. He shows that the mere elimination of the symbol for Nazi insanity, his hunched back, is not sufficient to alleviate Germans of whatever guilt they might feel from their participation in National Socialism.

After his stint as an artist’s model, Oskar pursues activities facilitating his self-development and self-expression. Upon his successful experience drumming in the *Zwiebelkeller* Oskar chooses musical performance as a career and uses his drumming as a way to make money and support himself. Although his musical performances indeed entail work, Oskar does not experience this as work-oriented therapy in the conventional sense. In fact, the work-oriented rehabilitation present in the novel is not for Oskar at all, for Oskar is not portrayed as being in need of rehabilitation. Oskar’s greatest need is for society to accommodate him. Rehabilitation will not make him grow, but growing is not necessarily important. Fitting in is important, in the sense of being welcome, not in the sense of conforming. Therapy that would make Oskar conform would only silence him. His important voice of critical insight would be lost, and Germany would suffer from refusal to confront the past in preparing for the future. Grass shows that if Oskar were
"therapeutically" treated to behave in socially acceptable ways, he would not be in a position to offer the insightful critique that he does in the novel. If the Federal Republic would argue that it is good for the social whole to have Oskar conform, Grass shows that it is even better for the social whole in the long run if Oskar continues not to conform. Oskar's particular position of insight is exactly what Germany needs. To "treat" his disabilities through work-oriented therapy would be to eliminate his insight.

Conclusion: Rehabilitation as the overarching principle of "Die Blechtrommel"

The rehabilitation in question is clearly that of Germany. Grass shows how the prevailing post-war fixation on work is not therapeutic at all, but in fact stands to yield only more psychological sickness stemming from the unreflected, unacknowledged Nazi past. He shows that Oskar's approach to dealing with the past is actually healthier. Oskar's music, his releasing of emotions, his refusal to conform, and his lack of regard for order are all shown to be vitally important. Since the majority of people do not see it this way, it is once again Oskar who is viewed as sick. He writes from a mental institution, after all: "Zugegeben: ich bin Insasse einer Heil- und Pflegeanstalt" (6).

Through his adopted physical and perceived mental disabilities, Oskar provides a challenging social and historical critique of National Socialism and its influence beyond the Second World War. Grass shows the complex ways in which these disabilities prevent many people from taking him seriously. For these reasons, Die Blechtrommel marks a turning point in twentieth-century prose representations of the disabled outsider. The narrative problematizes Oskar's relationship to the social whole and demonstrates the
contribution he makes to shaping that society. The novel reminds readers that not only the educated Bildungsbürger is involved in building this German nation. To be sure, Oskar’s stunted growth can function in a limited way as a metaphor for the stunted ethics of the German middle classes both during and after the Second World War. Yet Grass must be credited for creating a “dynamic metaphor,” one that is supremely active and capable of affecting change. Oskar is not merely acted upon or even held up as an example of a life to imitate or to avoid. Grass puts tired stereotypes of disability to work by constantly repositioning them within a dynamic framework. Through this repositioning, Die Blechtrommel accentuates the tension between the social welfare of the emerging German nation and the individual rights of the seemingly unimportant citizen, Oskar Matzerath. Grass shows Oskar to offer important insight into the construction of German culture and history. Oskar demands to be recognized as an active member of his society. He is not only shaped by, but he also shapes, literally, the German nation in which he lives.

Excursion: Ursula Hegi’s “Stones From the River”

Ursula Hegi’s 1994 novel, Stones From the River, has much in common with Die Blechtrommel. Written in the United States, in English, thirty-five years after Die Blechtrommel, Stones From the River has enjoyed considerable popularity in the United States. It can arguably be understood as a feminist response to Grass’s novel because of its concerted attention to a woman’s experience and perspective within a relatively similar thematic context. Both novels trace families in Germany through several generations

\[114\] In her review of the novel, Suzanne Ruta notes that “like Oskar, the dwarf in Günter Grass’s novel, The Tin Drum, [Trudi] incorporates the best and worst of Germany. (...) Ugly heroines are rare in novels, rarer still in movies and fairy tales. To recast Mr. Grass’s Oskar as a woman was a daring and rewarding move” (18).

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and over the span of two world wars, and both novels have as their main characters a dwarf. A Disability Studies approach to reading both novels sheds light on Hegi and Grass’s constructions of dwarfism and reveals how two authors from different socio-historical contexts use disability as the main structural device propelling their respective narratives.

Although in many ways reminiscent of Grass’s anti-hero, Hegi’s main character, Trudi Montag, also differs from Oskar substantially. Trudi is indeed a dwarf, but unlike Oskar who chooses not to grow, Trudi desperately wants to grow and be like everyone else. Trudi spends most of her life wishing she could be taller and trying to find ways to grow. She consults a doctor and even looks for a patron saint to whom she might pray, but she finds none for dwarfs, only “St. Giles (...) a patron saint for cripples.” (...) ‘I’m not a cripple,’ she cried. (...) ‘I’m not a cripple,’ Trudi whispered” (97). Trudi’s repetition of that which she is not, “a cripple,” is but one indication of her awareness of her particular identity. Although she is painfully conscious of her difference from other people in terms of her height, Trudi gradually separates appearance from ability and acknowledges the many things that she is able to do. Instead of marking Trudi as a mere symbol of difference or loss, the narrative shows Trudi’s subjective agency to spring from her disability. In this regard Hegi foregrounds a disability-centered perspective akin to that advocated by the United States disability rights movement.

Like Oskar, Trudi uses her height to her advantage. She takes advantage of the fact that people do not remember that she is not a child. Like Oskar’s relatives, the people around Trudi say things in front of her that they do not expect her to understand. “Most
grown-ups didn’t look right at Trudi: they acted as if she were invisible and said things they would never say around other children. She found if she stayed very quite they often kept talking, disclosing far more about themselves than they realized” (72). Unlike Oskar, Trudi uses the information she learns to help herself and other people in a variety of situations. Her small physical stature makes her an unlikely, though pivotal player in several townspeople’s attempt to hide Jews. Throughout the course of the novel, Trudi realizes that although her height has made her different from other people, it has also given her special and valuable opportunities to help others. Trudi chooses to avail herself of those opportunities, and people grow to rely on her assistance and to trust her opinion.

Storytelling plays a central role in Stones From the River. Secrets and stories become a powerful presence in Trudi’s life. They are the currency through which she saves herself and other people from persecution and murder by National Socialists. In the novel stories and secrets are shown to be embedded within bodies. Trudi realizes this at a young age when she hears of a clandestine embrace between her mother and man who was not her husband. Falling onto a gravelly surface after leaving the encounter, fragments of gravel became embedded in her mother’s knee. “Carefully the girl skimmed her fingers across her mother’s knee. It was smooth; the skin had closed across the tiny wounds like the surface of the river after you toss stones into the waves. Only you knew they were there. Unless you told” (31). Once embodied, stories take on bodily attributes: “They fascinated her, those secrets, and she hoarded them, repeating them to herself before she went to sleep, feeling them stretch and grow into stories” (72). Thus embedded, secrets are portrayed to render their host at once particularly vulnerable and potentially powerful.
Unlike in *Die Blechtrommel*, where disability functions as insight but continues to indicate deviance and difference, disability in this novel largely indicates sameness and the commonality of human experience. Disability invites identification as Trudi learns the variety of ways in which other people consider themselves “different,” as Trudi does: “Georg Weiler was different from other children, too. A boy who looked like a girl” (66). Another friend, Eva, tells Trudi “I’m different too.” She pulled up her undershirt. A dark red birthmark, shaped like an irregular flower, spread across her thin chest. (...) “It’s beautiful, [Trudi] whispered” (104). Eva’s birthmark is a literal stigma, a visual, but in Eva’s case, concealable marker of difference. Trudi learns throughout the course of the narrative that virtually everyone has some stigma to manage.\(^{115}\) Trudi’s greatest insight is into the unfair distribution of social power with which one might manage stigma. Trudi’s story becomes one of advocacy for the rights of stigmatized people.

Readers are invited to identify with Trudi, even as Trudi learns to identify with those people she believed to be “normal” when she thought herself aberrant:

Still, on days when the light fell just so and memory offered a brief lull, you could almost convince yourself that the war had never happened. You’d grasp at the good moments and tell yourself all was well, and if you didn’t look too closely for too long, you could deceive yourself, along with all the others who had been broken in some way, altered. And then just when it felt that your life was back to the way it had been, something would happen to remind you of your brokenness. (459)

Hegi extends this invitation to identification to perpetrators of Nazi crimes. The National Socialists who would violently annihilate any person perceived to be “inferior”

\(^{115}\) Here I refer to Goffmann’s work on the “management of a spoiled identity.”
are portrayed throughout the novel to be human beings who engage in violence against other human beings. That it might be possible to view Nazis and Nazi sympathizers as fragile human beings—and Trudi does—by no means exonerates their crimes. To the contrary, Stones From the River illustrates the capacity of human beings to “manage” stigma through the violent oppression of other human beings or through the recognition of “difference” as that which human beings have in common.

Stones From the River extends the work of Die Blechtrommel in positing disability as insight, however Hegi’s novel at times also portrays disability as a symptom of the burden of Germany’s Nazi past. This tendency toward metaphor has the potential to contradict Hegi’s primary attention to disability as a position of subjective insight. Toward the end of the novel, Trudi speaks of her desire to narrate a “heile Welt— an intact world—and leave out anything that might hurt” (522). She concludes instead that narrating the collective disability of the German legacy would best resist the silence “that she’d fought all along” (522). In this regard, Stones From the River offers less reflection than Die Blechtrommel on the historical and cultural continuities linking the Nazi period and the post-war era. Instead, brief passages at the end of Stones From the River may be understood to appropriate human suffering and suggest a cause-and-effect relationship between National Socialist crimes and a disabled national German psyche. In capitulating to a fixed metaphoric portrayal of disability, the novel compromises its original attempt to construct disability as a locus of subjective agency. This potentially reductive and problematic conclusion differs substantially from Grass’s Blechtrommel, which ultimately posits an ambiguous, and consequently irreducible disabled character and narrator. Thus,
although *Stones From the River* offers much to challenge traditional notions of subjective agency and metaphor, the novel finally reifies the very notion of disability as brokenness that it seeks to dispute.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: DISABILITY AS LIMINALITY

This dissertation has examined the function and portrayal of disability in German literature in a variety of genres and from a variety of literary-historical periods. Throughout my analysis I have maintained a politically and historically self-conscious perspective, acknowledging the significant degree to which the American Disability Rights movement has influenced my readings. Although this entailed the methodological hurdle of crossing national and historical borders, I believe it was nonetheless important to take that leap, for my position of critical insight allowed me to examine both conceptual and historical differences in the construction of disability as well as the ways in which disability functions in literature from various historical periods. My perspective has also raised a complex of analytical questions. I have been most interested in examining the tension between the lived experience of disability and the cultural signification of disability. To that end I have posed a variety of questions which this dissertation has only begun to answer. The most compelling issues that remain include determining the ways scholars might begin to assess the production and function of metaphors of disability and how they might assess the relative weight of discourses informing disability. Additional areas for
further analysis concern the degree to which major artistic and cultural movements such as the Enlightenment or Expressionism rely on a discourse of disability.

My study identifies the centrality of disability to a broad range of social discourses and institutions, including, but not limited to nationhood, citizenship, and religion. I found disability to be most often configured as undesirable difference, abnormality, and deviance within those discourses. My study also identifies those areas where disability is simultaneously configured as a perspective or as a social identity. Thus I have explored disability as a mode of liminality, as a “threshold” discourse integrally related to other discourses of human identity and lived experience. I have discovered that discourses of gender, race, and class are deeply tied to unreflected and ahistorical notions of the normalized body. Only recently have scholars in the field of Disability Studies begun to uncover the ableist assumptions inherent in other discourses. My project has attempted to build on disability-centered scholarship and uncover ableist assumptions within the context of German culture and literature. In particular I have examined disability as a gendered trope, focusing on male literary figures who have acquired disabilities in conjunction with national wars.

Of all the primary works under consideration here, Günter Grass’s novel Die Blechtrommel provides perhaps the best model for examining the function of disability in literature. The focus of my inquiry was on the ambiguity of Oskar Matzerath, both as a narrator and as a character. Precisely because of the ambiguity surrounding Oskar’s disabilities, Oskar’s portrayal allows for many kinds of insights. On one level it is possible to view Oskar as a metaphoric character, although it must be reiterated that Oskar can be
a metaphor for many things, including resistance to National Socialism, the stunted ethics of the German *Kleinbürgerturn* before, during, and after the Second World War; and post-war denial of guilt over the crimes of National Socialism. Yet a more nuanced reading of Oskar identifies his disabilities as insight into the configuration of culture. Because disability as insight does not negate Oskar's capacity to function metaphorically, it is possible to describe his portrayal as a dynamic metaphor that is capable of marking human difference and effecting social change. Disability in this novel functions both as a catalyst and as a lens for reflecting on the past, present, and future.

Leonhard Frank's collection of novellas *Der Mensch ist gut* professes the original goodness of the human being, yet the novellas show that misguided values culminate in war and endanger the human being. Those soldiers who are disabled in war serve as punishing reminders of a fallen society, and Frank seeks to remove the circumstances that disabled them. Frank shows that the *Kriegskrüppel* no longer measure up to cultural body ideals and social expectations of bodily performance, but he does not question the validity of those norms. He instrumentalizes disability in order to protest the war that causes disability, and in the process he reifies the very norms that soldiers wounded in war cannot approach. Frank's achievement is to recognize previously unrecognized suffering and to question the German people's preoccupation with winning the First World War. Arguing for the eradication of war, the novellas assert that the removal of war-incurred disability will be the surest sign commemorating the arrival of the new age. In this new age Frank envisions that the human being will be restored to his originally good condition. Thus the
disabilities presented in the novellas function as a structural barrier to Frank’s notion of
rebirth.

Achim von Arnim’s novella Der tolle Invalide auf dem Fort Ratonneau
instrumentalizes mental disability in order to grapple with notions of social and political
causality. In the text Arnim’s Francoeur exhibits unexplainable, uncontrollable behavior
for which a remedy must be found. The novella problematizes many possible reasons for
Francoeur’s insanity, ranging from physiological causes to divine or diabolical
intervention. Perhaps the novella’s most significant contribution to the discourse of
disability is that it questions the long-standing tradition that holds supernatural influence to
be the most likely source of disability. More significantly, however, the novella
foregrounds issues of causality and ultimately problematizes perceived causal relationships
between a disabled individual and the well-being of the social whole. The novella situates
disability at the intersection of competing social discourses. Thus situated, disability allows
Arnim to contemplate issues of political and experiential causality from a variety of angles.
By conjuring such broad and seemingly disparate discourses of politics, religion,
nationality, and marriage, disability in this novella suggests that causality cannot be
conclusively ascertained. Thus we see a significant discursive shift from the earlier
Enlightenment text under consideration, Minna von Barnhelm. Arnim’s Francoeur is far
different from Lessing’s Tellheim, who can in virtually every instance identify and
ultimately accommodate the cause of his disability and his social and financial burdens. In
that Francoeur cannot, Der tolle Invalide shows a move away from the empiricism and
rationality of the Enlightenment toward the combination of myth, supernaturalism, and fairy tale so prevalent in Romantic literature.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's drama Minna von Barnhelm ultimately shows that a disability need not impinge on the value of the human being or interfere with the development of an enlightened human subject. This pronouncement must be qualified somewhat, for the play also clearly presents disability to be a function of class and gender. Tellheim believes his paralyzed arm to be one factor contributing to his sense of compromised honor. Tellheim also declares himself to be unworthy to be a husband to Minna, articulating a link between sexuality and disability. The ultimate resolution that is achieved for Tellheim comes through the privileges of his class.

New questions posed by this reading of the play concern its potential to exemplify or critique Enlightenment principles of reason, rationality, and embodiment. In other words, does disability in Minna von Barnhelm reveal new aspects of the Enlightenment that Lessing's better-known dramas Emilia Galotti (1772) or Nathan der Weise (1779) do not? Another important question that emerges is whether or not the enlightened man can be sick. Although more research into this question is warranted, I submit from my reading of the play here that Lessing will ultimately allow for the possibility of an enlightenment figure who is sick. Whether the Enlightenment as a larger movement will allow for sickness remains to be seen.

My readings of these four literary texts have ultimately revealed continuities and discontinuities in the discursive function of the concept of disability over two hundred years of German literature and culture. Disability functions in each of these literary works
in very different ways which have heretofore gone unaddressed in scholarly analysis. This study has attempted to "disable" the better-known discourses of race, gender, and class as they structure the texts under consideration. To this end I have attempted to ascertain the dimensions of disability present in each of the works ultimately to gain insight into its discursive construction and its function in culture. Although it is certainly important to identify inaccurate stereotypes in literature, my aim has not been simply to dismiss stereotypes as untrue, but instead to analyze the construction of those images by examining the historical concepts informing them. In the process I have interrogated the ostensibly stable category of able-bodiedness. I have discovered that war and work share a notion of able-bodiedness that springs from naturalized assumptions of "wholeness," and that despite some development, a resilient and often unqualified notion of human wholeness appears in the primary texts under consideration. By exploring literary and cultural metaphors of disability I have examined disability as a language through which other issues are articulated. I hope finally to have laid the groundwork for more research into the historical and cultural construction and function of the disability category.


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