

**Neoliberal Governmentality in the Red-Green Era:
Tracing Facets of the Entrepreneurial Self in Three Contemporary German Novels**

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

This dissertation examines three contemporary German novels and their respective representations of the Red-Green era. It focuses on the discourses to which these novels refer in order to shed light on the consequences and implications of Red-Green politics for the subjectification of individuals during this time. When Gerhard Schröder replaced Helmut Kohl in 1998 as Chancellor of Germany, there was a noticeable shift towards neoliberal policies that has since received much attention in scholarly studies and public-political debates about its impact on Germany's economy, social security system, political party system, and institutional structure. Taking a new approach to understanding the politics of the Red-Green coalition, I argue that its impact is noticeable not only in the political sphere, but that this impact also permeates all levels of society, in particular concepts of selfhood, and that it has found its way into contemporary literary works. As my particular interest lies in investigating how these literary works process the consequences and implications of Red-Green politics for the subjectification of individuals during this time, the novels I selected situate themselves explicitly within the Red-Green era mostly through references to some of its most well-known labour market measures, namely the *Ich-AG*, the *Mittelstandsoffensive*, and employability training programs. Analysing the neoliberal discourses to which these novels refer and (re-) constructing the particular sets of knowledge, truths, and norms that enable neoliberal governing practices allow me to shed light on the mechanisms of individuals' subjectification through the politics of the Red-Green coalition.

Of particular importance during the Red-Green era are the discourses surrounding entrepreneurialism as they construct the market as a structuring principle of society in which all individuals are called upon as entrepreneurs. For the examination of neoliberal governing

discourses, I draw both on Michel Foucault's theory of neoliberal governmentality and Ulrich Bröckling's conceptualization of the entrepreneurial self, an idealized and hence unachievable self-image that addresses individuals as entrepreneurs of their own lives. Foucault's theory allows going beyond an understanding of neoliberalism as a political theory of free market policies but views it as an *act of governing* that expands the notion of the government of others to include the government of the self according to the principles of entrepreneurialism and the market, hence taking into account the participatory role of the subject. Bröckling's conceptualization draws on Foucault's theory to examine the subjectification of individuals as entrepreneurial selves, that is, as individuals who are constantly stimulated to act as enterprising subjects.

The literary analysis of the novels – Ralph Hammerthaler's *Alles bestens* (2002), Reinhard Liebermann's *Das Ende des Kanzlers. Der finale Rettungsschuss* (2004), and Joachim Zelter's *Schule der Arbeitslosen* (2006) – shows they cast light on various ways in which specific forms of subjectivity are promoted and enabled through neoliberal governing practices. More specifically, I illustrate that the protagonists in each novel represent three different facets of the entrepreneurial self, namely the enthusiast, the melancholic, and the social lemming that Ulrich Bröckling identifies in his typology of the entrepreneurial self (2008). While the nameless protagonist in *Alles bestens* embraces the market as a universal structuring principle and a metaphor for his own life, the protagonist Hans Hansmann in *Das Ende des Kanzlers* embraces free market principles, yet fails to fully understand the demands of the market and his own position within it. By contrast, Karla Meier in *Schule der Arbeitslosen* refuses to accept yet nevertheless follows the demands implicit in the image of the entrepreneurial self.

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1 Introduction

Since Gerhard Schröder replaced Helmut Kohl in 1998 after 16 years in office as Chancellor of Germany and Germany was governed for the first time since unification by the Social Democratic and Green Parties, there has been much scholarly and public-political inquiry into the impact of Red-Green politics on Germany, particularly on Germany's economy. The main focus of these inquiries is to understand the institutional, party-political, and economic shifts brought about by the Red-Green coalition, which have often been identified as promoting neoliberal practices that focus on market deregulation and reducing Germany's system of social security.

This dissertation takes a different approach to understanding the impact of Red-Green politics and argues that this impact is noticeable not only in the political sphere but also permeates all levels of society, particularly concepts of selfhood, and as such has found its way into contemporary literary works as well. It examines select novels and their respective representations of the Red-Green era, focusing on the discourses to which these novels refer in order to (re-)construct particular sets of knowledge, truths, and norms that enable neoliberal governing practices, which shed light on the consequences and implications of Red-Green politics for the subjectification of individuals during this time. For this examination, I draw on Michel Foucault's theory of neoliberal governmentality and Ulrich Bröckling's conceptualization of the entrepreneurial self. Foucault's theory allows going beyond an understanding of neoliberalism as a political theory of free market policies, viewing it as an *act of governing* that expands the notion of the government of others to include the government of the self according to the principles of entrepreneurialism and the market, hence taking into account the participatory role of the subject. Bröckling's conceptualization draws on

Foucault's theory to examine the subjectification of individuals as entrepreneurial selves, that is, as individuals who are constantly stimulated to act as enterprising subjects. Of particular importance during the Red-Green era are the discourses surrounding entrepreneurialism as they construct the market as a structuring principle of society in which all individuals are called upon as entrepreneurs. Through the analysis of three select novels – Ralph Hammerthaler's *Alles bestens* (2002), Reinhard Liebermann's *Das Ende des Kanzlers. Der finale Rettungsschuss* (2004), and Joachim Zelter's *Schule der Arbeitslosen* (2006) – I will show how these literary works cast light on the ways in which specific forms of subjectivity are promoted and enabled through neoliberal governing practices. The three novels selected for this dissertation process the politics of the Red-Green coalition under Gerhard Schröder as a noticeably neoliberal government and construct their protagonists as characters who adopt some of the subject positions available to individuals within the discourses of neoliberalism.

This scholarly approach to the formation of subject positions and subjectivities enabled by neoliberal governing practices and processed in contemporary literary works is novel. It stands out from an existing body of scholarly literature that examines “work” and “economy” as literary motifs in contemporary German fiction. Since the rise of the so-called New Economy in the mid-1990s and its fall in 2000 as a result of the burst of the Internet bubble, a considerable number of literary works published in Germany deal with an increasingly deregulated market economy and its impact on social, gender, and class structures. Among the most prominent works are Rainer Merkel's *Das Jahr der Wunder* (2001), Ernst-Wilhelm Händler's *Wenn wir sterben* (2002), Anne Weber's *Gold im Mund* (2005), and Katharina Hacker's *Die Habenichtse* (2006). While many scholarly examinations of these works emphasize the permeation of everyday life through the economic sphere – manifest in

“Sprachmustern digitaler Medien” (Chilense 297) or the transfer of “berufliche Denk- und Handlungsmuster ... auf die Familie” (300) – they fall short of investigating the complex mechanisms of the relationship between the economic sphere and the individual, simply assuming that the powerful economic sphere imposes itself onto the powerless individual. This assumption, found in most scholarly contributions that deal with these works including the recent *Seminar* special theme issue “Globalization, German Literature, and the New Economy” (Corry and von Dirke 2011), is based on the acceptance of the common notion that neoliberalism is a synonym for free-market economy or capitalism, a notion that is challenged by Foucault’s theory of neoliberal governmentality. Because scholarship has, so far, neglected to challenge the notion of neoliberalism itself as it is processed in contemporary German literature, it remains implicitly affirmative of the discourses of neoliberalism it examines, hence losing some of its critical potential. This dissertation will show that it is at this scholarly junction that Foucault’s theory of neoliberal governmentality opens a different avenue for the examination of neoliberal discourses as they are processed in works of literary fiction. While my analysis focuses on a detailed examination of three contemporary German novels, these are only the first steps of a promising further exploration that is able to scrutinize cultural artefacts through the lens of Foucault’s theory of governmentality so as to uncover the pervasiveness and diversity of neoliberal governing practices far beyond the era of the Red-Green coalition in Germany.

In chapter 2, I will begin my analysis with an examination of the politics of the Red-Green coalition under Gerhard Schröder as an example of neoliberal governmentality. Using Michel Foucault’s history and theory of neoliberal governmentality, I will situate Schröder’s government in a historico-political context of government not as an institution but as an act of

governing. I will show how Foucault traces this phenomenon back to the advent of modernity and a generalization of Christian pastoral power that reinterpreted the formerly religious goals of happiness, salvation, and prosperity within the political context of the state and illustrates its significance for the emergence of liberalism as a distinctly new form of thinking about and exercising power that insists on the limitation of government and hence the deregulation of the market. As a contemporary variant of liberalism, neoliberalism has shaped Western societies since the end of World War II and continued to shape Germany, as I will show, during the era of the Red-Green coalition. Because of my particular interest in examining the way Red-Green politics contribute to the subjectification of individuals as enterprising subjects during this time, and how contemporary German literature processes and speaks to this phenomenon, my methodological considerations for the following literary analysis draw not only on Foucault's theoretical framework but also on the work of sociologist Ulrich Bröckling, whose concept of the "entrepreneurial self" examines the subjectification of individuals through neoliberal governing practices (*Das unternehmerische Selbst* 2007).

The three chapters following my theoretical and methodological considerations each examine one of the novels, all of which weave themselves into the fabric of Red-Green politics through concrete reference to some of its labour market measures and, I argue, construct protagonists who at the same time attempt and are urged through these measures to act as entrepreneurial selves. The novels cast light on various facets of the entrepreneurial self that together represent a spectrum of possible subject positions offered to individuals in a society governed by neoliberal principles.

In chapter 3, I analyse Ralph Hammerthaler's novel *Alles bestens*, arguing that the protagonist can be understood as a literary embodiment of the *Ich-AG*, and that his blind

striving for the idealized image of the entrepreneur can be interpreted as his self-conception as a corporation. Before a detailed analysis of the novel, chapter 3.1 will shed light on the discourse of the *Ich-AG* by outlining its significance not only as a government program but also as a notion that constructs individuals as enterprising subjects who wholeheartedly embrace the free-market principles of self-responsibility and self-control as well as the limitation of government as a provider of welfare. My analysis in chapter 3.2 will show that *Alles bestens* comments on the detrimental impact of this responsabilisation on the individual by construing a character who relentlessly calculates the cost and benefit of every action and exercises self-responsibility as a masculinized and entrepreneurialized individual to the point of social isolation and ultimately physical and mental decay of his self.

Chapter 4 examines Reinhard Liebermann's novel *Das Ende des Kanzlers. Der finale Rettungsschuss* and argues that the protagonist Hans Hansmann is portrayed as a hybrid literary figure who oscillates between a mercantile self and an entrepreneurial self and whose self-understanding as a self-employed *Mittelständler* draws on both bourgeois and market-centred principles. In keeping with a parallel structure of all literary analysis chapters, chapter 4.1 illustrates the significance of the *Mittelstandsoffensive* – the Red-Green labour market measure explicitly referenced in *Das Ende des Kanzlers* – as a government program that aims at stimulating the desire of German *Mittelständler* to take entrepreneurial risks in an effort to pursue the economic growth of their businesses. In chapter 4.2, I will examine Hans Hansmann as a masculinized, stereotypically German, and bourgeois *Mittelständler* whose inability to resolve this struggle, along with the subsequent bankruptcy of his drugstore, can be understood as the novel's commentary on the destructive implications of the measure's responsabilisation

of the individual and deresponsibilisation of the state for the *Mittelständler* who is forced to negotiate this perhaps insurmountable transition towards an increasingly free market economy.

In chapter 5, I examine Joachim Zelter's novel *Schule der Arbeitslosen*, in particular the character of Karla Meier, and argue that her portrayal allows the novel to expose the mercilessness and claim to absoluteness of rationality of the market as it manifests itself in the Red-Green coalition's appeal for individuals' incessant *Weiterqualifizierung*. I will then provide an analysis of the notion of *Weiterqualifizierung* in chapter 5.1, arguing that it creates both the need and possibility for individuals to regard themselves as responsible for continuously improving their human capital as entrepreneurial selves. In chapter 5.2, I will return to an analysis of *Schule der Arbeitslosen* and show that the feminized character of Karla Meier is both pathologized and responsabilized for her failure and disinterest in improving herself to adapt to the demands of the market.

In my last chapter, I will provide a concluding comparison of my findings that will trace the structure of my literary analysis. In chapter 6.1, I will juxtapose the examined measures of the Red-Green coalition as means of responsabilisation and their implications for the characters' subjectivities vis-à-vis the notion of the entrepreneurial self that I identified in my literary analyses. Subsequently, in chapter 6.2, I will compare the various subject positions embodied by the novels' characters, suggesting that they provide a sense of the vast spectrum of the images of the entrepreneurial self. Finally, chapter 6.3 will illustrate the significance of gender constructions and their interconnection with the notion of the entrepreneurial self.

2 Neoliberal Governmentality: Gerhard Schröder's *Neue Mitte*

In this chapter, I will first illustrate that the politics of the Red-Green government under Gerhard Schröder exhibit a shift from the SPD's traditional social democratic principles towards its alignment with neoliberal governing principles. Going beyond the already existing scholarly and public-political characterization of Schröder's government as a neoliberal government, I will show that an examination of Red-Green politics through the lens of Michel Foucault's history and theory of neoliberal governmentality yields novel insights into an understanding of its powerful mechanisms that affect individual and collective choices and its popularity in the Western world. Subsequently, I will present my methodological considerations for my following literary analysis that create a valuable link between Foucault's theoretical framework and the work of sociologist Ulrich Bröckling who draws on Foucault's theory to examine the effects and implications of contemporary neoliberal governing on the individual. I will conclude this chapter by illustrating that the novels I selected process these implications for the individual and serve as a literary field for experimentation where various possible subject positions vis-à-vis neoliberal governing practices and their implications for the subject are scrutinized.

“[W]e want a society which celebrates successful entrepreneurs just as it does artists and footballers” (Blair and Schröder 165). What seems merely a stylistic device to emphasize the importance of entrepreneurialism in the politics of the New Centre in fact is symptomatic of a far-reaching reconceptualization of subjectivity and the nation state. When Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder drew this comparison in their joint position paper “Europe: The Third Way/ Die Neue Mitte” in 1999, they presented it as a necessity for a growing and prospering economy that “must promote a go-ahead mentality and a new entrepreneurial spirit at all levels

of society” (165). Despite differences both in terminology and outlook, Blair’s “Third Way” and Schröder’s *Neue Mitte* both aim at reforming social democracy by ridding themselves of negatively-connotated features of the welfare state, such as state regulation and the creation of dependencies. Instead, they advocate the search to find, quite literally, a third way between “the extremes of free market economics on the one hand and a centralized welfare state economy on the other” (Hombach 1). Simultaneously, according to Blair and Schröder, the welfare state as it had previously existed in Germany and the UK must undergo changes that primarily encourage an increase in employment. To achieve this goal, “public sector bureaucracy at all levels must be reduced, performance targets formulated, the quality of public service rigorously monitored, and bad performance rooted out” (164). Implied in this political program is a neoliberal criticism of the welfare state that is consequently reinterpreted within economic terms. From the neoliberal perspective that manifests itself in this position paper, citizens are constructed as active political subjects who take initiative, make choices, and fulfil their potential as entrepreneurs, not as passive and dependent recipients of social benefits. Correspondingly, the nation state is seen as enabling a market-driven political economy by removing policies that are regarded as constraining obstacles, such as state regulation and the undervaluation of economic performance.

Neoliberal governments have been widespread in many countries, notably since the late 1970s in the United Kingdom and the United States under Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. When Helmut Kohl became Chancellor of Germany in 1982, he also attempted a neoliberal reform of German politics. In his first governmental statement in October 1982, he announced a shift in the relationship between the state and its citizens, from welfare to self-responsibility: “Die Frage der Zukunft lautet nicht, wieviel mehr der Staat für seine Bürger tun

kann. Die Frage der Zukunft lautet, wie sich Freiheit, Dynamik und Selbstverantwortung neu entfalten können” (Kohl). Despite the attempts of his government to promote “Selbst- und Nächstenhilfe der Bürger füreinander” while in fact proclaiming the dismantling of the welfare state, Kohl’s neoliberal reforms were actually considered too modest (König, Blume, and Luig 88) and ultimately unsuccessful (Prasad 163, Zohnöfer 141). When Gerhard Schröder replaced Kohl after 16 years in office, the new government surpassed Kohl’s attempts and introduced policies that enabled a much more profound neoliberal redirection of German politics. Under Schröder’s Red-Green coalition, Germany experienced a peak in neoliberal politics that aimed at pervading all aspects of life: A neoliberalization of society.

Central to Schröder’s neoliberal politics is the promotion of entrepreneurialism. Beyond representing an essential element of Red-Green politics and policy-making, it is also an explicit and all-encompassing model of individual subjectivity. Despite Schröder and Blair’s proclamation that “the past two decades of neoliberal laissez-faire are over” – an unambiguous allusion to Kohl’s attempts at neoliberal reform – the paper’s emphasis of the notion of entrepreneurialism and deregulation makes evident an orientation towards a neoliberal free-market economy. In fact, this statement is accurate insofar as Red-Green politics advocate a neoliberalized social market economy, not neoliberal laissez-faire. State intervention, in particular regarding the provision of basic social security, was part of Schröder’s political program. The position paper makes clear, however, that welfare is nevertheless seen as an impediment to economic growth, and society is constructed as a collective of individuals with values that ought to support a prospering economy. Schröder and Blair envision Germany and Great Britain as nation states in which individual achievement and responsibility on the one

hand, and less market regulation on the other will become the defining characteristics of these societies.

Fairness and social justice, liberty and equality of opportunity, solidarity and responsibility to others – these values are timeless. Social democracy will never sacrifice them. To make these values relevant to today’s world requires realistic and forward-looking policies capable of meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century. [...] The belief that the state should address damaging market failures all too often led to a disproportionate expansion of the government’s reach and the bureaucracy that went with it. The balance between the individual and the collective was distorted. Values that are important to citizens, such as personal achievement and success, entrepreneurial spirit, individual responsibility and community spirit, were too often subordinated to universal social safeguards. [...] Companies must have room for manoeuvre to take advantage of improved economic conditions and seize new opportunities: they must not be gagged by rules and regulations. (Blair and Schröder 159-62)

This short excerpt from the Blair-Schröder Paper exemplifies the politicians’ endorsement of neoliberal maxims as guiding principles of their political programs in Britain, Germany, and as members of the European Union; their statements make clear that they do not reject neoliberal ideas, but rather embrace them. Regardless of whether Blair and Schröder declared the end of neoliberal laissez-faire in an attempt to distance themselves effectively from the centre-right politics of their predecessors or whether they said this for other strategic reasons, their intent was not to disengage from a neoliberal approach to government policies. The declared values of social democracy – freedom, equality, social justice, and solidarity – that are commonly conceptualized within the context of the welfare state are reinterpreted with an emphasis on individual entrepreneurial success as part of a deregulated liberal market economy. Schröder and Blair claim that the extension of market rationality to the all-encompassing spheres of the

individual and the collective would restore their perceived lost balance by placing greater emphasis on individual responsibility and less emphasis on state responsibility. According to this logic, state intervention is seen as inappropriate because it means an overstepping of state boundaries that impedes the economic self-determination of individuals and companies. The collective social security provided by the state is thus not understood as a manifestation of community spirit but rather as a threat to the prosperity of individuals who form these communities. This emphasis on a deregulated market and entrepreneurship as well as equality of opportunity as a part of individual responsibility reflects an adherence to neoliberal values despite Blair and Schröder's attempt to assure the audience of the opposite. The reason for such caution might be to avoid the negative connotations commonly associated with the term neoliberalism and the potential consequence of losing the confidence of voters. Its underlying concepts, however, are clearly identifiable in the rhetoric of the Blair-Schröder paper.

One of the harshest critics of Schröder's New Centre was sociologist and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu. In a dialogue with Günter Grass, which was published shortly after Bourdieu's death in 2002 in *The New Left Review*, he argues that neoliberal policies have recently become such common practice in Europe because of the particular governments and politicians who choose to advocate and execute them in the name of socialism. "The strength of neoliberalism lies in the fact that it has been implemented, at least in Europe, by people who label themselves socialists. Schroeder, Blair, Jospin all invoke socialism in order to carry out neoliberal policies" (Bourdieu). His observation that Schröder, alongside his British and French Social Democratic colleagues, only posits the modernization of Social Democracy while in fact carrying out neoliberal practices is insightful. It problematizes Schröder's politics

on a more global level and invites questions regarding its implicit understanding of the roles citizens are expected to fulfil within political practice.

Strongly influenced by Marx, Bourdieu adds that “social liberalism, Blairism, the Third Way – these pseudo-inventions are all ways of internalizing the dominant outlook of the dominant powers within the dominated themselves. [...] We are perpetually invaded and besieged by the dominant discourse” (Bourdieu). Bourdieu’s understanding of discourse in general and the discourse of neoliberalism in particular is problematic for several reasons. His view of neoliberalism as a single discourse implies that he frames it as a homogenous entity with a cohesive and also controllable structure. Doing so, Bourdieu appears to overlook those elements of neoliberalism that are unstated or less visible. It seems that precisely this inconspicuous quality of many neoliberal ideas allows for their even greater impact on the self-understanding of individuals, groups, and societies without this effect ever becoming explicit. He identifies neoliberalism as a dominant discourse that obscures a non-dominant discourse of a political reality uncorrupted by neoliberalism. Accordingly, this dominant discourse needs to be revealed so that society can be free of its internalized dominant viewpoint; in other words, society needs to rid itself of a “false consciousness,” a Marxist argument that views material and capitalist ideas as forces that drive society towards a state of misinformation. In order to attain what Bourdieu calls a “social Europe,” he demands the formation of a European social movement positioned left of social democratic governments as an indispensable force against neoliberal dominance. From Bourdieu’s perspective, “social gains have historically come from active struggles,” which he calls for in this dialogue with Günter Grass.

Behind Bourdieu’s notion of a neoliberal discourse lies his own belief in the truth of socialist principles such as class struggle and base and superstructure and in the benefits of

their implementation. By positioning himself within the discourse of European socialism and using it as a point of departure for his criticism of neoliberalism, Bourdieu's argument and reasoning remain strongly influenced by his evident wish to replace one system of thought with another. Hence, Bourdieu's commentary neither achieves a deeper understanding of neoliberalism and its powerful mechanisms that affect individual and collective choices, nor does it shed light on why and how it has become such a powerful and popular phenomenon not only in Europe, but throughout the Western world. What is needed at this point is an investigation of why neoliberalism is attractive to governments and, more importantly, to individuals, as well as how individuals and societies that are driven by neoliberal mechanisms are affected by them.

Going beyond perspectives that see neoliberalism merely as a theory of entrepreneurialism, privatization, and market deregulation (Harvey 2), or, as Bourdieu points out, as a dominant and oppressive discourse, my understanding of neoliberalism follows Michel Foucault's discussion of neoliberalism in his theory of governmentality. Neoliberalism, according to Foucault, is not a theory or a particular set of government policies but an *act of governing* that expands the notion of the government of others to include the government of the self. It is a "rationalization of governmental practices" (Burchell 21) in that its principles permeate not only government laws and programs but also extend to individuals, groups, companies, and institutions, all of which share a common neoliberal rationality, that is, a neoliberal way of thinking, feeling, and reasoning. This neoliberal rationality, Foucault argues, aims at "a general formalization of the powers of the state and the organization of society on the basis of the market economy" (*Biopolitics* 117), whereby "the essential thing of the market is ... competition" (118). Of importance here is the simultaneous significance of the market

economy for the regulation of both state and society. Therefore, an orientation towards the market as a site of buying and selling informs not only this formal version of the market but is generalized to all forms of conduct. “Everything for which human beings attempt to realize their ends, from marriage, to crime, to expenditures on children, can be understood ‘economically’ according to a particular calculation of cost for benefit” (Read 28). This phenomenon is commonly referred to as “Ökonomisierung des Sozialen” (Lemke 254), the “economization of society” (Hamann 47). It redefines any activity in that it can be an investment in maximizing one’s performance and productivity in the hope that this leads to a greater material or personal benefit, and ultimately to the improvement of one’s happiness, success, or any other desired outcome. Because of its promised and perhaps achieved effect on individuals’ well-being, Foucault argues, neoliberalism encourages and enables the participation of individuals in neoliberal practices to form governmental programs. Hence, individuals themselves contribute to a system in which they are both governed and govern themselves according to neoliberal concepts. Instead of examining Schröder’s government as a site where neoliberal policies are designed, carried out, and imposed on citizens, an analysis grounded in the theory of governmentality creates the possibility of understanding it as a “versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself” (Foucault, “About the Beginning” 203-4). Viewing government as an act of governing and not a localized site of policy making allows widening its scope and taking into consideration all techniques and forms of knowledge that act on individuals and with which individuals act upon themselves. This understanding of governing also shows that the hitherto sufficient oppositions of “state and civil society, economy and family, public and private, coercion and freedom” may

be rather “clumsy and inept” (Barry, Osborne, and Rose 2). These oppositions imply that the boundaries between these spheres are indeed firm, true and valid, rendering their transgression an inappropriate act that violates allegedly natural facts. The theory of governmentality opens up the possibility of questioning the natural validity of these boundaries by suggesting that the governing of others and the self occurs across all of them.

Although neoliberalism seems to be about governing less as it advocates deregulation and the free choice of the enterprising individual, it is rather quite the opposite. With the demand to reduce state intervention and the simultaneous promise to ensure proper improvements in the areas of employment, family, and the market comes the necessity of a “proliferation of a dispersed array of programs and mechanisms, decoupled from the direct activities of the ‘public’ powers” (Rose 155), which lead individuals and groups onto desired paths and enable conduct that is deemed appropriate for these areas. This range of programs and mechanisms extends to all spheres, such as health, education, arts and culture, technology, urban planning, and science. Limiting the governments’ ability to intervene and regulate the lives of its citizens directly requires what Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose term “government at a distance” (“Introduction” 16), an approach that ensures the alignment of individuals, groups, and institutions with the values and priorities of the state, not against their wants and needs but through them. The theory of governmentality examines this act of governing that attempts to “shape, sculpt, mobilize and work through the choice, desires, aspirations, needs, wants and lifestyles of individuals and groups” (Dean 12) in order to enable conduct that is compliant with the state’s objectives.

2.1 Michel Foucault's History of Governmentality

Foucault coins the term *gouvernementalité* and develops its conceptualization in a series of lectures entitled *Sécurité, Territoire, Population*, which he held in 1978 at the Collège de France in Paris as Professor of the History of Systems of Thought. By merging 'govern' and 'mentality,' Foucault underlines the semantic connection between the two concepts. He is thus able to express more precisely the perception of government not as an institution but as an act of governing as it relates to the notions of subjectivity and rationality. This means that government is not a localized institution and only executed by government officials but instead, Foucault sees government as an act of governing that each individual practices. Hence, governing is not to be mistaken for the coercion of individuals into doing what those who govern want but emphasizes the participatory role of the individual. This perspective introduces a new understanding of power in that it draws attention to power as non-hierarchical and as emanating from existing societal structures, norms, and knowledge.

Foucault differentiates three different dimensions of the term governmentality:

By this word "governmentality" I mean three things. First, by "governmentality" I understand the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument. (*Security*, 108-9)

Here, Foucault describes how the exercise of governmentality depends on various forms of political practices and institutions. This kind of governing aims at reaching the population by means that are framed by economic principles and at creating appropriate measures to secure their impact.

Second, by “governmentality” I understand the tendency, the line of force, that for a long time, and throughout the West, has constantly led towards the pre-eminence over all other types of power – sovereignty, discipline, and so on – of the type of power that we can call “government” and which has led to the development of a series of specific governmental apparatuses (appareils) on the one hand, [and, on the other] to the development of a series of knowledges (savoirs). (108)

Here, Foucault discusses the historical circumstances that enabled the emergence and domination of governmentality as a particular form of government.

Finally, by “governmentality” I think we should understand the process, or rather, the result of the process by which the state of justice of the Middle Ages became the administrative state in the fifteenth sixteenth centuries and was gradually “governmentalized.” (108-9)

Lastly, Foucault points to the history of governmentality. In his lectures on governmentality at the Collège de France in the late 1970s, he investigates various kinds of governmentality and begins his considerations with an analysis of state reason in the 16th century, which he identifies as the moment in which the phenomenon of governmentality began to emerge. Foucault’s reflections on the history of governmentality are essential to understanding that governmentality is anything but a unified governing program. It consists of a variety of movements and schools of thought with varying emphases and positions. Instead of attempting to formulate a static definition, Foucault offers a view of neoliberal governmentality in the form of neoliberal practices of governing that can be understood from an historical perspective. By approaching this concept via its historical specificity, Foucault presents an understanding of emerging views and patterns as well as arising circumstances and conditions, which, together, shed light on the underlying reasoning of neoliberal governmentality.

It is with the advent of modernity that Foucault identifies a distinctly new form of thinking about and exercising power that is intimately connected to what will be called liberalism in the era of European enlightenment. According to Foucault, this shift towards governmentality – governing as an act as opposed to governing as an institution – lies at the junction of the demise of feudalism and the move toward state centralization on the one hand, and the rise of the Reformation and religious dissidence on the other. These societal changes lead to a generalization of Christian pastoral power beyond its religious origins and brought on a shift from guiding souls to guiding humans, which entailed the political rationality becoming independent of theological principles. The formerly religious goals of happiness, salvation, and prosperity were secularized and reinterpreted within the political context of the state (Lemke, Krasmann, and Bröckling 11).

Foucault takes Niccolò Machiavelli's widely discussed and heavily criticized treatise *The Prince*, written in 1513, as a starting point for his theoretical considerations. He considers Machiavelli's text as a significant site where government is discussed as a general problem, that is, how to govern, how to be governed and by whom, by what means, and to what ends. Foucault chooses *The Prince* as an example for this shift because it has sparked continuous engagement with questions of government for centuries after its publication. The treatise suggests to Foucault that it is the state and state reason, and not religious belief that should be regarded as the foundation of government. Consequently, Machiavelli considers the interest of the monarch the only principle of rationality needed to justify the act of governing.

Because Machiavelli's ultimate concern was still the sovereign's ability to keep his principality, Foucault examines some writers of anti-Machiavellian literature that expand on the definition of governor to include, for example, the head of a family or the teacher of a

student alongside the monarch of a state. He draws on a series of educational texts by François de La Mothe Le Vayer (1651-1658) intended for the pedagogical formation of young Louis XIV, in which he describes three fundamental types of government. Differentiating the concept of government according to the subject to be governed and a particular discipline that informs it, de La Mothe Le Vayer identifies the act of governing a family as economy, as “the correct manner of managing individuals, goods, and wealth, within the family (which a good father is expected to do in relation to his wife, children, and servants) and of making the family fortunes prosper“ (Foucault, “Governmentality” 92). He integrates this understanding of economy as the proper guiding of a family into a typology that regards the art of self-government as morality and the art of governing a state as politics. This typology reinterprets the *act of governing* as an *art of governing* because of the complex integration of all governmental forms: A person who wishes to govern a state well must first learn how to govern himself as well as his goods and his estate; conversely, within a well-run state, heads of families will know how to properly govern their families as well as their goods and estates to ensure their prosperity, and individuals will behave as they should. Establishing this continuity of governing subjects – either in an upward direction from the individual to the state or in a downward direction from the state to the individual – is an important task in the art of government because it links all forms of power with each other in a way that emphasizes both their interconnectedness and impact on each other. It is this understanding of economy as a way of governing not only a state but also the property, wealth, the family, and the self that Foucault refers to in his theory of governmentality. This concept of continuity illustrates once more Foucault’s focus on governing as an act as opposed to concepts of government as an institution.

In this discourse on government, economy as the governing of a family plays a central role. Its proper functioning is understood as a vital factor for both the proper education of the governors and the governed and for the prosperity of the state. It thus becomes, Foucault argues, the goal of the art of government to apply this knowledge of economy to governing a state. It is this consideration of introducing economy into political practice that he considers essential in establishing the art of government. In the same way that a father is expected to guide his wife, children, servants, and wealth, Foucault argues, a state has “to apply economy, to set up an economy at the level of the entire state, which means exercising towards its inhabitants, and the wealth and behaviour of each and all, a form of surveillance and control as attentive as that of the head of the family over his household and his goods” (92). What is to be governed is not merely a territory; it is an aggregate of people tied up in complex relations to objects, such as material wealth, resources, and territory. Here, Foucault cites the anti-Machiavellian text *Miroir Politique*, written by Guillaume de La Perrière in 1567, to elaborate further on this notion of government. As La Perrière argues, “government is the right disposition of things, arranged so as to lead to a convenient end” (qtd. in Foucault, “Governmentality” 93). The ultimate purpose of government, then, is to create convenience for all who govern and are governed. In order to achieve convenience, Foucault elaborates, a plurality of aims must be reached, for instance the greatest possible quantity of wealth, sufficient means of subsistence, and favourable conditions for reproduction (95). In order to achieve such convenient living conditions, it is not enough to impose laws on people and demand they be obeyed. More importantly, structures have to be arranged tactically so as to encourage certain behaviours and opinions and discourage others. Governing expands towards

all other spheres of life so that potentially each sphere and each activity, from personal to military conflicts, are governed by the state.

Moving further away from the Machiavellian notion of the sovereign and towards a state rationality in alignment with the state's strength, the notion of economy as a form of government underwent significant changes by the 18th century. No longer regarded as a form of government, the economy becomes the government's main objective that needs to be organized with the help of technologies and vast bodies of knowledge. These technologies and knowledges arise to surveil, control, and measure the population of the state and its economically favourable behaviour. For instance, the German *Polizeiwissenschaft*, police science, and 'statistics,' the science and quantification of the state and its citizens, serve the government's attempt to manage the lives of each individual member of society through laws, decrees, regulations as well as precise measurements of regularities within the population. Police science, on the one hand, includes the collection of detailed knowledge of theory, pedagogy, and codification of the governed reality of the state. The target of police science, Foucault proceeds, namely the securing of behaviour in an array of unforeseeable and infinitely many circumstances, was no longer the family but the population at large that had expanded vastly with the rise of the Industrial Revolution. Statistics, on the other hand, reveal the population's "own rate of deaths and diseases, its cycles of scarcity, [...] and a range of intrinsic aggregate effects, [...] such as epidemics, endemic levels of mortality, ascending spirals of labour and wealth; lastly it shows that [...] population has its own specific economic effects" (99). A government focused on the increase of wealth could no longer draw on the model of the family, because it was too small in relation to the vast state territory and finances and, as a patriarchal model, too similar to the abandoned model of sovereignty. Foucault argues

that the population's quantification through police science and statistics led to a new role of the model of the family, namely as "an element internal to population, and as a fundamental instrument in its government" (99). While the family functions as an essential gateway to the desired information about a population, it also serves as the target for campaigns that aim at regulating the private lives of individuals, for instance when promoting marriages, shaping family customs and values of upbringing and education, and reducing mortality. Conceiving of individuals as population meant to conceive of "a particular objective reality of which one can have knowledge" (Dean 107) that can be used to guide, shape, and mobilize it.

Foucault elaborates that it is this form of state reason that is informed by police science and statistics, namely the assumption that it is possible to collect and use exhaustive knowledge of the state and all of its elements, that was criticized by Scottish Enlightenment thinkers such as Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson (49). Here is where Foucault situates the emergence of liberalism, identifying it not as a political system but as a characteristic way of posing problems and of criticizing existing forms of state reason, "a doctrine of the wise limitation and restraint on the exercise of authority by sovereign bodies" (50). Opposing this form of state reason, liberalism "sets limits to the State's capacity to know and act by situating it in relation to the reality of the market or of commercial exchanges, and more broadly of civil society, as quasi-natural domains with their own intrinsic dynamic and forms of self-regulation" (Burchell 22). Obtaining such detailed knowledge as the basis for government is therefore impossible because of the complex forces of the market and of a civil society informed by market principles that possess an internal logic that is impossible to fully comprehend. Turning to Adam Smith's well-known metaphor of the 'invisible hand of the market' that describes this incomprehensible yet logical self-regulating nature of the market, Foucault elaborates on the

principle of invisibility which not only allows for, but in fact forces liberal thought to focus on individual, not collective, benefit. The invisible hand according to Smith postulates that

by preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, he [every individual] intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. ... By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. (Smith 184)

Smith's doctrine of liberalism emphasizes the limitation of the power of governing bodies in that it recognizes that government is dependent on the existence and activities of various non-governmental domains, such as the economy. Foucault argues that the principle of invisibility means that "the world of the economy must be and can only be obscure to the sovereign, and it is so in two ways. [S]ince the economic mechanism involves each pursuing his own interest, then each must be left alone to do so. [Since] the invisible hand ... spontaneously combines interests, [it] also prohibits any form of intervention" (*Biopolitics* 280). This means that the economy is understood to be outside the reach of political authority, which has to respect the forces of the economy that are understood to be intrinsic and cannot be altered by external forces. Despite the forces of the economy, however, it was still the absolutist state that provided the overarching framework for the market at the time in which writers like Smith put forth their ideas.

According to liberal principles, another limit to state action is the incompatibility of regarding subjects both as a collective in terms of juridical rights and as individuals in terms of their own economic interests. In order to resolve this incompatibility and to preserve the

functioning of the government based on these principles, the desires, liberties, and capacities of the population are used as mechanisms through which the government operates. For example, schools become a space of instruction but also of surveillance, and disease regulation becomes a measure of helping to cure the population as well as of creating a market for vaccinations and other medical campaigns.

Foucault suggests that the term liberalism be understood very broadly. He defines it as “the acceptance of the principle that somewhere there must be a limitation of government and that this is not just an external right,” a “new type of rationality in the art of government,” and a “new type of calculation that consists in saying and telling government: I accept, wish, plan, and calculate that all this should be left alone” (Foucault, *Biopolitics* 20). This means that, instead of regarding liberalism as a coherent philosophy based on the ideal of limited government or as a distinct institutional structure, Foucault sees liberalism as a particular yet polymorphous instrument for a critique of state reason. The polymorphous quality of liberalism is unveiled by the observation that its targets of criticism change according to the circumstances in which it is located. Liberalism has turned and is still turning against previous forms of government from which it tries to distinguish itself and has taken on a multitude of shapes, such as classical liberalism in the 18th century, social liberalism in the late 19th century, and ordo-liberalism and neoliberalism in the 20th and 21st century. When looking at neoliberalism through the lens of governmentality, Foucault sees a variation of liberalism that has reinterpreted the liberal core elements – the market and the individual – within a contemporary context. Specifically, he discusses two particular kinds of post-war forms of neoliberalism, namely German ordo-liberalism and the Chicago School of Economics.

Between the 1930s and the 1950s, a group of German and Austrian economists and legal scholars, among them most prominently Friedrich von Hayek, Walter Eucken, Alexander Rüstow, Franz Böhm, and Ludwig Erhard, developed the theory of ordo-liberalism. In 1948, Eucken and Böhm founded the ORDO yearbook, an influential academic journal to which many ordo-liberals contributed regularly and which would serve as the forum for most of the conceptualization of ordo-liberalism. That same year, many ordo-liberals became part of the newly formed Bi-Zone's Scientific Council – predecessor of the current Federal Ministry for Economics and Technology – which was formed alongside the Bizonal Economic Council with Ludwig Erhard as Director of Economics. In his lecture from January 31, 1979, Foucault points out that shortly after the Council had reported its demand for no price controls and immediate deregulation to align German prices with international prices, Erhard took up the council's demands in his speech at a meeting of the Bi-Zonal Economic Council (*Biopolitics* 80). Foucault elaborates especially on the conclusions that Erhard drew from this principle of price deregulation to explain a crucial principle of German post-war neoliberalism. Foucault quotes François Bilger's (1964) French translation of Erhard's speech, which is originally reproduced in Wolfgang Stützel's *Grundtexte zur Sozialen Marktwirtschaft* (1981).

Wenn auch nicht im Ziele völlig einig, so ist doch die Richtung klar, die wir einzuschlagen haben – die Befreiung von der staatlichen Befehlswirtschaft, die alle Menschen in das entwürdigende Joch einer alles Leben überwuchernden Bürokratie zwingt. [...] Es sind aber weder die Anarchie noch der Termitenstaat als menschliche Lebensformen geeignet. Nur wo Freiheit und Bindung zum verpflichtenden Gesetz werden, findet der Staat die sittliche Rechtfertigung, im Namen des Volkes zu sprechen und zu handeln. (Stützel 39-42)

Foucault calls attention to the fact that Erhard integrates elements of economic liberalism demanded by the Scientific Council into the larger context of state action and makes the limitation of state interventions imperative to maintaining the legitimacy of the state (*Biopolitics* 81). At first sight, Erhard's statement simply emphasizes that a state forfeits its rights of legitimacy and representation once it abuses the rights and freedom of citizens. On a deeper level, Foucault argues, this statement implies that "only a state that recognizes economic freedom and thus makes way for the freedom and responsibility of individuals can speak in the name of the people" (82). This principle of economic freedom as a legitimizing foundation of the state formulated, according to Foucault, an important politico-economic message. As long as Germany is divided and occupied and can thus form no consensus of collective will, it is impossible to found a legitimate German state. Foucault argues that Erhard's statement further implies that it is possible, however, to use Germany's slowly growing economy as "juridical expedient" (83) and establish Germany's economic freedom prior to its juridical legitimacy. This suggestion signalled that the economically strong Allies could have free relationships with the German industry and economy without having to fear that the German state would in any way resemble the totalitarian state of previous years (83). It is in Erhard's assertion that Foucault sees a fundamental feature of German neoliberal governmentality that extends to the late 1970s when Foucault formulated his theory of governmentality and, I argue, also to the period of Schröder's Red-Green government.

In contemporary Germany, the economy, economic development and economic growth, produces sovereignty; it produces political sovereignty through the institution and institutional game that, precisely, makes this economy work. The economy produces legitimacy for the state that is its guarantor. In other words, the economy creates public law, and this is an absolutely important phenomenon, which is [...] a quite singular phenomenon in our times. [...] This

economic institution [...] produces a permanent consensus of all those who may appear as agents within these economic processes, as investors, workers, employers, and trade unions. All these economic partners produce a consensus, which is a political consensus, inasmuch as they accept this economic game of freedom. (84)

Foucault argues that it is the economy that creates the German state in that it shapes its institutions and public law, which, in turn, guarantees and supports the economy and keeps it alive and well. Participation in these economic processes alone functions as a confirmation of their validity and constitutes not only economic but also political agreement with the status quo. The economic game of freedom, however, is played by the rules of institutions and laws that decide what citizens can and cannot say and do. Within these confines, institutions achieve the civic consensus necessary for their legitimization by encouraging and enabling the expansion of personal and corporate wealth and its associated benefits. The well-being of the population becomes a necessary stimulant of this circuit, going from the economy and state institutions and laws to the population's adherence to this regime (85). In June 1948, Ludwig Erhard did in fact announce the abolition of price controls, which would be established around 1953. Erhard made this decision without the consent of the Bizonal administration that had enacted these controls. It was later confirmed by law and become known as one of the reasons for Germany's "economic miracle" in the 1950s and 1960s.

According to Foucault, ordo-liberals accused earlier forms of government, in particular Soviet socialism and National Socialism, of implementing a planned economy and allowing too much state power and intervention (Dean 70). They sought to organize a "competitive market as 'an artificial game of competitive freedom' but under particular institutional conditions" (71). Foucault elaborates that the market was not seen as a quasi-natural

autonomous process but as a reality that needed to be secured by an appropriate juridical and institutional framework. Foucault sees a link between this framework and Alexander Rüstow's social policy called *Vitalpolitik*. This social policy aimed at creating a society in which individuals conduct themselves like competitors on the market. All aspects of personal life were to be perceived as a range of different enterprises that seek their own benefit while competing with those of other individuals (Gordon 42).

Foucault also approaches the Chicago School of Economics from a perspective that focuses on what it opposed and criticized. Proponents of this school of thought problematized the New Deal and Roosevelt's Keynesian policy as an example of 'too much government,' which would inevitably lead to a vicious cycle: economic interventions lead to excessive public sector growth, over-administration and bureaucracy, which lead to more interventions (*Biopolitics* 216). The logic of the US American neoliberal rationality moved in the opposite direction of the German ordo-liberals in that liberalism was considered to be its "founding and legitimizing principle" (217) during the formation of American independence and was hence more radical and exhaustive. There was such confidence in market rationality, Foucault argues, that liberalism in the US was "a whole way of being and thinking" (218) and could hence be extended to all other areas of life, for instance the family. From this perspective, the time parents spend with their children and the care they give them are understood as an investment, which could form human capital (229). For American economists Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz, two of the pioneers in the conceptualization of human capital, human capital is embodied in individuals; it is their "knowledge, skills, health, or values," (Becker 16) which are considered as assets that yield income and other desirable outputs similar to financial or physical assets without, however, the possibility of separating and moving them away from

their owner; “a part of man” (Schultz 329). Drawing on human capital theory, Foucault states that human capital “is made up of innate elements and other, acquired elements” (*Biopolitics* 227), which refer to an individual’s genetic make-up on the one hand and to skills and abilities on the other. These skills and abilities are the result of the sum of experiences and behaviours, such as upbringing, schooling, and training but also affection and love as well as nutrition and physical exercise. From this perspective, every action and experience represents an investment into oneself as human capital, which will eventually – so one hopes – yield profit, success, and well-being, an idea which gives rise to the notion of the individual as a self-responsible, enterprising subject whose entrepreneurial spirit is considered to increase the return on the investment in oneself. This view also means that individuals cannot blame anyone but themselves for any failures because they are inevitably tied to the shortcomings of one’s human capital and hence of oneself.

The notion and importance of the entrepreneurial spirit is not new to the politics of the Red-Green coalition; in fact, it was introduced at the beginning of the 19th century by Austrian economist Josef Schumpeter. It gained particular popularity and significance at the end of the 1970s with the election of Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom in 1979 and Ronald Reagan in the United States in 1981. Thatcher’s goal was to establish an enterprise culture defined by the Centre for Policy Studies, a conservative British think tank, as “the full set of conditions that promote high and rising levels of achievement in a country’s economic activity, politics and government, arts and sciences, and also the distinctively private lives of the inhabitants” (Morris 23). At a similar time in the United States, Reagan proclaimed the dawn of an entrepreneurial age and promised to “sustain and advance the spirit of enterprise” by lowering taxes and reducing “government red tape” as well as “millions of man-hours in

paperwork” (3). This stimulation of individuals to become entrepreneurs through the government’s invocation and corresponding economic policies is reminiscent of Blair and Schröder’s paper. Correspondingly, the notion of human capital is very prominent in the politics of the Schröder government. In the 2003 document “Deutscher Beschäftigungspolitscher Aktionsplan” that outlines labour market reforms, the improvement of human capital is seen as an essential stepping-stone towards greater economic growth. “Arbeitnehmern und Arbeitnehmerinnen muss die Möglichkeit gegeben werden, mobil zu sein und ihr Humankapital an den Erfordernissen des Marktes auszurichten” (17). The way to replace post-war Keynesianism as the leading economic theory in Germany and many Western countries with free market policies was paved by post-war economists such as Friedrich Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, and Milton Friedman who co-founded the Mont Pelerin Society – an organization that advocates free-market policies and deregulation – and who collaborated with free-market think tanks to gain acceptance for free-market thinking within academia, public opinion, and governments.

German ordo-liberalism, the Chicago School of Economics, and Thatcherism and Reaganomics are only a few varying perspectives on neoliberal governmentality. They do, however, share commonalities that Foucault is able to highlight from this perspective. On the one hand, neoliberal governmentality reasons and acts around the market as the regulatory and organizing principle of the state and its stimulation, and on the other, orients itself on the economically rational, self-responsible, and decision-making individual who must constantly be stimulated to participate in the market system through competition. The freedom of the individual is not conceived of as innate and deserving of respect as such, but is framed within economic terms. Freedom centres on economic behaviour in terms of profitability, efficiency,

optimization, innovation, competitive advantage, property, and autonomy. As rational decision-makers, individuals use the knowledge available to them to judge situations according to their own competitive advantage. This tactic makes the individual decision-making process susceptible to indirect manipulation – that is, stimulation towards or away from a particular decision – because it requires more and more potentially valuable information to enable better decisions that could lead to a greater personal advantage. The market provides a mechanism of neoliberal governmentality that enhances an individual’s personal advantage, which is, by implication, an advantage over someone else. Through competition, individuals are encouraged to first compare themselves with all those who compete and then gain their advantage by setting themselves apart from their competitors as unique and distinctive. The mechanism of competition and individuals’ search for a competitive advantage, according to the neoliberal maxim, must constantly be stimulated. “Regieren heißt, den Wettbewerb, sich selbst regieren heißt, die eigene Wettbewerbsfähigkeit fördern” (*Das unternehmerische Selbst* 107).

Neoliberal governmentality enables and secures this perpetual motion machine of mutually conditioning market mechanisms and the stimulation of individual market-driven behaviour that continuously creates its own conditions and right to exist. In the form of governing practices, they both shape and operate through the self-understanding of individuals, groups, and institutions that centres on the need to distinguish oneself through rational, self-responsible, and risk-taking conduct. They extend to social roles and reinterpret them within an economic system, forming individuals who reason and act as economic subjects.

2.2 Michel Foucault's Theory of Governmentality

Alongside his reflections on the history of governmentality, Foucault also points towards a theoretical framework of governmentality that is useful in examining “the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument (*Security*, 108-9). Through the theory of governmentality, Foucault develops a new dimension of his analysis of power. The distinction between power and government on the one hand, and the attention to the interdependency of governing others and oneself on the other, allow a further differentiation of the analysis of power mechanisms. As Thomas Lemke and his colleagues point out in their anthology on Foucault's theory of governmentality, it is precisely the dynamics between the government of others and the self that determine power relations (29). In order to better understand these power relations, it is necessary to examine these dynamic moments when the techniques of guiding individuals inform the practices of their self-guidance and when the processes of this self-guidance in turn become part of the structures that govern them (Foucault, “About the Beginning” 203). Governing is therefore seen as a highly complex form of power, a balance of various related and interacting governing techniques and practices. Both forms of governing attempt to affect individual behaviour according to normative practices that define what is desirable, necessary, or appropriate and which are based on particular power relations and forms of knowledge. Foucault's theory of governmentality calls into question the self-evidence of these norms, power relations, and forms of knowledge, not with the aim “to expose or to denounce our current ethical vocabulary, but to open a space for critical reflection upon the complex

practices of knowledge, power, and authority that sustain the forms of life that we have come to value, and that underpin the norms of selfhood according to which we have come to regulate our existence” (Rose 167). It offers ways to understand the conditionality of the knowledge and practices we normally accept as given and natural, and to uncover not only their less visible workings but also some of their causes and goals.

Besides a theoretical framework, Foucault provides a set of analytical terms to examine the knowledge and practices of government and uncover the conditions under which they operate and are regarded acceptable. This method marks out a space to ask questions about government, authority, and power without attempting to formulate a program of reform. It affords the possibility of highlighting our own roles within the system of governing and accepting a sense of responsibility for the consequences and effects of thinking and acting in particular ways. In an interview entitled “Questions of method” ([1980], 1991) and published in the first anthology of Governmentality Studies, *The Foucault Effect* (1991), Foucault describes his method of analysis as targeting “regimes of practices” (75). As Foucault explains, regimes of practices

are not just governed by institutions, prescribed by ideologies, guided by pragmatic circumstances ... but possess up to a point their own specific regularities, logic, strategy, self-evidence, and ‘reason’. It is a question of analysing a ‘regime of practices’ – practices being understood here as places where what is said and what is done, rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and the taken for granted meet and interconnect. (75)

Because regimes of practices are based on particular forms of reason and render reality both intelligible and practicable, an analysis of the neoliberal governmentality of the Schröder government as a regime of practices allows examining both its underlying rationality – that is,

the rationality of the market – and the practices it informs, ranging from policies and measures to the market-driven behaviour of individuals. Foucault explains the characteristics of and interconnection between “practices” and “rationalities” by pointing to the “interplay between a ‘code’ which rules ways of doing things (how people are to be graded and examined, things and signs classified, individuals trained, etc.) and a production of true discourses which serve to found, justify and provide reasons and principles for these ways of doing things” (79). A useful description of these two distinct but intrinsically linked elements of governmentality can be found in Miller and Rose’s discussion of characterizing and analysing governmentality (“Introduction” 15-16). Rationalities are ways of knowing or reasoning that manifest themselves in widely accepted a priori that render “reality thinkable in such a way that it [is] amenable to calculation and programming” (16). Although rationalities oftentimes claim the status of truth and reject others on the basis of their own internal logic and reason, they cannot be conceived of as a singular rationality that would stand against the irrational. Instead, there are multiple varieties of rationality that sometimes conflict, complement, and contradict each other as they can be formed relative to specific times, places, persons, and issues.

Many governing rationalities upon which Schröder’s Red-Green coalition is built posit the necessity of stimulating market growth and reinvigorating entrepreneurialism in Germany. Among many other principles, these rationalities presume that political authority must be limited and cannot govern as a sovereign power; that civil society is a natural realm of freedoms that exists outside of the sphere of political activity; that individuals are free, self-reliant, and self-responsible; that individuals’ freedom is a freedom of choice, which is maximized through competition; that human rights and equality emanate from the structures of the marketplace; that the market is a natural fact, fair, and self-regulating; that trade and

markets must be free to ensure the uninhibited accumulation of capital; that growth is always desirable; and that an ever-growing economy results in more wealth and well-being, and less poverty (Braedley and Luxton, Connell, Miller and Rose, Prasad, Turner). These beliefs contribute to a neoliberal normality that, regardless whether it is met with agreement or disagreement, is widely accepted.

While rationalities are “a way of representing and knowing a phenomenon”, practices are “a way of acting upon it so as to transform it” (Miller and Rose “Introduction” 15). Miller and Rose refer to these tools for acting and transforming a phenomenon as technologies, a term that Foucault later used in his 1982 seminar on “Technologies of the Self” that was published only in 1988 as an essay in an anthology of the same name. Foucault briefly defines technologies as “specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves” (“Technologies of the Self” 18). Miller and Rose elaborate on this notion and describe technologies as all those “devices, tools, techniques, personnel, materials and apparatuses that enable [one] to imagine and act upon the conduct of persons individually and collectively, and in locales that [are] often very distant” (“Introduction” 16). The role of technologies is to create this normality through people, documents, institutions, and programs that “seek to delineate, normalize, and instrumentalize the conduct of persons in order to achieve the ends they postulate as desirable” (du Gay and Salaman 626). An analysis of governmentality as regimes of practices examines rationalities and their production of truth as well as technologies and their codification of actions in order to explore the government of others and the self.

Of the four major types of technologies Foucault identifies, three technologies will be regarded as central to the analysis of neoliberal governing under Schröder. Just as rationalities and technologies are inextricably linked and represent distinct elements of the same

phenomenon, technologies hardly ever function separately. One of these technologies is language – termed an intellectual technology by Miller and Rose (“Introduction” 21) – as it creates normality by making it thinkable, visible, intelligible, and manipulable. Miller and Rose’s conceptualization of language as intellectual technology is very similar to, if not identical with, their notion of discourse as a technology of thought (30). Both technologies are meant to express the “discursive character” of Foucault’s governmentality, namely the “attention to language” when analysing “the conceptualizations, explanations, and calculations that inhabit the governmental field” (29). Evidently, Miller and Rose link their understanding of language and discourse to Foucault’s notion of discourse that he famously explained in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* ([1972], 2002).

Instead of gradually reducing the rather fluctuating meaning of the word ‘discourse’, I believe I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it as sometimes the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualisable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements. (*Archaeology* 80)

Foucault distinguishes among three meanings of the concept of discourse. In a more general sense, he uses the term to refer to all meaningful statements and texts. More specifically, he uses it to refer to various groups of statements, which are related and held together by a kind of internal coherence – thematically, historically, or otherwise. The discourses of neoliberalism, for example, refer to all statements about neoliberalism, which centre on similar issues and use similar styles and tropes (Mills). Among these topics and issues is the continuing search of individuals and governments alike for new ways to enter and encourage others to enter the labour market. Foucault’s third definition of discourse moves away from statements themselves and points to the rules and structures that underlie and produce them. These rules

are tacit and are used only implicitly to generate meaningful communication, such as the understanding of the market as an entity that is at once self-regulating and unpredictable but coherent and rational.

Despite their differing terminology, Miller and Rose follow Foucault's notion of discourse when discussing their notions of language as intellectual technology and discourse as a technology of thought. In all cases, language and discourse are conceptualized as an historically and culturally contingent means of making the world thinkable and manipulable by producing knowledges and truths about it, without claiming the status of true or false knowledge (*Archaeology* 118). Just as Foucault, Miller and Rose are interested in the effects of language and discourse on individuals, groups, and institutions instead of conceptualizing it as a priori and uncontested knowledge. However, Miller and Rose's choice of terminology places a useful emphasis when using Foucault's now classic notion of discourse. Conceptualizing language and discourse as a technology accentuates their constructedness and their use as instruments with particular – intentional or unintentional – effects. It highlights the directing character of language and discourse and their use as tools in shaping and directing opinions, beliefs, and behaviour. Following Miller and Rose's conceptualization but with the intention to ensure clarity, I will use the term discourse, understood as a technology of thought, when referring to language as a device to construct a reality, depict and enact normality, and render these intelligible and manipulable.

While Miller and Rose elaborate mainly on language as an intellectual technology, there are other crucial and highly visible technologies aside from language that contribute to defining and normalizing the conduct of persons under Schröder's government, namely technologies of domination and technologies of the self. It is, in fact, the "contact between

technologies of domination of others and those of the self” (“Technologies of the Self” 19) that Foucault calls governmentality. The numerous policies, measures, laws, and guidelines introduced or continued by the Red-Green coalition are paramount examples of technologies of domination, which Foucault defines as “determin[ing] the conduct of individuals and submit[ing] them to certain ends or domination” (18). Technologies of domination are linked to authority, political and otherwise, and expertise that appear both in the form of persons and institutions as well as forms of judgement. Through these technologies, authority and expertise claim that

personal capacities can be managed in order to achieve socially desirable goals – health, adjustment, profitability, and the like. ... They ... problematize new aspects of existence and, in the very same moment, suggested that they can help overcome the problems that they have discovered. And they ... act as powerful translation devices between ‘authorities’ and individuals, shaping conduct not through compulsion but through the power of truth, the potency of rationality and the alluring promises of effectivity. (Miller and Rose, “Governing Economic Life” 42-43)

As government programs are created by authority figures elected precisely because of their presumed expertise in matters political, economic, social, and educational, to name but a few, they are expected to uncover problems and offer reforms to address and manage them.

Although governments seem to hold a powerful position of expertise and authority from which they proclaim which goals are desirable, which personal capacities are in demand, and in what ways these goals are to be reached, the market-driven, non-interventionist approach of neoliberal governments requires the participation of individuals in order to put their programs into practice. Using the language of the market to construct a market-driven normality,

government programs rely on constantly attempting to enable, encourage, and urge individuals to use or develop capacities that will lead to the programs' successful realization.

Government programs not only make use of language in order to construct a particular normality, they also depend on the participation of the individual, whose behaviour must be transformed in order to be able to participate in creating this normality. The motivation to do so arises out of the notion of individual self-interest that, according to liberal and neoliberal thought, is a personal right that ensures the pursuit of success, wealth, and happiness within this normality. According to Foucault, it is through technologies of the self, that is, attitudes and actions towards the self, that individuals are given the ability to “effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (“Technologies of the Self”, 18). Through practices that assist individuals in managing themselves and their lives in accordance with market-oriented principles, they contribute to constructing a market-driven normality.

Technologies are therefore mechanisms and techniques that not only “produce the citizen best suited to fulfil those governments' policies” (Mayhew 224) but they also equip the citizen with the “‘personal’ capacities and aspirations necessary to bear the political weight that rests on them” (Rose 155). Precisely because neoliberal governing relies on the governing of the self, it is important to keep in mind that the demand for personal responsibility and self-reliance places a constant and heavy burden on the individual. Individuals' participation is made necessary through the shift of the governments' responsibilities for societal risks onto the individual who, reframed as a self-reliant and supposedly autonomous citizen-entrepreneur, must bear them as personal responsibilities. The enforcement of neoliberal principles, which

counts on the performance of civic responsibilities despite a merely formal aversion to interventions of any kind, is therefore made possible through the guiding of individual behaviour and opinions at a distance. Disease, unemployment, poverty, and crime no longer need to be dealt with by governments but have become personal issues that individuals readily resolve in the personal sphere.

The analysis of technologies of domination functions as a useful gateway into the analysis of a neoliberal rationality. Besides making neoliberal rationality tangible, they are also effective means of acting upon any phenomenon that is considered problematic and in need of transformation, or to use a political term, reform. In doing so, they draw attention both to the perception of the status quo and to the desired future state of affairs. At the moment of attempted transformation, the perceived normality or naturalness of a particular technology is shattered and, within the range of perceived possibilities, is exposed to challenge. As neoliberal governmentality can only manifest itself through the technologies and truths produced by them, its emergence in various contexts – from political statements, press coverage, and non-fiction and literary texts to programs, initiatives, and events – can be analysed by examining their use of language and its correlation with authorities, experts, and the self.

The questioning of a perceived normality or naturalness of neoliberal rationalities and technologies is not to be understood as a critique of an ideology that seeks to reform neoliberalism in order to reveal the supposed truth behind it following, for example, Bourdieu's perspective. Foucault considers the notion of ideology itself to be problematic as it "always stands in virtual opposition to something else which is supposed to count as truth" ("Truth and Power" 118). Such a truth would be, again, an ideology that only argues for its own truth, prompting a cycle in which the concept of ideology only produces other ideologies.

Neoliberal governing practices are neither necessary nor natural or self-evident, and they do not represent objective knowledge but are instead subjective interpretations of reality. The theory of governmentality aims at drawing attention to this constructed nature of neoliberalism in order to open up a space to question its perceived validity and truths.

As evident in the Blair-Schröder paper and numerous government programs, the language of enterprise is central to Schröder's government. It guides arguments and underlies programs that at once problematize individual and organizational practices and provide solutions for adjusting them (Miller and Rose 48). Performance, health, time, money, and emotions, among many other aspects of life, must be managed to achieve improvement, growth, self-awareness, and control. The language of enterprise touches upon numerous spheres of life and ties them together with the same understanding of the market as an all-encompassing, regulatory force, therefore achieving a "largely unquestioned acceptance of [its] normality and perceived good sense ..." (du Gay and Salaman 615). The language of enterprise postulates that entrepreneurialism not merely improves but actually gives rise to personal as well as national wealth and well-being. Thus, enterprise

not only designates a kind of organizational form, with individual units competing with one another on the market, but more generally provides an image of a mode of activity to be encouraged in a multitude of arenas of life – the school, the university, the hospital, the GP's surgery, the factory and business organization, the family, and the apparatus of social welfare. (Rose 154)

To consider enterprise as a generalized mode of activity means that individuals and organizations alike are viewed in terms of their sufficiency or insufficiency of enterprise and entrepreneurial behaviours. Consequently, they are encouraged – by authorities, experts, and

not least by themselves – to take risks and make bold choices, calculate their own advantage, find original solutions to problems, be resourceful, explore new markets, and do all of it with vigour and perseverance. The conceptualization of enterprise in the politics of the New Centre is tied closely to the notions of freedom, autonomy, and choice, which are used to reframe individuals and groups as discrete entities that pursue all activities as enterprises. It is so powerful in its articulation of a neoliberal rationality precisely because it aligns economic success, career progress, and personal development and links them to the self-regulating capacities of individuals (Miller and Rose, “Governing Economic Life” 50). Therefore, not only the workplace, but also all other spheres can benefit from entrepreneurial conduct, such as relationships, the family, and education. Individuals are no longer conceived of as social beings in search of security and solidarity but precisely as individual, single persons in search of ways to actively “shape and manage [their] own life in order to maximize its returns in terms of success and achievement” (49). As a formula for success, “the values of self-realization, the skills of self-presentation, self-direction and self-management” (50) have become tools to work on the constant improvement and growth of success that is at once personally attractive and economically desirable. In other words, individuals are encouraged to view their lives as an enterprise and themselves as entrepreneurs of their own lives. They are the targets of processes of subjectification, that is, the “active shaping of the self as subject” (Binkley 66), that enable and encourage them through varying technologies, which equate personal well-being with economic success, to strive to become enterprising individuals. Everything that threatens the presumed autonomy of the self – from pressure to frustration to hopelessness – must be translated into an experience that, instead of weakening it, helps incite it again. Suffering of any kind is hence not to be simply accepted or tolerated but “to be managed as a challenge and

a stimulus to the powers of the self. In transcending despair... the self can be restored to its conviction that it is master of its own existence” (Rose 159). Because an individual’s sense of autonomy is instrumental in achieving national economic success, it is not conceived of as an impediment to political power that needs to be kept in check; instead, it functions as an ally, objective, and instrument that can be regulated through technologies that proclaim and promote its significance. Nor is the formal autonomy of individuals shattered by these technologies that guide it because they are performed through mechanisms that allow for a less visible governing at a distance. However, the appeal to be autonomous must result in the inability to be autonomous, a paradox that reveals not only its absurdity but also the impossibility of its realization. Contrary to its proclaimed goal, this appeal prompts behaviour to merely resemble obedience rather than personal autonomy.

As a tool for analysis, the theory of governmentality enables the examination of neoliberal rationalities and technologies that inform our self-image and what roles we are to play within society. Precisely because these rationalities and technologies present themselves as natural and self-evident in their attempt to produce enterprising subjects, it is vital to draw attention to their constructed nature and uncover the process of subjectification as an indispensable element of neoliberal governing. This process of the subjectification of enterprising individuals has been examined in particular by Nikolas Rose (1991, 1996) and Ulrich Bröckling (*Das unternehmerische Selbst* 2007) whose works build upon Foucault’s theory of governmentality in order to shed light on its contemporary pervasiveness. Commonly referred to as the enterprising or entrepreneurial self, this notion is considered to be a fundamentally significant manifestation of a contemporary neoliberal rationality and its association with an economization of society. While Foucault’s theory of governmentality

provides insight into the rationality and practices that shape the mechanisms of neoliberal governing as a collective societal phenomenon, sociologists Nikolas Rose and Ulrich Bröckling draw on Foucault's theory to examine the effects and implications of contemporary neoliberal governing on the individual and its subjectification as an entrepreneurial self. Their interest, however, lies not in discovering whether the technologies have, in fact, the desired effect on individuals and groups, but rather what kind of reality they create (Rose 18, Bröckling, *Das unternehmerische Selbst* 36). They attempt to uncover how numerous neoliberal technologies aim at encouraging individuals to regard themselves as entrepreneurs and even strive to become entrepreneurs of themselves.

2.3 Methodological Considerations: Governmentality, the Entrepreneurial Self, and Contemporary German Literature

Foucault himself briefly reflects on the emergence of the entrepreneurial self in one of his lectures at the Collège de France in 1979. He describes it as a neoliberal version of homo oeconomicus, which he sets apart from its classical liberal conceptualization. Foucault argues that a shift took place from homo oeconomicus as “one of the two partners in the process of exchange” who analyses himself in terms of utility, which can then be adjusted to suit the process of exchange (Foucault, *Biopolitics* 225) to “an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself, ... being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of his earnings” (226). While the mode of exchange prevalent in classical liberalism was conceived of as natural and self-regulating, the neoliberal mode of competition between enterprising individuals is conceived of as artificial in that it must be protected from interventions by the state. Although the state must not intervene in the market, it is expected to

intervene in the conditions of the market in order to maintain and improve its function as the site of competition. Similar to the mode of competition, the tendency of the subject to compete must also be enabled and encouraged. There are a multitude of realms that foster the enterprising individual's competitiveness, from the workplace to education to medicine, among many others.

Bröckling's conceptualization of the entrepreneurial self seems most fitting for an analysis of literary subject positions vis-à-vis neoliberal governing practices and technologies of language, domination, and the self. While Rose's work focuses mainly on the neoliberal subjectification of individuals through the disciplines of psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapy, and psychoanalysis, among which he also examines the governing of enterprising individuals (150-68), Bröckling's attention is directed mostly towards analysing the neoliberal subjectification of the entrepreneurial self through economic theory on the one hand, and self-management literature on the other.

Bröckling regards the entrepreneurial self, "das unternehmerische Selbst" (*Das unternehmerische Selbst* 7), as a powerful, idealized, and hence unachievable self-image, which addresses individuals as persons they already are and at the same time ought to become. He explores the various facets of the entrepreneurial self by investigating self-management guidebooks to entrepreneurial success on the one hand, and, on the other, economic theories – particularly by Frank H. Knight (1926, 1942), Joseph Schumpeter (1926, 1928), Ludwig von Mises (1940), Israel M. Kirzner (1978, 1988), and more recently by Mark Casson (1982, 2000) – that describe fundamental characteristics of entrepreneurial acting. Bröckling concludes that the advice given in such guidebooks builds on economic theories and their image of the entrepreneur, and attempts to make them a reality ("Jeder könnte, aber nicht alle können").

However, this image of the entrepreneur – not to be confused with the capitalist, employer, or manager –, refers not to a person but to a prototype of conduct that personifies and unifies various roles and capacities within the flow of market mechanisms (Bröckling, *Das unternehmerische Selbst* 110). Examining these economic theories, Bröckling identifies four main entrepreneurial functions that are to explain market success: entrepreneurs as clever users of opportunities for profit, innovators, bearers of economic risks, and coordinators of production and marketing processes (110). He argues that these theoretical models provide more than just an explanation for a thriving economy. “Indem sie den wirtschaftlichen Erfolg auf spezifische Handlungstypen zurückführen, präsentieren sie zugleich ein normatives Modell individueller Lebensführung” (123). By ascribing economic success to specific prototypes of conduct, they simultaneously offer an implicit normative model of how individuals ought to conduct themselves in order to resemble the various types as much as possible.

The four functions Bröckling identifies can neither be clearly separated from each other nor can they clearly characterize entrepreneurs in their entirety. More importantly, however, they attempt to unite two conflicting approaches: unrestricted creativity and rational calculation. “Unternehmerisches Handeln setzt ... gerade dort ein, wo der Rahmen bloßer Kosten-Nutzen-Kalküle überschritten und neue Gewinnmöglichkeiten entdeckt und ausgenutzt werden” (111). Hence, the successful entrepreneur must constantly cope with the paradox of bringing together creativity and rationality in the same person without the possibility of ever succeeding. The entrepreneur must know the established routes but must not follow them too eagerly; instead, it is the knowledge of when and how to use an ingenuous and risky approach that is meant to enable the discovery and utilization of hidden opportunities, an attempt that is most often doomed to fail from the outset. Just as these discoveries and opportunities require further and

continuous optimization, the entrepreneur is called on to continuously adapt to the ever-changing and unpredictable dynamics of the market, calculating the incalculable. The entrepreneurial self must continuously negotiate between the demand to assess profit and coordinate the allocation of resources on the one hand, and to be an innovative thinker and risk taker on the other. Audacity and calculation cease to be opposites but need to be connected to each other. The entrepreneurial self is “kreativer Nonkonformist und pedantische Krämerseele in einer Person” (125). The subjectification of the entrepreneur involves a process of simultaneous self-governing and being governed by others that enables the constant regulation, adjustment, and improvement of the implementation of entrepreneurial concepts. Because these concepts are contradictory, however, as is the case with the advocated synthesis of rationality and creativity, the entrepreneurial self is formed and forms itself in an incessant process of subjectification, a perpetual motion machine of entrepreneurialism.

This perspective allows one to move beyond Foucault’s theoretical framework to examine the ways in which neoliberal governmentality aims at shaping the attitudes, behaviour, desires, and lifestyles of individuals who govern themselves according to this unattainable ideal. As this image calls on individuals at work, at home, with friends and family, and everywhere in between, it also speaks a truth about them in which they can already recognize themselves as entrepreneurial selves. The effect of this image is the alignment of an individual’s entire lifestyle with the model of entrepreneurship, which shapes and models the relationship of individuals to themselves and to others according to entrepreneurial beliefs and practices. “In der Figur des unternehmerischen Selbst verdichten sich sowohl normatives Menschenbild wie eine Vielzahl gegenwärtiger Selbst- und Sozialtechnologien, deren gemeinsamer Fluchtpunkt die Ausrichtung der gesamten Lebensführung am Verhaltensmodell

der Entrepreneurship bildet” (47). Hence, the entrepreneurial self is a contemporary form of the subjectification of individuals that acts as a strategic element within the context of neoliberal governing practices. The expectations of entrepreneurs and their entrepreneurial spirit are nothing less than a strategy to generate solutions to many societal problems. As Bröckling puts it,

der *spirit of enterprise* soll wirtschaftliche Stagnation überwinden und die allgemeine Prosperität fördern, er soll bürokratische Verkrustungen wie auch politische Borniertheiten beseitigen, im Geiste marktförmigen Austauschs die Gesellschaft pazifizieren und schließlich jedem Einzelnen zu Erfolg und Zufriedenheit verhelfen. (124)

Indeed, the Blair-Schröder Paper states that “[t]he importance of individual and business enterprise to the creation of wealth has been undervalued [while] the weaknesses of market have been overstated and their strengths underestimated” (162). Consequently, the Social Democrats must “support enterprise and setting up one’s own business as a viable route out of unemployment.” In order to decrease unemployment, Schröder postulates the need for the unemployed to see themselves as potential entrepreneurs who could create wealth for themselves if they followed his suggested route. Allowing the market to function without enterprise-hindering political action will, according to Schröder, provide solutions to a similarly wide variety of societal challenges:

... to promote employment and prosperity, to offer every individual the opportunity to fulfil their unique potential, to combat social exclusion and poverty, to reconcile material progress with environmental sustainability and our responsibility to future generations, to tackle common problems that threaten the cohesion of society such as crime and drugs, and to make Europe a more effective force for good in the world. (Blair and Schröder 160)

Companies, organizations, and individuals alike are encouraged to use entrepreneurial practices in the belief that this will benefit individuals and society alike in all spheres of life. Schröder therefore positions himself and the coalition's politics within a tradition of neoliberal thought that believes that "human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (Harvey 2). Although government programs urge individuals' participation in them, it is still the individual who is conceived of as a seemingly autonomous decision maker. Because this perceived autonomy is an essential element of neoliberal principles that is fundamental for the notions of independence and self-responsibility, it must stay intact. Neoliberal governing practices ensure the integrity of individual autonomy by stimulating instead of coercing individuals to participate in them. "[Programme des Regierens] installieren keine Reiz-Reaktions-Automatismen, sondern erzeugen einen Sog, der bestimmte Verhaltensweisen wahrscheinlicher machen soll, als andere" (Bröckling, *Das unternehmerische Selbst* 39). They seek to stimulate behaviours and decisions that secure individuals' continued participation in the free-market system, which requires the fostering of individuals' desire to be competitive and defeat competitors. Stimulation is a necessary and highly effective tool of neoliberal governing because it makes it possible to guide individuals in their self-guidance with the promise of well-being and success without calling into question their perceived independence. "Die Menschen sind regierbar, weil sie konditionierbar sind, und es ist effizienter, sie mittelbar durch Anreizsysteme zu regieren als durch unmittelbaren Zwang" (106).

Within the theoretical framework of subjectification, becoming an entrepreneurial self is a paradoxical endeavour, as it involves moments of simultaneously governing oneself and

being governed by others. The entrepreneurial self, like any subject, oscillates between recognizing itself as an independent being and acting accordingly while, at the same time, obtaining this ability to act from external entities against which it attempts to assert its independence (19). As a logical problem, this paradox of subjectification remains unsolved. However, it becomes a practical task that is fuelled precisely by its perpetuity, making it both an inevitable and continuous process.

So wenig es ein widerspruchsfreies Subjekt geben kann, so unvermeidlich wie unabschließbar ist die Arbeit der Subjektivierung. Diese Arbeit ist rekursiv; der Gegenstand, dem sie gilt, und der Arbeiter, der sie leisten soll, fallen zusammen. ... Das Subjekt der Subjektivierung existiert nur im Gerundivum: als wissenschaftlich zu erkundendes, pädagogisch zu förderndes, therapeutisch zu stützendes und aufzuklärendes, rechtlich zu sanktionierendes, ästhetisch zu inszenierendes, politisch zu verwaltendes, ökonomisch produktiv zu machendes usw. (21-22)

The process of subjectification remains interminable, allowing its subject to be incessantly acted upon through a plethora of discourses that attempt to define and shape it as a scientific, pedagogical, therapeutical, juridical, aesthetic, political, and economic subject. While this process may bring together complementing discourses, it is also not without contradiction as varying discourses may offer opposing or conflicting truths. As the target of such attempts to guide its conduct and self-conceptualization, the subject creates itself and is created through the engagement with these discourses that function as precepts. “Das Subjekt ‘erfindet’ sich ... ausgehend von und in Auseinandersetzung mit den an es herangetragenen Selbstdeutungs- wie Selbstmodellierungsvorgaben je nach Kontext in ganz unterschiedlicher Weise” (35). The subject is conceived of as profoundly historically contingent because it can never be permanent or stable. At all times, it is the object of various practices and mechanisms that act on it and

with which it acts on itself, and is therefore a site of societal as well as individual impact. Bröckling argues that the subject can hence be surveyed by means of exploring the knowledge, methods, and techniques of governmentality through which individuals are constituted and constitute themselves, and which are used to define and form the subject (31). Correspondingly, as Bröckling focuses on the entrepreneurial self, he argues that an understanding of the entrepreneurial self is best attempted via understanding the knowledge, methods, and techniques of neoliberal governing through which it is governed and governs itself, an approach Nikolas Rose termed a “genealogy of subjectification” (23). Bröckling identifies several prototypes of subjectivity with respect to the image of the entrepreneurial self, namely the enthusiast, the ironist, and the melancholic that normally overlap or appear in mixed form (“Enthusiasten, Ironiker, Melancholiker” 83). According to Bröckling, enthusiasts celebrate “den *spirit of enterprise* als Geist der Befreiung – von hierarchischer Bevormundung, bürokratischen Zwängen und konformistischer Anpassung – und sing[en] das Hohelied der Kreativität, Smartness, Selbstverantwortung und Risikobereitschaft” (83). They embrace the deregulation of the market as a means to achieve a feeling of freedom from all ties they perceive to restrict their sense of autonomy. Not seeing that also a deregulated market and its actors require governing from a distance to ensure their functioning according to market-oriented principles, they believe they are freed of hierarchy and bureaucracy and enabled to become creative, self-responsible, and risk-taking entrepreneurs of their own lives. While enthusiasts reject any scepticism of the imperative of the market, ironists assume an attitude of indecisiveness that allows them both to distance themselves from and yet partake in the system. “Augenzwinkernd versichern sie zu durchschauen, was sie im nächsten Moment wieder vollziehen” (85). They avoid committing to following one path or the other, thus remaining in

a state of limbo in which freedom means reaching for the best of both worlds, parading their mental ability to achieve critical distance to the game of entrepreneurialism that they then decide to play all the more masterfully. “Ihre aufgedrehte Lustigkeit ist die gute Miene zum bösen Spiel, das sie durchschauen – und gerade deshalb virtuos spielen zu können glauben” (85). The third type is the melancholic who, in Bröckling’s words, surrenders to the forces of the market instead of trying to limit them. The melancholic’s contempt for everything present is often accompanied by a glorification of everything past. To the melancholic, the threat of the entrepreneurial self is an external one, causing not only belief in being able to stand above its call but also blindness to its unintentional stimulation. “Weil er selbst über dem Sog zu stehen glaubt, merkt er nicht, wie sein lamentierender Alarmismus diesen wider Willen mit antreibt” (85). Elements of Bröckling’s enthusiast, ironist, and melancholic can be found in many of the characters in Ralph Hammerthaler’s *Alles bestens*, Reinhard Liebermann’s *Das Ende des Kanzlers*, *Der finale Rettungsschuss*, and Joachim Zelter’s *Schule der Arbeitslosen*. In *Schule der Arbeitslosen*, however, the protagonists share no commonalities with the types Bröckling offers, requiring an expansion of Bröckling’s typology and the suggestion of a fourth type of subjectivity. The protagonists in *Schule der Arbeitslosen* fall through the gaping holes of the previously provided net of social security. Not enraged, not sad, not enthusiastic, they willingly accept patronization and receive any help and instruction to improve themselves and become better entrepreneurs of their own lives. When they fail, they embrace what they believe is their fate and look to no one but themselves to take responsibility. Following the metaphor of lemmings that “move unthinkingly and unceasingly toward eventual destruction – of themselves, their environment, their culture, their society, and their civilization” (Palmatier 253), the fourth subjectivity vis-à-vis the image of the entrepreneurial self will be referred to as

social lemming and employed primarily for the analysis of Zelter's *Schule der Arbeitslosen*. The social lemming is a valuable contribution to Bröckling's typology because it acknowledges and further differentiates the complex subjectivities that emerge from the image of the entrepreneurial self.

According to Bröckling, the expansion and increasing significance of the enterprise discourse and the image of the entrepreneurial self is in part due to the proliferation of self-management books that he examines in order to develop a deeper understanding of its composition. The aforementioned novels by Liebermann, Zelter, and Hammerthaler open a different avenue for the examination of the entrepreneurial self. As novels that process the economization of society, they serve as simulation and rehearsal space where various subject positions vis-à-vis the image of the entrepreneurial self and their implications for the subject are played out and tested. The selected novels show the invocation of the entrepreneurial self in its all-encompassing orientation that spares no one, exposing it as a hegemonic image of subjectification. Their protagonists range from the successful businessman in *Alles bestens* to the struggling merchant in *Das Ende des Kanzlers* to the long-term unemployed in *Schule der Arbeitslosen*. Building upon Bröckling's conceptualization of the entrepreneurial self and Foucault's theory of neoliberal governmentality, the following literary analysis will examine how the novels by Hammerthaler, Liebermann, and Zelter process instances of a neoliberal governmentality, in particular with respect to the notion of the entrepreneurial self, and offer a literary space to ask questions about their implications for individual subjectivity. These novels can be read as instances of the literary processing of contemporary neoliberal rationalities and practices. They are situated specifically during the era of the Red-Green government in Germany between 1998 and 2005 mostly through references to some of its most well-known

labour market measures, namely the *Ich-AG*, the *Mittelstandsoffensive*, and employability training programs.

As pieces of contemporary cultural history, *Alles bestens*, *Das Ende des Kanzlers*, and *Schule der Arbeitslosen* illustrate and contribute to the discourses of neoliberalism in Germany under Schröder's Red-Green coalition. The novels create all-too familiar present-day socio-political realities in which all characters are governed by rationalities and technologies that both presuppose and ensure the imperative of the market as its organizing principle. An analysis of the various concurrent technologies that become visible in all novels – that is, technologies of thought, domination, and the self – will allow an understanding not only of their underlying rationalities but also of the numerous practices employed in the government of others and the self. The entrepreneurial self lies at the crossroads of all three technologies through which it is governed and governs itself in accordance with neoliberal rationalities. The novels construct different subject positions vis-à-vis the image of the entrepreneurial self and explore its implications for individuals' subjectivity. Although the entrepreneurial self therefore takes on different shapes, it remains a prototype of neoliberal conduct that personifies and unifies significant positions within the flow of the market.

The following analysis applies Foucault's concept of discourse and traces the processing of Red-Green government programmes in the novels by Hammerthaler, Liebermann, and Zelter as instances of discourses surrounding neoliberal governmentality and the entrepreneurial self. The starting point for this discourse analysis is the examination of Red-Green government programs referenced in each novel as technologies of domination. Because such programs are attempts to problematize and transform what is perceived as normality, its seeming naturalness is momentarily shattered and exposed to challenge. On the one hand, they

normally consist in visible and explicit, hence noticeable and tangible, instances of criticism that occur in specific contexts and spaces. On the other, their attempt to change an existing practice creates a contrast between what is considered to be status quo and what constitutes a desired future state. These moments of rupture create a space to call this normality into question and allow for an examination of the rationalities and technologies used to construct it. Conceptualizing Red-Green government programs as technologies of domination affords the opportunity to understand them not merely in terms of their immediate purpose, scope, and effect as examples of legislation, but rather as a combination of numerous instruments whose purpose, scope, and effect are more extensive than immediately visible. Although these programs appear to be limited to the sphere of work due to their categorization as labour market measures, the novels expose their extension far into the private sphere where they have an effect upon individuals' subjectivity. Similarly, this perspective allows for a differentiation of the notion of political authority within the context of government programs because it views authority as rather diffuse in that it occurs not only in the form of persons and institutions but also as forms of judgement. This conceptualization of authority, that is, the power to lay claim to the truth about what is normal and desirable, is illustrated in the novels in that they represent authority not only in the form of legislation or the representative figure of the Chancellor but also as internalized forms of self-judgement or less visible and indirect judgment from family members.

An analysis of the literary portrayal of Red-Green government programs as technologies of domination affords an opportunity to understand them as instances of the neoliberalization of society far beyond the programs' assumed immediate purpose as a means of job creation. Moreover, it will allow to examine the portrayal of each measure as an

instruction manual for the fabrication of individuals as entrepreneurial selves, that is, as tools that imply directives to act and think as rational, calculating, and profit-driven individuals and provide ways to put them into practice. In each novel, the portrayal of each government measure constructs a different type of the entrepreneurial self. Ralph Hammerthaler's *Alles bestens* processes the *Ich-AG* as a means that encourages individuals to understand and manage themselves as corporations by constructing a protagonist who can be seen as the *Ich-AG*'s literary embodiment. Reinhard Liebermann's *Das Ende des Kanzlers* processes the *Mittelstandsoffensive* as a point where the old mercantile model is challenged by the new entrepreneurial model, a conflict that is carried out in the protagonist's character. Lastly, Joachim Zelter's *Schule der Arbeitslosen* processes governmental employability training measures as a means to shape individuals as entrepreneurial selves not with the goal of becoming employed in an increasingly unpredictable labour market but with the aim of incarnating the idealized form of entrepreneurial existence.

Based on the conclusions about Red-Green government programs as technologies of domination, the analysis will also answer questions about how these programs are interconnected with technologies of the self and how they contribute to shaping the characters' subjectivities as entrepreneurial selves. The characters in each novel, in particular the protagonists, strive towards this image by persistently disciplining and working on themselves in order to undergo a transformation that brings them closer to their desired goal. Their concern with the self is expressed in particular with respect to conceptualizations of entrepreneurialism, body, gender, and social interactions. In all three novels, these self-concepts help construct the protagonists according to an entrepreneurial normality. Through them, the protagonists are enabled to perform particular subject positions vis-à-vis the image of the entrepreneurial self,

that is – referring to Bröckling’s typology – as enthusiasts, melancholics, ironists, and social lemmings. Examining the protagonists’ work on their selves as technologies of the self and showing their interconnectedness with Red-Green government programs as technologies of domination uncovers the complex socio-political processes involved in producing this subjectivity that links self-concepts of body, gender, and social interactions with the image of the entrepreneurial self. An analysis of the technologies of the self will reveal the many attitudes and actions of the characters that support, discipline, and propel them towards their desired goal.

Together with technologies of domination and the self, language as a technology of thought plays a fundamental role in the construction of public-political discourses of neoliberalism through Red-Green government programs and the way these programs create the image of the entrepreneurial self. It is equally essential to understanding their literary processing and construction in the novels by Hammerthaler, Liebermann, and Zelter. Through the identification and analysis of discourses related to neoliberal governmentality as emergent in subject constructions and as recurring themes, the analysis will illustrate how the novels comment on and construct neoliberal discourses, in particular discourses of entrepreneurialism.

3 *Alles bestens?* Economizing the Self

In this chapter, I examine the protagonist in Ralph Hammerthaler's novel *Alles bestens* as a literary embodiment of the *Ich-AG* and argue that his blind striving for the idealized image of the entrepreneur can be interpreted as his self-conception as a corporation. In order to provide an in-depth understanding of the complexity of the *Ich-AG* not only as a government program but also as an incarnation of the entrepreneurial self, I will first shed light on the US-American origin of this term as 'Me-Incorporated,' its introduction in Germany through Peter Wippermann, co-founder of the consulting firm *Trendbüro* that identifies trends and market opportunities (Trendbüro), and its legitimisation in the *Duden* and delegitimation as an *Unwort des Jahres* before its reconceptualization in 2003 as a government program of the Red-Green coalition. I intend to show that Hammerthaler's novel inscribes itself into this discourse of the *Ich-AG* and continues its construction through a narrative that imagines it as a means by which individuals are encouraged and enabled to understand and manage themselves as corporations.

As the chief editor of a popular-science journal, the protagonist in *Alles bestens* thinks he has it all: in his mid-thirties, he owns and manages a small high-profile, high-profit academic journal and has a non-committal affair with Nicole, a young professor from Jena whom he visits whenever the mood strikes him. He takes pride in being a self-made man and lives according to the belief that of all systems, the system of economic relations ensures the greatest satisfaction as it is based on the rationalization and calculation of personal benefit. Yet his successful life as a first-class businessman crumbles under the surface. Because there is nothing left to strive for, his success leaves him feeling void and fatigued. He can neither feel the thrill of closing a profitable business deal nor derive satisfaction from spending time with

Nicole. “Alles lief bestens. Es lief in der Liebe und im Verlagsgeschäft so gut, dass ich den Systemkitzel, ob Liebe, ob Geschäft, nicht mehr allzu stark spürte. So fing ich an zu ermüden, nicht aus Erfolglosigkeit, sondern aus Erfolg. ... Und so wurde ich in gewisser Weise das Opfer meiner eigenen Routine, ganz richtig: das Opfer” (Hammerthaler 15). Because he no longer feels the expected thrill of striving for success, he casts himself in the role of a victim of this unsatisfying routine. He begins to lose consciousness with increasing frequency and cannot remember anything he experienced during his blackouts; his body, however, continues to move and function properly and according to social standards, often causing his unconscious state to remain unnoticed for a while. Unwilling to seek medical help or even emotional support, he considers the lack of exhilaration in his life to be the cause for this condition he names “interpenetration damage.” He explains his loss of consciousness as a feeling of growing disorientation, dwindling self-assurance, and an inability to grasp the concepts that used to organize the now unnavigable world around him. His friend Lorenzo validates this claim by linking it to Systems Theory, clarifying that his weakened consciousness is harried and penetrated by social, political, economic and other systems around him, resulting in this chaotic state that will eventually threaten his existence.

Afraid of loneliness, the seemingly insurmountable demands of everyday life, and of the possibility that he is no longer of sound mind, he moves into a luxurious hotel where everything is taken care of for him, from making his bed and cleaning his room to cooking his food and taking his messages. When the suicide of Nicole’s colleague Dr. Schulz reveals that Schulz had taken intimate photographs of her, his capacity to experience emotions briefly resurfaces as he reacts with disappointment and jealousy. Unable to deal with or overcome his hurt feelings, he increasingly isolates himself from her and begins neglecting his position as

chief editor, leaving the hotel only when absolutely necessary, until he becomes unable to attend to the simplest tasks. He embarks on an insatiable search for thrill and excitement in an effort to rectify the emotional numbness his way of life has caused. When he discovers that even the game of Russian roulette he plays in his hotel room cannot satisfy this one desire left in his mind, he decides that he must seduce his best friend's wife Anne in order to feel truly distressed and alive. But even when Anne leaves Lorenzo to begin a relationship with him, an event that drives Lorenzo to desperation and momentarily brings about the eagerly awaited surge of emotion and vitality he had sought, he eventually also distances himself from her and plunges deeper into his secluded world. After several episodes of blackouts and delusions, he hallucinates that he is surrounded by a large array of police cars and officers at his local bar. Puzzled by their presence and unable to draw a conclusion about their intentions, he feels watched and eventually collapses during what he believes to be his execution by the police. When he wakes up in the hospital, a doctor explains to him that his self is slowly disintegrating. Ignoring medical advice and in a delusional state, he leaves the hospital declaring that he must take charge of his life one last time. He acknowledges for the first time that he cannot control his longing for Nicole and drives to Jena to visit her. Refusing to accept the possibility that he may be about to lose consciousness again, he has a blackout and is killed in a car accident.

In *Alles Bestens*, the protagonist – who is also the narrator of his own story – rushes headlong into disaster with his eyes wide open, aware of his own deconstruction as a subject but unable to change course. Using the imperative of the market as a metaphor for life itself, he is fixated on portraying and conducting himself as a purely rational and calculating individual who is in control of his career, his body, and even his masculinity. Because he sees life as a marketplace, he positions everyone and everything within this interpretative paradigm that

values profit, competition, self-responsibility, and entrepreneurial ingenuity over personal relationships, collaboration, and support. An enthusiast according to Bröckling's entrepreneurial typology ("Enthusiasten, Ironiker, Melancholiker" 83), he believes himself to be an autonomous entrepreneur who is free to think and act without any hierarchical, bureaucratic, or other constraints, and is therefore able to make particularly advantageous, market-driven choices. However, despite his greatest efforts to govern and discipline himself according to these principles, it becomes increasingly difficult for him to hold on to the lifestyle he has created for himself. His attempts to act upon himself to portray a successful entrepreneur are undermined by the very things he believes he is able to control. When the success of his journal is no longer dependent on him, his body begins to decay, and when his masculinity is called into question when Nicole has an affair with another man, he loses the ability to construct himself as a strong, successful, and virile entrepreneur; simultaneously, he loses his ability to continue living. Without being able to draw on meaningful and supportive relationships, he carries the principle of self-responsibility to extremes and, through his tragic failure, exposes it as an illusion that serves the preservation of the market and not of individuals' wellbeing. *Alles bestens* imagines the effects of the individual's blind striving for an idealized image of the entrepreneur and reveals the entrepreneurial self as a problematic prototype of conduct that needs to be called into question.

The protagonist is an archetype of the individual's participatory role in neoliberal governing practices that have shifted most governmental responsibilities, such as medical care or a prospering economy, onto the individual who willingly resolves all concerns in the private sphere. Because the all-encompassing appeal of the entrepreneurial self spares no one, he would not want it any other way: taking responsibility for his own body is synonymous with

the positively framed ability to take charge of his own life, be independent, and exercise will power. As the founder and chief editor of a popular-science journal, he is caught in the perpetual motion machine that is the entrepreneurial self and believes that exercising more self-control is the remedy for his decaying body and mind. More than only managing a corporation, as will be shown in the next section, he thinks and acts like a corporate being himself. He calculates the benefit of every action and every relationship he enters and expects of himself and others to assume personal responsibility for everything that happens to them. His attempt to portray the perfect neoliberal individual causes his life and his perpetual search for lucrative economic relations to merge into one, showing him to be a literary embodiment of the *Ich-AG* in the sense of an individual's self-conception as a corporation and hence a particular incarnation of the entrepreneurial self. Although the *Ich-AG* is not explicitly mentioned as a government measure in Hammerthaler's novel, the *Ich* and the *AG* merge on the fictional level in the character of the protagonist and form an entity that is often promoted in a nonchalant way: to be an *Ich-AG* instead of merely founding one.

3.1 The *Ich-AG* As Incarnation Of the Entrepreneurial Self

The concept of the *Ich-AG* had entered the public sphere long before it became a labour market measure introduced by the Red-Green coalition in 2003 to help more citizens become self-employed. The origin of the concept *Ich-AG* is generally attributed to Peter Wippermann who introduced Tom Peters' concept of "the brand called You" to German audiences in 2000 ("Einzelkämpfer"). Peters advocates an all-encompassing approach to managing oneself as a company and marketing oneself like a brand product. "Regardless of age, regardless of position, regardless of the business we happen to be in, all of us need to understand the importance of

branding. We are the CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You. It's that simple – and that hard. And that inescapable” (Peters). Following Peters, Wippermann defines the *Ich-AG* as “ein Individuum, das im Zuge der Globalisierung unabhängig in selbst gesuchten Bindungen lebt und sich nicht auf den Staat und seine Einrichtungen verlässt” (Wippermann, Interview). The globalized individual who has come to live independently and refrains from relying on the state and its institutions is meant to become a reality on a grand scale with the help of a government that supports individuals in their endeavour to become self-employed. The state's only goal, in this scenario, seems to be to support a life-makeover of its citizens. Transforming the belief in state responsibility into a reflection of a weak character, Wippermann imagines an individual who not only accepts, but wholeheartedly embraces self-reliance and rejects state welfare as a sign of personal strength. Such individuals have no claims against the state or fellow citizens and are prepared to pick themselves up again if necessary. Here, the necessity and role of technologies of the self become apparent. To be self-responsible and self-reliant to the extent that individuals are their own last resort and the state is no longer even recognized as a possible source of welfare requires them to constantly act upon their bodies, thoughts, and conduct so as to come closer to this desired ability and the promised success as an individual in a globalized world. It seems, interestingly, as though the labour market measure introduced three years later was put into place to support precisely the type of citizen Wippermann envisioned.

3.1.1 Introducing the *Ich-AG* in Germany

Already in 2001, the German dictionary Duden included the term *Ich-AG* in its newly published dictionary entitled *Duden Wörterbuch der New Economy*, written by Peter Wippermann, and secured its legitimate position in the German language.

Ich-AG. [zu gleichbedeutend engl. *Me Incorporated*] Das Verständnis der eigenen Person als Aktiengesellschaft. Der Begriff bezeichnet den entscheidenden sozialen Wandel zur Jahrtausendwende. Menschen sehen sich verstärkt als Lebensunternehmer, die Eigenverantwortung statt Fremdverantwortung wählen. Diese Entwicklung geht mit dem ökonomisch erzwungenen Rückzug des Staates aus einem flächendeckenden Sicherheitsnetz einher. Weiterhin befördert die Transformation der Arbeitskultur, in der mehr Eigenständigkeit und Unternehmertum gefragt ist, das Selbstverständnis als Ich-AG. Dazu gehört vor allem, wie bei einer realen Aktiengesellschaft permanent am Kurswert der eigenen Person zu arbeiten: “Ich muss meine Ich-Aktie unbedingt wieder nach oben treiben”. (Wippermann, *Duden Wörterbuch der New Economy* 79)

The dictionary entry first defines *Ich-AG* simply as the understanding of oneself as corporation. Contrary to the panel *Sprachkritische Aktion Unwort des Jahres*, the Duden uses this definition as a logical point of departure for the rest of the entry. It provides not only an elaborate explanation of the concept’s – not the term’s – relevance in various contexts, but also of its imperative function within these contexts. The *Ich-AG*, the entry declares, signifies a pivotal change at the turn of the millennium. Its only driving force lies, according to Duden, within people’s increasing perception of themselves as entrepreneurs of their own lives who choose personal over other-directed responsibility. Consequently, individuals are expected to perpetually improve themselves in order to raise their own market value. By contrast, the

state's retreat from a comprehensive system of social security and the higher demands of today's working culture in terms of independence and entrepreneurship are framed as surrounding circumstances that merely propel but do not elicit this self-perception.

This definition of the *Ich-AG* exemplifies how neo-liberal principles and techniques, from the perspective of governmentality, address individuals as entrepreneurs with the aim of encouraging them to fulfil government policies and programmes. This term is described as a phenomenon of social change that has already occurred and that we as a society now face. This change, according to the entry, has not brought about the need or prerogative for entrepreneurs, but is merely reflected in the fact that individuals have already come to see themselves as entrepreneurs of their own lives. Within this naturalized economic context, citizens are called upon as individuals who have already made the choice to be self-responsible. To that end, reliance on others is not only framed as the responsibility of others for one's actions but also in contrast to self-reliance, excluding any consideration of their potentially valuable concurrence. Because the self-reliant self-government of individuals is presented as an intrinsic human value that is recognized through self-awareness, individuals are conceptualized as active and self-reflected participants in this social change who are enabled to gain power over themselves. With the strength of the empowered individual, the state's responsibility for social security now appears not only as unsustainable but also as unnecessary. Social security has thereby become a personal issue that individuals readily resolve in the personal sphere as the demand for self-reliance is framed positively as self-empowerment and independence.

In 2002, the term itself along with its meanings, associations, and implications was chosen as the *Unwort des Jahres*, as the non-word of the year. To choose the non-word of the year, the politically independent panel *Sprachkritische Aktion Unwort des Jahres*, consisting

mostly of linguists, asks the German public to submit words found in public discourse that represent linguistic mishaps and are considered extremely inappropriate or even in violation of human dignity (“Unwort des Jahres”). According to the panel, the term *Ich-AG* suggests a “Reduzierung von Individuen – als Aktiengesellschaft? – auf sprachliches Börsenniveau” (“Die bisher gekürten Unwörter”). The panel further elaborates on the reasons for their 2002 choice, emphasizing the implications of reducing human fate by assigning to it a value on the stock market.

Diese Wortbildung aus dem ‘Hartz-Papier’ leidet bereits sachlich unter lächerlicher Unlogik, da ein Individuum keine Aktiengesellschaft sein kann. Selbst als ironisches Bild ist das Wort nicht hinzunehmen, da sich die aktuelle Arbeitslosigkeit mit solcher Art von Humor kaum noch verträgt. Ausschlaggebend für die Wahl war aber die Herabstufung von menschlichen Schicksalen auf ein sprachliches Börsenniveau. Ich-AG ist damit einer der zunehmenden Belege, schwierige soziale und sozialpolitische Sachverhalte mit sprachlicher Kosmetik schönzureden. (“Unwort des Jahres 2002 – Ich-AG”)

Only two years later, the panel chose the word “Humankapital” as *Unwort des Jahres*, criticising the promotion of a primarily economic understanding of all possible references to life. “Humankapital degradiert nicht nur Arbeitskräfte in Betrieben, sondern Menschen überhaupt zu nur noch ökonomisch interessanten Größen” (“Unwort des Jahres 2004 – Humankapital”). The assumption under attack that underlies both human capital and *Ich-AG* is that the market is used as an exclusive reference to determine the value of an individual. It is, of course, true that an individual, as suggested by the term *Ich-AG*, simply cannot be a corporation. The equation of the two and, more importantly, the accepted use of this term by German media personalities and politicians who would later use it as a label for an important labour market reform is much more than a case of ridiculous and illogical word formation. It

shows that this concept, however contradictory it may be from a logical perspective, is accepted to fit easily into an already existing socio-political context.

Within this context, the *Ich-AG* has come to express that founding a business and becoming an entrepreneur is not merely a career choice but rather an all-encompassing way of life that satisfies individuals' desire for material and financial success and the high social standing associated with it. As both the means and the end are firmly framed in economic terms, they both condition and perpetuate each other. Satisfying one's own desire to reach these entrepreneurial ideals is hence synonymous with the wish to take responsibility for one's welfare in the promoted cause of autonomy because it is inextricably linked to entrepreneurial success. By shifting the meaning of welfare from government-provided welfare – a political tradition in Germany since the inception of its post-war social market economy – to individually-provided welfare, the *Ich-AG* is an exemplary manifestation of neoliberal governmentality and, in particular, of the entrepreneurial self. As such, the concept of the *Ich-AG* as a self-image serves to support the perpetuation of neoliberal governing practices, which count and rely on the performance of civic responsibilities. Hence, individuals themselves contribute to a system in which they are both governed and govern themselves according to neoliberal concepts. The underlying neoliberal rationality becomes visible through the emphasis of the self-responsible and the economically-rational individual who is willing to use this self-responsibility to better adapt to a transformed working culture and a market that demands risk-taking entrepreneurship and the unhesitating formation of companies. As an aid to the subjectification of individuals as entrepreneurs, the concept of the *Ich-AG* can be understood as an incarnation of the entrepreneurial self.

It is in this context that Schröder's government adopted the term and introduced the *Ich-AG* as a labour market measure in 2003. It asserts its seemingly natural validity and legitimacy as a labour market measure as well as validates and legitimates the government that created it by drawing on and also producing the entrepreneurial values of self-reliance and material success that have supposedly become part of the desires and lifestyles of individuals. The *Ich-AG* measure was developed by a commission on reforms to the labour market under the leadership of Peter Hartz, who was both an advisor to the Chancellor and the human resources executive at Volkswagen AG. As a grant that guarantees those who start their own business a small income and social security for the first three years, its immediate goal was to encourage unemployed citizens to become self-employed entrepreneurs and to remain self-employed after the grant expired. On its website, the *Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie* explains the goal of the *Ich-AG* and briefly outlines how it works.

Der "Existenzgründungszuschuss", wie die Förderung der Ich-AG korrekt heißt, ist neben dem Überbrückungsgeld eine der beiden Förderhilfen, mit denen die Agenturen für Arbeit Gründungen von Personen, die arbeitslos oder von Arbeitslosigkeit bedroht sind, unterstützen. [...] Für eine Ich-AG kommt jede selbständige gewerbliche oder freiberufliche Tätigkeit in Frage. Die Antragstellung des Existenzgründungszuschusses ist außerdem einfach, und er garantiert dem Gründer eine soziale Absicherung in den ersten drei Jahren seiner Selbständigkeit. ("Förderung von Existenzgründungen aus der Arbeitslosigkeit")

The measure was modified several times since its introduction in 2003. In 2006, the *Ich-AG* was officially renamed *Gründungszuschuss*, business start-up grant, which runs for less than two years instead of three and provides less financial support ("Neue Förderung für Existenzgründer"). In November 2011, it was further reduced to little more than one year and even less financial support ("Gründungszuschuss").

As a technology of domination and the self, the *Ich-AG* measure both governs individuals and enables them to govern themselves as entrepreneurs. On the one hand, it signifies a manifestation of political knowledge that is exclusive to politicians and their experts and is therefore attributed authority that claims what is true, normal, and desirable. On the other, it calls for individuals to become autonomous entrepreneurs and therefore depends on their active participation and will to act upon and transform themselves. Because nearly any activity qualifies for individuals to become self-employed, the *Ich-AG* is able to address individuals as the entrepreneurs they already are and at the same time ought to become. In its description of the *Ich-AG*, the ministry establishes an understanding of unemployment as a problem for which the *Ich-AG* is presented as a remedy. Providing merely help to self-help, it is not the government agency itself or any other governing body that is portrayed as an advocate of the unemployed and the concerns they face; it is the unemployed themselves who are encouraged and enabled to become their own strongest supporters by becoming entrepreneurs. At the same time, the grant discourages unemployed individuals from receiving unemployment benefits or social welfare, allowing the ministry to withdraw from its own responsibility to provide welfare benefits to those who were formerly unemployed. As individuals strive to establish and maintain a lifestyle of self-responsibility, they participate in a process that recognizes the government as an institution whose own responsibility lies first and foremost in the support of economic growth and less in the provision of welfare. Fewer unemployment benefits and welfare claims, more capital generated by citizens that flows back into the market, and falling unemployment numbers; the value and importance of *Ich-AGs* for the state cannot be overstated and provide another explanation for the positive emphasis placed on this particular labour market measure.

The language used by the *Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie* to explain the *Ich-AG* frames the measure, without reservation, as an easy way for unemployed persons to effect positive change in their own lives. While the state is portrayed positively in the position of a compassionate supporter of those in need of help, unemployment is depicted as an uncontrollable threat external to the government's workings that can, however, be circumvented by accepting the recommendations given by this measure. Stipulating the desire in individuals to become self-employed by portraying it as diametrically opposed to unemployment, all the government seems to do is to provide the means for this wish, which is portrayed as innate, to become a reality. The call to become self-employed equates individuals' desire to secure their material existence with the desire to become self-reliant, thereby encouraging them to assume all responsibilities and carry all risks associated with founding a business. The ministry also points out the supposed ease with which individuals can become entrepreneurs, as they are merely asked to recognize the existing potential of any commercial or freelance activity for successful self-employment. The *Ich-AG* offers itself as a self-evident option without alternatives, although there are many kinds of employment and many ways to find it.

The text assures the hesitant future entrepreneur of the ease with which one can become an entrepreneur and the lack of risk involved in this process, owing to the ministry's guarantee of social security for the duration of the program. In fact, however, the grant barely provides an amount sufficient to cover the cost of pension insurance, medical insurance, and long-term care insurance, without considering unemployment insurance. On the one hand, this means that the grant merely covers the various insurances needed to create or maintain the minimum standard of social security (Kwasniewski). On the other, those who choose to become self-employed

must also immediately become self-reliant and generate enough profit to provide for themselves and possibly for dependents. Hence, the government's role lies exclusively in encouraging as many unemployed persons as possible to choose the path of self-employment. While it may seem as though the government fulfills a caretaker role by offering a measure that helps its citizens to improve their material existence, it actually advocates a lifestyle of great financial uncertainty and self-reliance that depends on the market and its unpredictable fluctuations. It then becomes the responsibility of the self-employed to acquire enough knowledge of the market to be able to sustain the *Ich-AG*. The ability to reason in terms of the rationality of the market – a neoliberal governing rationality – is a central effect of the *Ich-AG* on the self-employed, whose own welfare depends on understanding the market as a benchmark for every action and reaction.

The ministry furthermore encourages this leap into self-employment by showing the large number of *Ich-AGs* that have been founded since its inception without, however, mentioning the strikingly large number of people who already dropped out of the grant program.

Mit der Einführung des Existenzgründungszuschusses ist die Zahl der Existenzgründungen in Deutschland sprunghaft angestiegen. ... Von Januar 2003 bis Juni 2004 haben fast 170.000 Personen eine Ich-AG gegründet. Im selben Zeitraum sind rund 415.000 zuvor arbeitslose Menschen durch die Förderung der Agenturen für Arbeit (Existenzgründungszuschuss und Überbrückungsgeld zusammen) ihr eigener Chef geworden. ("Förderung von Existenzgründungen aus der Arbeitslosigkeit")

Nicolai Kwasniewski states that by March 2004, 11.584 people had left the grant program again. He argues that the reasons for this high drop-out rate are unclear or unknown because

the ministry has no system in place or no motivation to collect this information when people drop out of the program or choose not to renew their grant application. It seems far more important to the ministry to record information about individuals entering the program because this information is used to justify its existence and argue for its success. The text prioritizes not having to answer to anyone but oneself regarding the possible reasons for leaving the program early or choosing another path altogether. Considering the small amount of financial support offered by the grant program on the one hand and the necessity of taking high risks and being almost immediately self-reliant on the other, the ministry's program description distracts from the enormous demands placed on the self-employed created by the *Ich-AG*. Its proclaimed goal of 'becoming one's own boss' exemplifies the belief that self-reliance is not only a desirable but also a lifestyle-determining value that justifies the acceptance of uncertainty and the lack of outside help.

Moreover, the ministry claims that the *Ich-AG* allows more women, the long-term unemployed, and older unemployed persons to become self-employed, suggesting that self-employment generates gender and age equality.

Die ersten Erfahrungen zeigen, dass unter den Ich-AG-Gründern - im Vergleich zum Überbrückungsgeld - deutlich mehr Frauen sowie Langzeitarbeitslose und ältere Arbeitslose (die sich besonders schwer in Arbeit vermitteln lassen) zu finden sind. ("Förderung von Existenzgründungen aus der Arbeitslosigkeit")

By singling out unemployed women, the long-term unemployed, and older unemployed persons as the most challenging groups to employ on the one hand and as *Ich-AG* successes on the other, the ministry portrays the *Ich-AG* as an employment option without viable alternatives. The ministry affirms these groups' weak position on the labour market and

validates their personal deficits as the cause for this instead of questioning, for example, the exclusionary mechanisms of the market. What underlies this perspective is an understanding of the market as an essential regulatory mechanism, not only of labour but also of individuals and the way they relate to one another. Consequently, the members of these groups are not only portrayed as capable of becoming self-employed, but they are also expected to follow this path because it is portrayed as their last chance to compensate for their unemployability, a situation that is framed as an unalterable and self-inflicted shortcoming. At the same time, this argument purports the validity of the neoliberal notion of self-responsibility by implicitly questioning the validity of the social security measures that so far had provided them with a minimum means of existence and that may, on this basis, be conceived of by the government as obsolete. As a technology of domination, thought, and the self, the *Ich-AG* paves the way for many into entrepreneurship and hence allows Schröder's government to further withdraw from efforts to provide social welfare while "produc[ing] the citizen best suited to fulfil those governments' policies" (Mayhew 224).

For those who want to found an *Ich-AG*, there are many government publications that contain information about the preparation of an *Ich-AG* that is considered adequate. The brochure "Selbständig statt arbeitslos" (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Arbeit), for example, urges its readers to find out whether they are an "Unternehmertyp" (9) with sufficient subject-specific and entrepreneurial knowledge to found an *Ich-AG*. Regardless of the answer, the brochure advises the reader to start small, thereby taking advantage of the arguably limited entrepreneurial risk, financing requirements, and expenditure of time. Because the grant is meant to mostly cover the necessary insurances to provide social security, however, "Geld für Investitionen, z.B. eine Laden- oder Büroeinrichtung, wird hierüber aber nicht zur Verfügung

gestellt” (9). The difficulty for *Ich-AGs* to find a product or service that can be produced or offered, as the brochure elaborates, can be counterbalanced with a “gut durchdachter Gründungsidee und einem detaillierten Businessplan” (9). At this point, the new entrepreneur has been tied into a cycle that demands a constant improvement of entrepreneurial skills in order to be able to continuously adapt to the fluctuating demands of the market. Those attempting to become entrepreneurs are required to have or develop particular characteristics and skills that are reminiscent of the four main entrepreneurial functions Bröckling (2007) identifies. They are expected to evaluate whether their current market assessment is correct and whether their business location is favourable to making a profit (“Selbständig statt arbeitslos” 9), which are conditions for becoming clever users of opportunities for profit (*Das unternehmerische Selbst* 114). They must also be bearers of economic risks, a characteristic that Bröckling clearly identifies as one of the main entrepreneurial functions (110). Hence, the *Ich-AG* makes use of existing notions of the entrepreneur and its associations to devise effective techniques and mechanisms that aim at achieving particular government interests, such as lower social security costs and an expanding work force that actively contributes to rapid economic growth; on the other, it contributes to producing new facets of this notion, expanding the existing one. Within the context of neoliberal governmentality, everyone can and therefore should be an entrepreneur regardless of the scale of one’s business, an endeavour facilitated by the *Ich-AG*. By attributing a better social standing and economic success to entrepreneurial prototypes of conduct, it offers an implicit normative model of how both unemployed and self-employed individuals ought to conduct themselves in order to continue approximating the idealized image of the successful entrepreneur. In a process of perpetual adaptation to the entrepreneurial model, the founders of *Ich-AGs* constitute themselves and are

constituted through the knowledge and methods generated by the discourse of the *Ich-AG* that borrows much of its rationality from the larger discourses of entrepreneurialism.

3.2 The Literary Embodiment of the *Ich-AG* in Ralph Hammerthaler's *Alles bestens*

Hammerthaler's novel taps into the discussions and deliberations about the discourse of the *Ich-AG* as well as its implications for the individual and puts this self-conception into imaginary practice. The protagonist seems to have internalized an economized perspective on himself and his life and recognizes himself in the discursive truth of the *Ich-AG*, exposing its power as a technology of domination that manifests itself in the form of self-judgement. He strives to become more successful, richer, and more powerful by persistently attempting to exercise control over his thoughts and his conduct. These technologies of the self range from earning a doctorate degree only out of ambition and narcissism to devaluing friends and strangers alike, which allows him to act upon himself by differentiating between the unsuccessful others and his successful self in order to construct himself as the ideal entrepreneur. These technologies of domination and the self become visible in his assumed role as the narrator and hence creator of himself as a success story. Through the language of the entrepreneurial self, that is, the language of self-assurance, control, autonomy, and success, he also attempts to take narrative control of himself and his life without realizing that his pursuit of an idealized image must remain futile. Despite his efforts to remain in control, the language he tries to instrumentalize for his self-serving goals undermines his attempts and turns against him. This tension between language as a means of self-preservation and a mirror of self-destruction is present throughout his narrative and creates an ironic effect that also undermines the protagonist's reliability as the narrator of his own success story. Hence, an analysis of the

protagonist's self-construction through language as a technology of thought allows the reader to identify how he governs himself and is governed through technologies of domination and the self.

As the narrator of his own story, which he tells retrospectively, the protagonist opens his account with a description of himself as a prime example of a self-made entrepreneur who created a successful business out of nothing but his own strength, evoking the myth of the man who rose from rags to riches. "Alles lief bestens. Ich baute einen Verlag auf, und ich gründete eine Zeitschrift, ich wurde Verleger und Chefredakteur in einer Person. Alles aus eigener Kraft" (Hammerthaler 8). Unexpectedly, he briefly interrupts his own plot in order to dismantle the truth he just created about himself, explaining that this is merely the story he feels compelled to tell for the purpose of presenting himself in a favourable light. "[S]o muss man es Amerikanern erklären, aber nicht nur denen, auch die eigenen Landsleute hören solche Geschichten gern" (8). Although he claims to be aware that the widespread narrative of the self-made man who rose from rags to riches is merely a socio-cultural construct, a pleasing myth that reinforces the desirability and hoped-for attainability of this entrepreneurial image, his own unfolding story is about a man who brings about his own demise because he desires and pursues the image of the perfect entrepreneur. Although he is aware of the constructedness of this image, he is not able to position himself outside of this narrative, exposing the entrepreneurial self as an all-encompassing image of hegemonic subjectification that spares not even those who understand that it is a socio-culturally constructed concept. Despite his seeming effort to distance himself, he continues to tell his own success story by describing himself as a determined, clever, overconfident, and self-interested businessman, whose relationship with his authors equals that of an investor with his investments.

Ich fing an, zu reisen und aus dem Koffer zu leben, denn ich hatte mir vorgenommen, meine Autoren aus der sogenannten geistigen Elite zu rekrutieren. Ein Begriff, mit dem ich schon damals nichts anfangen konnte Aber gut. Es war nicht zu vermeiden, ich brauchte berühmte Namen, die mir den Weg säumten, und das taten sie auch bereitwillig, solange ich nur ein anständiges Honorar in Aussicht stellte. (8)

He embraces the myth of the self-made man and its presupposition that it is determination and a clever business concept alone that create opportunities to attain prosperity and success. He does not attempt to resist or distance himself from this image, whose constructed nature he has at least begun to decipher; instead, he inscribes himself completely and devotedly into it by portraying himself as an ambitious, profit-oriented, and power-hungry man who is always on the lookout for his own advantage without giving any consideration to the needs of others or questioning his own. Because the language of the entrepreneurial self serves as a tool that gives meaning and a higher purpose to his conduct as a journal editor who is forced to use professors as resources for his product, it also allows him to instrumentalize and place himself above them like a puppeteer who controls the puppets' every move.

Where the source of his entrepreneurial ambition lies is unbeknown to the protagonist. All he knows is that he is drawn to keep moving up the ladder without a particular professional goal that drives him. "Dass ich mir etwas wirklich gewünscht hätte, kann ich so nicht behaupten, keinen bestimmten Posten, keine bestimmte Position, es zog mich einfach immer eine Stufe höher" (7). This upward pull to become more and more successful is generated only by his desire to be recognized as such both by himself and by his surroundings. What could otherwise appear as a characteristic that is intrinsic to his individuality is rather an expression of the discourse of the entrepreneurial self, specifically of the notion of the *Ich-AG*, which he

has internalized and is now the driving force behind his conduct. Because he is driven by the incessant desire to distinguish himself in an attempt to be noticed, reminiscent of Tom Peters' notion of "the brand called You", the protagonist's only moments of enjoyment are when he is congratulated and celebrated for his success. Upon receiving his doctorate degree, an instance of his acting upon himself in the image of the entrepreneurial self, the only satisfaction he derives revolves around holding the material proof in his hands that he is now allowed to claim the right to call himself and be addressed as 'doctor'. "Ich nahm die Urkunde in Empfang, und ich wusste, dass ich mich jetzt Doktor nennen und vor allem nennen lassen durfte" (7). His satisfaction with receiving such a high academic degree is not due to an intellectual achievement but rather to using this achievement to prove his superiority and competitive strength. Because of the underlying rivalry he feels between himself and those whom he will oblige to address him appropriately, it is as though he emerged the celebrated winner of a competition. As the call of the entrepreneurial self spares no one, the protagonist sees everyone who has the hypothetical ability to pursue a doctorate degree necessarily included in this competition. He designates himself the winner by demanding those who did not succeed in this endeavour to continually acknowledge his success.

The protagonist embraces the market as a universal structuring principle and can be considered what Ulrich Bröckling calls an enthusiast within his typology of the entrepreneurial self ("Enthusiasten, Ironiker, Melancholiker"). "Der Enthusiast feiert den *spirit of enterprise* als Geist der Befreiung – von hierarchischer Bevormundung, bürokratischen Zwängen und konformistischer Anpassung – und singt das Hohe Lied der Kreativität, Smartness, Selbstverantwortung und Risikobereitschaft" (83). He believes not only in his own autonomy but also in being a mobile, self-reliant, clever, free, rational and hence powerful individual,

qualities that he must continuously reinforce through his own narrative. He perceives himself to be autonomous to such an extent that he constructs the flawless functioning of his body even when he loses consciousness, making his collapse hardly noticeable to those around him. When he describes one of his blackouts, he chooses to do so by juxtaposing these incidents with a deliberately invented, cynical scene of himself fainting in the middle of a pompous dinner party reminiscent of 19th century soirées.

Das erste Mal, als ich in Ohnmacht stürzte, hörte ich kurz, bevor es dunkel wurde, einen spitzen Schrei, und ich hatte den Eindruck, dass dieser Schrei der Gastgeberin selbst entfuhr, sie stieß einen Schrei aus und die kleine Gesellschaft erstarrte, ... Später ließ ich mir alles genau berichten, etwa, dass ... die kleine Gesellschaft, nachdem sie meinen bewusstlosen Körper auf eine Chaiselongue gebettet hatte, im Kreis um mich herum stand. ... Sie hatten mich noch nicht aufgegeben und so kehrte ich wie zur Belohnung wieder in ihren Kreis zurück. (16)

In this scene, he wastes no opportunity to portray not himself, but those who are concerned about his health as weak and helpless, disparaging their sympathy for him as an expression of powerlessness and ridiculing it as useless. By using this cynical exaggeration as a juxtaposition for the description of his blackouts, he sets the stage for portraying them not as an expression of impotence, in fact, not even as full blackouts, but rather as a state in which he is able to partially retain control because his body continues to function properly and maintains the pretence of autonomy. “[Ich falle] genau genommen gar nicht in Ohnmacht ... Auch im Fall einer Ohnmacht [bleibe ich] gewissermaßen mächtig, es ist wahr, dass ich mein Bewusstsein verliere, und zwar immer wieder, aber der Körper ... steuert sich in diesen Auszeiten gewissermaßen selbständig” (16-17). Seemingly unshaken by this experience of his own vulnerability, he attempts to portray his entrepreneurial self positively by assembling it with

narrative elements chosen to serve as illustrative examples of his power and strength as a successful *Ich-AG*.

Although, or rather because he repeatedly and enthusiastically asserts that “alles lief bestens” (8, 13, 15, 154, 183), it becomes clear early on in his account that, in fact, nothing is running at its best. Rather than an expression of content, this phrase serves as a technology of thought that acts as a mantra-like means of self-reassurance. It bares an underlying technology of the self with which he continuously attempts to reaffirm the validity and success of his striving to govern himself in the image of the entrepreneurial self. While his own narration is congruent with his perception of being a successful entrepreneur, it is contrasted by a parallel narration of his failure as an entrepreneur. On the plot level, this contrast is uncovered by the striking discrepancy between this nonchalant stock phrase and the increasingly worsening and dangerous blackouts as well as by his increasing isolation and desperation. On the narrative level, it is uncovered by the discrepancy between his attempt to use language as a means of self-preservation and the way language itself has the opposite effect, undermining his attempt by mirroring his unstoppable self-destruction. Through these two competing narratives of success and failure, the illusion of his success is broken and the unreliability of the protagonist-narrator is exposed. Their function is not to question the legitimacy of his experiences but to create an ironic distance between illusion and reality and to uncover his self-deception, to which he is unable to put an end even as he faces death. By bringing to light his physical and emotional decline as an economized individual, the competing narratives also reveal the otherwise invisible destructive force of the idealized image of the entrepreneurial self.

As the literary embodiment of an *Ich-AG*, the protagonist believes that the system of economic relations is the best functioning of all systems. He presupposes that a rational,

calculating approach to understanding any situation is not only possible but will also lead to a result that – in order to be worthwhile – satisfies the self-interest of the rational individual.

Having determined that the rationality of the market creates the most stable and solid interactions and adopting it as his own, the protagonist thus makes possible a justification of all of his self-interested actions not only as economically but also socially appropriate because they are understood to follow the same rationality.

Das System der wirtschaftlichen Verhältnisse funktioniert von allen Systemen am besten, sagte ich mir, denn es beruht auf einer sorgfältigen Abwägung von Kosten und Nutzen, auf einer Rechnung, die jeder für sich anstellt, so lange, bis sie ihn überzeugt und ihm, wie man sagt, zu seinem Vorteil gereicht. So gelten Wirtschaftsbeziehungen, sofern sie nur sorgfältig kalkuliert sind, als die dauerhaftesten Beziehungen [...]. (49)

Consequently, he understands all relationships he forms as economic relations. As the fundamental measuring unit that powers and maintains the economic system is money, it becomes the most sought after resource in his life. “Alles, was du brauchst, ist Geld, sagte ich mir, und schon wirst Du im Übermaß verwöhnt, du bestellst à la carte, ... immer das, worauf du gerade Lust verspürst, und du schläfst, wann und wo und mit wem du schlafen willst, ... du hast alle Muße der Welt, um einen klaren Gedanken zu fassen, was willst du mehr” (49-50). By simultaneously assuring himself of its importance to him and mobilizing his efforts to keep earning it in order to maintain his self-image, he creates a self-perpetuating cycle whose elements are mutually dependent and hence mutually stimulating: a vital element of the image of the entrepreneurial self. He believes that money buys not only material pleasures but also empowers him to satisfy his sexual needs whenever they arise and have a space free from all restrictions that leaves nothing to be desired. It is this hypertrophic notion of money as an

almost magic power that opens the door to a world in which he is free to do as he pleases that fuels his desire to keep striving for entrepreneurial success. Inspired by his belief in the omnipotence of money, he inscribes himself into the discourse of the entrepreneurial self and embraces the market as a metaphor for his own life. He constructs himself as a corporate entity that assigns to people and objects the material or immaterial costs and benefits he sees fit. With each of his actions transformed into an economic transaction, he governs himself as a corporatized entrepreneurial self, merging the self and the corporation, or the *Ich* and the *AG*, to become one, inseparable entity.

While he believes that the money he earns as a successful, self-made publisher has opened a world of endless possibilities to him, it becomes clear that it has also become the only way to create these experiences for himself. There is no life anymore outside of the economic system, the “Krakensystem der Wirtschaft” (50) as he labels it, in which he has situated himself so firmly. “Besser eine Gesellschaft konstituiert sich im Zeichen des Geldes als im Zeichen der Macht. ... Gut, sagte ich mir, gut, dass es das Geld gibt, denn das Geld hält die Welt zusammen und so auch ihre Gesellschaften. Hier weiß man wenigstens, woran man ist” (50). While the system of economic relations provides him with a pattern of interpretation that construes the world as a marketplace held together by the seemingly incessant flow of money, at the same time it also imposes on him the necessity to play by its rules and accept its unforeseeable and uncontrollable dynamic. Hence, the freedom and autonomy he believes to have are not only non-existent outside of it, but also within it.

That his autonomy is illusory must, however, remain unnoticed by the protagonist if he is to continue functioning as an entrepreneur. The power of the discourse of the *Ich-AG* as a technology of domination and its demand that individuals be autonomous becomes particularly

evident when the protagonist moves from his apartment into a hotel after losing first one housemaid he hired from Ireland who quits immediately after he harasses her sexually and then a second, elderly housemaid whom he fires for stealing money from his wallet. Although he admits that he feels utterly incapable of dealing with everyday life, ranging from the construction site noise in front of his apartment to his fear of being alone in his apartment to choosing what to eat and buying food, he is able to ignore – if only temporarily – the fact that he feels utterly helpless and in need of a caregiver. He achieves this by constructing himself as an economically and spatially mobile individual who takes care of himself and avoids becoming a needy and dependent welfare case. “Ich lief Gefahr, zu einem Sozialfall zu verkommen, zu einem Anspruchsberechtigten des guten Ernst-Abbe-Staates, ... den man ins Sozialheim steckt... Doch bevor ich in solch ein Heim umziehe, sagte ich mir, ziehe ich besser um in ein Hotel. Ich zahle fürs Essen und fürs Schlafen, und wenn mir etwas nicht passt, dann beschwere ich mich eben” (49). By moving into a hotel instead of an asylum, he attempts to create for himself the illusion of being responsible both for himself and for his journal, thus assuring himself that he exercises control over his life within this artificial home he has created for himself. But because he is aware of the illusion’s falseness and hence of his loss of control in every regard, his life at the hotel fails to provide him with the solace and comfort for which he longs; instead, he lends himself to the illusion that others will accept his deceit, allowing his social standing to remain intact. “Das Hotel dient mir und meiner Illusion... einer uneingeschränkten Zurechnungsfähigkeit. ... [Es befördert] die Illusion, ... dass ich unvermindert in die Geschäfte meines Verlages verwickelt bin, dabei spielt die Musik ganz von selbst” (52-53). To the protagonist, money has become the ultimate caregiver that allows him to keep up his self-deceiving belief in his inviolate autonomy. Although his mobility as an

autonomous individual has kept him from becoming a socially stigmatized welfare case, he lives his life without a home, uprooted and alone.

The “Ernst-Abbe-Staat” to which the protagonist refers is post-war Germany during the time of the Red-Green coalition. The novel is situated between 1999 and 2001, after the Reichstag’s move “in den Spreebogen” (67) and before the government of Berlin’s “Konservative” had ended in 2001 (66). It is a state in which a gentle form of capitalism, “ein sanfter Kapitalismus” (24), rules and can sustain itself because it is able to rectify all disruptions by absorbing them.

Manchmal protestiert ein Häuflein Enttäuschter gegen Enttäuschungen, ... aber etwas Protest tut jedem System gut, weil er Unzulänglichkeiten benennt, die das System hemmen. Die Störung wird behoben, und das System kreist weiter, in aller Ruhe um sich selbst. Keiner der Beherrschten soll wirklich ins Elend stürzen, weil das nicht gut aussieht vor der Welt, die auch eine Weltwirtschaft hat, mit der man Handel treiben möchte. (24-25)

In this kind of society, citizens are not ruled by a government, but instead by a system whose national and international economic relations regulate their wellbeing and in which the government is only one among a nondescript mass of economic actors who are looking to trade in the market place. He names Germany an Ernst-Abbe-Staat because Ernst Abbe, a wealthy optometrist and entrepreneur, “sicherte das Wohlwollen der Arbeiterschaft, indem er Bruchteile des kapitalistischen Reichtums unter sie streute. Er führte soziale Reformen ein, errichtete Wohnheime, und er gründete die Carl-Zeiss-Stiftung” (25). From the protagonist’s perspective, social security is meant only to pacify those who cannot claim any capitalist riches by making them feel cared for and understood and to maintain the status quo of disproportionate wealth distribution caused by the market-driven mechanisms of the capitalist

system. Dissociated from its societal purpose of alleviating the hardships of those who experience poverty, illness, disability, and unemployment, social security is no longer an expression of collective responsibility and solidarity but framed solely in economic terms as a means to ensure the preservation of the market. The economization even of social hardship and its regulation as part of an economic process that prioritizes profit over social justice is not only part of his abstract understanding of the paramount importance of the flow of the market and the government as nothing but an economic actor; it also underlies and shapes his relationship to others and himself, in particular to his body. Instead of approaching it with sympathy, benevolence, and care, he conceptualizes it as an economized sphere structured by self-control, autonomy, discipline, and competition. As an entrepreneur of his life, he believes that it is possible to govern his body and thus acts upon his corporal self as a corporate self.

3.2.1 Economizing Body and Mind

The decay of the protagonist's self begins with the decay of his mind, over which he unsuccessfully attempts to keep control until the very last moment of his life. At first, as he begins to experience blackouts – seemingly out of the blue – his body continues to move and function properly and, importantly, according to social standards, often causing his unconscious state to remain unnoticed for a while. “Ich stürze in die Nacht und der Körper sitzt weiter am Tisch, er isst und trinkt, achtet darauf, dass er an keiner Gräte erstickt, so als ginge ihn die periodische Abwesenheit seines Herrn nichts an” (17). He describes his body as having a mind of its own, able to perform the standards of social behaviour that his mind has become unable to conceptualize. Through his narration, he constructs his loss of consciousness as only a partial loss of control over his social status and ascribes his body the ability to execute social

rituals despite the absence of his will power. This narrative self-deception allows him to believe in the integrity of his public persona that has, although still invisible to him and the outside world, already begun to disintegrate. In order to rationalize his experience, he diagnoses his condition as an “Interpenetrationsschaden,” an interpenetration damage:

Mit dem Bewusstsein schwindet die Selbstgewissheit, das Gespür für den Standort zwischen Dingen, zwischen den Systemen, in denen sich das Leben, ob aus Pflicht, ob aus Neigung, bewegt. ... Begriffe, dazu gemacht, eins vom anderen zu unterscheiden, lösen sich auf, und man ist unfähig, eine bestimmte Situation zu bewältigen. Wenn man mich fragt, so würde ich sagen, dass ich an einem Interpenetrationsschaden leide. Ich werde, meiner Begriffe entkleidet, interpenetriert und letztlich außer Kraft gesetzt. (19)

In these now rationalized states of disorientation, he loses his ability to conceptualize the world around him, not only in terms of time and space, but also in terms of social norms, structures, and language itself. He perceives everything to move towards a state of dissolution, leaving him incapacitated and unable to position or cope with himself and his experiences, which he foresees will eventually lead to the complete dissolution of his self. Not knowing when or under which circumstances his blackouts occur but also unwilling to seek medical help, he instead makes himself the object of his own experimental investigation. “Es gibt da etwas, das mich an meinem Fall interessiert ... Ich erwarte, dass ich über den Prozess des langsamen Abtauchens Aufschluss gewinne ... Und nur was die Zwischenzonen betrifft, sehe ich eine Chance, etwas über mich in Erfahrung zu bringen” (19). Masking his unwillingness to seek medical help, the support of Nicole or his friend Lorenzo, or even admit that he may be in need of help, he reduces his now unreliable mind to a medical case, hence transforming it into an object amenable to his actions. He is determined to find out more about the progression of his sudden blackouts because he believes that his ability to experience the transition from

consciousness to unconsciousness will allow him to reconnect with his fading consciousness. This narrative attempt to create a notional separation of body and mind allows him not only to construct himself as being in control of his own bodily experience, but also to reintegrate his disconnected mind into his story of success and a rationalized quest for his self.

In a conversation about his blackouts, his friend Lorenzo insists that this account makes sense only from the perspective of Systems Theory. He builds on this theory's assumption that modern society created different spheres that adhere to particular rules. From this perspective, the economy operates according to the calculation of cost and benefit, politics according to government and opposition, and science according to true and false knowledge. Using Niklas Luhmann's Systems Theory (1984) – a communication theory that posits the construction of reality through individual, non-objectifiable perception – Lorenzo carries on the narrator-protagonist's attempt to explain and rationalize the decay of his friend's mind. According to Luhmann, interpenetration denotes the reciprocal penetration and enablement of two systems through the contribution of each system's unique complexity. "*Interpenetration* liegt entsprechend dann vor, wenn ... beide Systeme sich wechselseitig dadurch ermöglichen, daß sie in das jeweils andere ihre vorkonstituierte Eigenkomplexität einbringen" (Luhmann 290, original emphasis). Lorenzo further argues that social systems cannot exist autonomously and are therefore regulated and penetrated by other systems. If they are held together by strong rules, they will not disintegrate; if they are weak, however, they inevitably will.

Weil die sozialen Systeme nicht ganz und gar auf sich selbst bezogen denkbar sind, ... muss der Theorie unter dem Stichwort der Interpenetration aufgeholfen werden. Ein System dringt ins andere ein, aber es verliert sich nicht, nicht, wenn es ein starkes System ist, eines mit

starken Regeln und Vorzeichen. ... Ein geschwächtes Selbst wird von Systemen bedrängt und schließlich durchbohrt. (Hammerthaler 21)

Because the protagonist is also the narrator of his own story, Lorenzo's role as the presenter of Luhmann's theory appears as a reliable source of scientific information that legitimizes the protagonist's self-diagnosis. The application of Luhmann's Systems Theory to his own self-understanding allows the narrator-protagonist to use his blackouts to construct himself as powerless in the face of the system of economic relations he perceives to be more powerful. His unwavering belief in the omnipresence of economic principles that both produce and validate his striving to be a successful entrepreneur offers him the possibility of believing and acting as though he had no capacity to act outside of it or to reject taking anything but economic responsibility for the consequences of his actions.

Although Lorenzo fails to explain whether his friend's blackouts are the cause or effect of this seizure, he explains that the reason why he loses his ability to conceptualize and navigate the world around him is that his self is weakened and therefore vulnerable to being seized by other systems. It is the protagonist himself who provides the answer to this question through his narrative. Immediately after he describes his feeling of being fatigued and simultaneously victimized by his own success, he continues with a seemingly unrelated account of beginning to experience blackouts frequently. Initially, the connection between his success and his blackouts seems to be created merely by the chronology of the narrative. But the strong link between his fatigue due to his success and his blackouts becomes clear when he imagines losing the successful life to which he has grown accustomed. Creating a self-fulfilling prophecy, he admits that he cannot imagine himself outside of his established understanding of life. "Ich bin ein erfolgreicher Verleger, ich habe es zu etwas gebracht, aber wenn ich nicht Tag

für Tag erfolgreich sein kann, dann wird sich alles zerschlagen, ich habe Angst vor dem Nichts. ... Ich habe Angst, aus der Welt zu stürzen” (160). On the one hand, the symbolic nothingness he fears – the absence of familiar structures and principles – is a signifier of his unwillingness to see beyond and outside of the economic principles that produce and validate his entrepreneurial conduct and success. Such a place would be unfamiliar to him, demanding that he redefine everything that is already defined. “Um aus dem vertrauten Kreislauf auszubrechen, in eine dunkle, fremde Gegend hinaus mit einem dunklen, fremden Code, dazu war ich inzwischen zu bequem geworden. Wer fängt, Mitte dreißig, schon gerne nochmal von vorne an? Ich jedenfalls nicht” (15). His rhetorical question about starting anew in his mid-thirties and the fear associated with that prospect rest on the seemingly self-evident assumptions that a successful career should be built up as quickly as possible and that one should not jeopardize an established career without expecting to face negative consequences from which one might never recover. On the other hand, the symbolic nothingness he fears is also a fear of losing control over his life, a fear that materializes and is mirrored in his blackouts, during which he indeed experiences a loss of control over his self and a sensation of mental and physical emptiness. “Ich ängstige mich davor, dass mir die Dinge entgleiten, dass sie mir aus den Händen rutschen” (150). But his fear of failure and losing control is as imminent to his striving to become the ideal entrepreneur as his overconfident belief in being successful. Rarely expressed but always present, this fear attests to the omnipresence of a market-driven rationality within which success and control are never certain because every market-driven action must inevitably depend upon uncontrollable factors like competitors, circumstances, and even chance. Because success is a measure of individuals’ ability to adapt to the market-driven social order, unsuccessfulness and the loss of control prompt a fear of falling outside of this

order. “Das unternehmerische Selbst ist ... bewegt von dem Wunsch, kommunikativ anschlussfähig zu bleiben, und getrieben von der Angst, ohne diese Anpassungsleistung aus der sich über Marktmechanismen assoziierenden gesellschaftlichen Ordnung herauszufallen” (*Das unternehmerische Selbst* 46-47).

Once the protagonist admits this fear, the narrative construction of his success story has reached a turning point, after which his blackouts become hallucinations that propel him outside of the economized social order to which he has desperately tried to cling. The proverbial beginning of the end sets in as he finds himself inside his previously cynical description of a 19th century soirée, comfortably sprawled over a chaise longue and revelling in Nicole and Anne’s motherly attention after a sudden blackout that, for the first time, exposes his loss of consciousness to the outside world; at this point, his loss of self-reliance also begins to inscribe itself into his body. After another attempt to prove his entrepreneurial determination, willpower, confidence, and control by playing Russian roulette in his hotel room, he begins hallucinating. Following his own narrative logic, his hallucinations appear as manifestations of interpenetration. At first, he gradually loses the ability to distinguish between his own imagination and actual events he witnesses, unable to identify and conceptualize the difference between people who remind him of each other. During a conversation in his local pub with Lorenzo about the hotel chambermaid who regularly services his room, the waitress he has known for many years and the chambermaid, both of whom are sexual objects to him, merge into one woman. “Darf es noch etwas zu trinken sein? Ja, bitte, sagte Lorenzo, ja, bitte, gern. Ein Bier. ... Und Sie? ... Darf ich Ihnen ein paar Flaschen in die Minibar stellen? Ich sagte: bücken Sie sich und, bitte, sehen Sie nach, was fehlt. Mein kleines Türchen freut sich darauf, von Ihren geschmeidigen Händen bedient zu werden” (Hammerthaler 127). Although Lorenzo

is visibly perturbed by his inappropriate reaction to the waitress's question, the protagonist cannot identify what caused Lorenzo's reaction. "Ich sah ein, dass etwas falsch gelaufen war, ... ich war mir nicht sicher" (128). Imagination and reality continue to blend into each other, causing him to question his own accountability and even to expect the unreliability of his perception. It is his strongest hallucinations that shed light on his interpenetration, in particular regarding which systems interpenetrate his weakened self. His hallucinations, whether they occur in public or in his hotel room, are driven by his economized worldview that has become his all-encompassing interpretive pattern for deciphering experiences. They are revealed to be hallucinations because they are preceded by his perception of an emerging darkening that refers to his dwindling consciousness but which he integrates into his narration as a darkened, overcast sky or approaching nightfall. As he walks across Berlin's Alexanderplatz, he narrates his encounter with two punks on his way to meet his friend Jens Wettrich, whose request for change he provokingly rejects with the explanation that he is only carrying a one hundred Mark bill. Showing neither feelings of compassion nor resentment for them, he instead uses their request as an opportunity to display his economic superiority over them. "Der Punker fragte: haste mal fünf Mark? Seh ich so aus?, sagte ich? Nee, ... sagte der Punker, schon jut, ik wollte bloß mal jefragt haben. ... Ich sagte: ich habe nichts als einen Hundertmarkschein" (167-68). When his superiority is threatened by one of the punks, who kicks him from behind, he resolves the escalating conflict by seizing the greatest power over another being and shooting both. "So einen Tritt kann ich schwer verkraften, ... ich zog meinen Revolver und schoss auf sie, einmal, zweimal, ich muss sagen, ich knallte sie ab" (169). Although it is unclear precisely where his hallucination begins, later on it becomes clear that he never shot them, as the same punks surround him as he is lying on the ground and attempt to wake him from his unconscious

state. “Ich hatte mich wieder, ich nickte in die Runde, ... ich hätte nicht sagen können, wie ich zu ihnen gelangt war. ... Es war taghell, wenn auch unter einem mit Wolken verhangenen Himmel. ... Haste dir wieda eenjekriegt? Biste lange jenuch im Krees jelofen? ... Wo ist Wettrich? Null Trefffa” (182).

This hallucinative episode is, together with others that follow, a narrative construction of the protagonist’s belief that he is being interpenetrated. The sphere that imposes its rules and structures onto his weakened self and causes its disintegration is the economic sphere, which is not only an instrument he believes to be at his disposal to govern his thoughts and actions but which is exposed as being inscribed into them where they also govern his inner world. The autonomy of the entrepreneurial self for which he strived is now exposed as a paradox whose mechanisms effect, on the contrary, his dependence and loss of self. Moreover, it is his hallucinations that keep him from becoming the *Lebensunternehmer* he strives to be. “[Der Verlag] hat sich von mir abgenabelt. Ich sollte es den Kollegen nicht verübeln, ich stehe nicht mehr für sie zur Verfügung, ... ich kann keine Verantwortung übernehmen, nicht für die einfachste Angelegenheit, ..., ich kann für mich nicht länger verantwortlich sein, ich treibe auf den Rand zu ... und werde am Ende ausgeschlossen sein” (262-63). As the journal is no longer dependent on his leadership, and has, he believes, begun to lead a metaphorically separate existence from him, he finds himself detached from his corporate self, which used to be inseparable from his corporal self. Although he now feels utterly incapable of taking responsibility for himself and anything he does, he still regards himself as responsible for being deprived of his once-powerful position as chief editor of the journal he founded. The protagonist continues to take responsibility in an attempt to continue governing the self as an entrepreneur even when the *Ich-AG* fails as an enterprise. It merely appears as though he

distances himself from the image of the ideal entrepreneur, whose success lies precisely in striving to assume more risks and responsibility. Even after experiencing the involuntary disintegration of his body and mind, he blames no one but himself for his failure as an entrepreneur and for his exclusion from the social order. Similarly, surrendering to his unstoppable and increasing hallucinations is a decision he makes as a rational individual, refusing to be overwhelmed by fear and agitation. Instead, he regards his decision as an opportunity to test himself and measure the success of his performance. “Ich sah die Dämmerung aufziehen, aber ich fürchtete sie nicht, ich ließ mich nicht beunruhigen, ich beschloss, mich ihr auszusetzen und mich dadurch auf die Probe zu stellen: wie lange würde ich die Übersicht behalten?” (264). Approaching even his hallucinations from an economized perspective allows him to maintain the narrative construction of his failure as an entrepreneurial success.

3.2.2 Entrepreneurial Masculinity

For the construction of himself as a successful and powerful entrepreneur, the narrator-protagonist draws on and instrumentalizes his social interactions in order to establish an entrepreneurial masculinity through traditional masculine images that allow him to establish his superiority over both women and men. The entrepreneurial self he strives to be is a gendered, masculine self: rational, successful, independent, self-involved, superior, and a perpetual “Liebeswähler” (13) who takes advantage of women both sexually and emotionally. As he constructs himself both as the only entrepreneur as well as the only desirable male character in his narrative, an understanding of the protagonist as an entrepreneur can hence not be separated from his performance of an entrepreneurial masculinity. He subjects women as

sexual objects and portrays them as needy, weak-willed, and dishonest, and he subjects men by portraying them as frail, economically irrational, dependent, and unsuccessful, characteristics that are diametrically opposed to the ideal image of the successful entrepreneur. Thus, he positions every character with whom he interacts – that is Nicole, Lorenzo, Anne, Jens Wettrich, and Schulz – as inferior in order to construct and reaffirm his entrepreneurial masculinity.

His numerous sexual encounters with women are a central element of his success story. Common to all of these encounters is his lack of interest in establishing an emotional relationship with anyone; he is concerned exclusively with women's bodies and uses them to achieve sexual gratification. "Ich bin gern mit Frauen zusammen, ..., ich mag es, wenn sie die Arme zurückwerfen aufs Laken, das ganze Repertoire, mit dem sie ihre Hingabe vortäuschen. Das Spiel folgt bestimmten Regeln, aber seit jeher ist es das Beste, von Liebe zu reden" (22). At the same time as he chooses to deceive women by pretending to have romantic feelings for them, he also expects them to deceive him by using their bodies to pretend to be physically attracted to him. He frames relationships as an economic system that is regulated by self-interest and the calculation of cost and benefit and that determines whether an interaction can be regarded as successful or unsuccessful. From this economized perspective that views relationships as instances of economic activity, there exists no emotional intimacy and support between partners. He therefore sexualizes Nicole, the woman with whom he has a long-term affair, as much as he sexualizes the prostitute, the waitress in his local pub, the chambermaid in his hotel, and Lorenzo's wife Anne. Fixated on body parts traditionally associated with evoking sexual desire – mouth, buttocks, hair, belly, and eyes – he dehumanizes them by reducing them to their corporeality. "[Das] Gesicht [der Nutte] interessierte mich nicht, und so

forderte ich sie auf, sich auszuziehen, aufs Bett zu steigen und mir ihren fetten Hintern anzubieten” (8). While his self-understanding as a man is inseparable from his experience and performance of a pornographic sexuality, his understanding of women as sexual commodities further indicates his firmly segregated, polarized, and biologized view of gender. This view denies not only similarities between him and them but it also justifies his characterization of women as uncompetitive, inferior, and untrustworthy, marking them as the weaker sex and also as entirely unsuitable entrepreneurs.

Although he is unwilling to acknowledge Nicole’s role in his life, not only as a sexual but also as an intellectual and emotional partner, his relationship to her is the most important one to him. He describes her as a passionate, intelligent, and interesting woman who stands out among the many women he knows. “Diese Affäre ... lebt von einer unaufzehraren Leidenschaft, und sie lebt von der Intelligenz einer Frau wie Nicole, die Gespräche zustande bringt, bei denen sich ein Gähnen verbietet” (33). At the same time, however, he relativizes his description of her as someone whom he respects and treats as his equal by superimposing this image with a degrading sexualisation. “Nicole, muss ich sagen, ist eine der wenigen Frauen, die mich auch noch nach dem Abspritzen interessieren” (33). Their relationship is, in his words, pragmatic, in that “jeder nimmt, was er bekommen kann, und damit gut” (32), an economizing approach to relationships that allows him to hold the upper hand over her. After finding out that Nicole also had an affair with her colleague Schulz and leaving her apartment in disappointment, he hides his jealousy and hurt feelings by rationalizing them as fatigue caused by his blackouts, a viewpoint he justifies opportunistically through the same medical authority he has so far refused to consult. This observation keeps the image of his dominant entrepreneurial masculinity temporarily intact and enables him to revisit his familiar

calculation of cost and benefit that must serve his self-interest in order to justify an action.

“[W]as bringt dir das noch, und was kostet es dich? ... [I]ch muss auf mein Wohlbefinden achten, das würde jeder Arzt bestätigen, würde ich einen Arzt zu Rate ziehen” (149). Because the costs of his relationship with Nicole exceed its benefits, it must be ended. He has convinced himself that it is only through measuring the effort he invests into a relationship and weighing it against its return that he can ascertain whether his effort is still worth its cost.

However, economizing their relationship in order to dismiss his emotional dependence on her eventually fails as a coping mechanism, as it is her threat to his entrepreneurial masculinity, which demands his unequivocal independence and superiority, that causes his struggle for control to intensify. As her long undiscovered betrayal amounts to a challenge of his ability to exercise control over her, he is overcome by his fear of losing control of everything else as well. “[J]etzt bin ich so weit, es zuzugeben: ich ängstige mich davor, dass mir die Dinge entgleiten, dass sie mir aus den Händen rutschen” (150). Afraid to surrender the control over his own life and the lives of others, he struggles to discipline himself through sheer willpower and decides to re-enter his role as the chief editor of his journal. “Es ist eine schreckliche Vorstellung, zuerst aus dem Leben der anderen, dann aus dem eigenen Leben zu fliehen, ... ich werde in meinen Verlag zurückkehren, sagte ich mir, ich werde allen die Hände schütteln, ... denn das Geschäft muss weitergehen, es muss laufen, und zwar bestens” (154).

Neither his affair with a hotel chambermaid nor his consumption of porn or his games of Russian roulette provide him with relief from his pervasive “Angst vor dem Nichts” (160). To satisfy his need to feel the thrill of life again, an endeavour he considers justified by the societal consensus of market-driven self-interest, he creates a competition for himself with the highest possible and hence most rewarding stakes. By instrumentalizing and objectifying Anne

as a trophy in someone else's hands that can only be won through shrewd cleverness, he positions himself in a competitive battle against Lorenzo. Profit and success are in sight again, "koste es was es wolle" (198). "[E]rst in dem Augenblick, da ich beschloss, Lorenzo zu opfern, ... wurde mir klar, dass ich mich für Anne noch viel mehr interessieren sollte als bisher, dass ich sie gewinnen sollte – um Lorenzo erfolgreich zugrunde zu richten. [S]o ist das Leben. ... Man sollte mir also keine Vorwürfe machen" (186). The seduction of Anne is a calculated and rational project divided into several phases that will culminate in the systematic evocation of romantic feelings for him that will, according to his assessment, cause her to leave Lorenzo. Keeping his goal firmly in sight, her seduction is transformed into an "Investment ins eigene Leben, und dieses zu einem Projekt, dessen Erfolg von nichts anderem abhängt als von Geschick und Fortune des unternehmerischen Selbst" (Bröckling "Enthusiasten, Ironiker, Melancholiker", 84). Letters about her interest in soccer are followed by an analysis of her reaction to his presence when Lorenzo invites him for a drink in his and Anne's apartment and his undivided attention to her, her wishes, and her discontent with Lorenzo. "Wer den Code beherrscht, beherrscht die Herzen, sagte ich. Er kann damit seine Gefühle verschlüsseln und sie verschlüsselt in ein fremdes Leben bohren" (110). His project eventually comes to fruition, and when Anne separates from Lorenzo to be with him, he revels in the sensation of having succeeded upon hearing about Lorenzo's utter desperation. "Anne sagte: er ist verzweifelt. Ich schloss die Augen, und ich gab mich diesem Augenblick hin, ... Zweifellos, ich fühlte, wie betroffen mich das Unglück meines Freundes machte, und als ich dessen gewahr wurde, fühlte ich mich glücklich" (240). However, his contentment fades quickly as he realizes that Anne sees in him a partner with whom she wants to build a relationship. Shortly after Anne asks him

to meet her father, he makes her character disappear from his story, thereby using his narrative to force her out of his success story, which has no room for a long-standing partnership.

The narrator-protagonist creates a similar construction of the men in his life that renders it impossible for them to threaten his masculinity or his entrepreneurial status. They are either in long-term relationships – like his frail friend Lorenzo – or unwilling to act in an economically rational way – like Nicole’s father Jens Wettrich, a public servant who oversees constructional development in Berlin. He regards Wettrich as a “gerissener Ossi, der gern im Gewand der kapitalistischen Moderne auftritt und jedes Mal, wenn es brenzlig wird, seinen DDR-Ausweis hervorzieht” (81), referring to Wettrich’s efforts to establish discussion forums where citizens are invited to discuss construction plans, which, according to Nicole, merely serves to create the illusion of civic participation. “Übrigens bieten wir jetzt solche Foren an, es wird viel diskutiert, das ist alles sehr lebendig. So. Nicole sagte: das ist doch billig. ... Die Öffentlichkeit soll sich in dem Glauben wiegen, sie habe ganz fabelhaft partizipiert. Aber sie hat allenfalls beim Jasagen partizipiert” (79).

His next encounter with Wettrich is in one of his hallucinations on Berlin’s Alexanderplatz, where he imagines meeting with him. In a conversation about the relationship between the interests of investors and the interests of the city, he criticizes Wettrich’s belief in the possibility of asserting the city’s interests even if they run counter to economic interests. “Das Krakensystem der Wirtschaft steuert die Politik. Wettrich sagte: ... Es gibt Leute, ... die uns durchaus zutrauen, die Interessen der Stadt zu vertreten. Solange sich diese Interessen mit den Interessen der Wirtschaft decken [, sagte ich]. Nein, auch gegen die Interessen der Wirtschaft, sagte Wettrich. Viel Spaß, sagte ich” (174). The importance of this hallucination, in which he creates an antagonist against whom he insists on the absolute primacy of the

economy, becomes clear shortly after this conversation, when he continues hallucinating that Wettrich is assaulted by two men who persistently try to bribe him but whom he puts to flight by firing a handgun that he carries with him. “Immerhin hatte ich so viel Erfolg, dass die Gestalten beim ersten Knall auseinander sprangen, ... ich stellte keine Regung mehr fest, ... es gab nichts mehr zu tun” (181). In this scenario, the protagonist is not only the strong and energetic hero who saves a weaker man, but he also saves someone whose economic irrationality lead to a life-threatening situation. A similar attack on Wettrich indeed takes place in the novel, leaving him with only two fingers on his right hand after he touches an exploding letter bomb. In his narrative construction, Wettrich is a weak and literally incomplete man who fails to play the game that he himself has long mastered.

The scenario in which he competes with Lorenzo for Anne’s affection serves the same narrative purpose, in that his construction of Lorenzo as an emasculated and weak man allows him to position himself as a more powerful and superior man. His masculinity is, again, inextricably connected to his entrepreneurialism: in order to successfully devastate Lorenzo, he not only attempts to seduce Lorenzo’s wife but he also constructs him as an undesirable and failed man who lacks entrepreneurial drive. As reviewer Ulrike Winkelmann puts it, Lorenzo is also “die Stimme der Theorie”. Throughout the narrative, the protagonist and Lorenzo meet in their local pub and discuss the meaning of love and relationships and their interconnectedness with the journal business in particular and economic relations in general. It is Lorenzo who links the protagonist’s self-diagnosis to Systems Theory and offers him a rational explanation of his economized worldview within which the economy shapes our scientific understanding of true and false, our political perspective of government and opposition, and even emotional and sexual relationships because they are all judged from the perspective of the individual who

evaluates them in terms of self-serving cost and benefit. Ironically, it is also Lorenzo who tells his friend that his economized perspective entails that he must abandon love as a self-contained system and subordinate it to the system of economic relations. “Dann musst du die Liebe als ein eigenes System aufgeben und sie der Wirtschaft unterordnen” (20). Without hesitation, the protagonist agrees with a quick response. “Frauen kosten Geld” (20). Although he admires Lorenzo’s vast knowledge, insight, and incorruptibility – characteristics the protagonist lacks –, he does not hesitate to take advantage of the same traits he admires if he can use them to his own advantage, as he demonstrates when he later betrays Lorenzo with his wife Anne.

Es wäre zwecklos gewesen, hätte ich Lorenzo etwas von der Aufklärung der Massen vorgeheuchelt... Er hätte es mir sowieso nicht abgenommen. Ich wollte mit einer Idee Geld verdienen, ohne dass mir jemand hineinredete... Im Übrigen war ich froh, dass ich in Lorenzo einen letzten unbestechlichen Freund hatte. ... Er hatte ein Wissen, das ans Unverschämte grenzte, und ich holte mir in allen Fragen seinen Rat. (11-12)

In one of their many conversations, Lorenzo and the protagonist theorize about love “in ihrer Maßlosigkeit, ... in ihrem Exzess, in ihrem unnachgiebigen Feilschen um die Erfüllung einer Sehnsucht” (108) that is fathomless and that must remain impermanent like a “Geisterschiff” (121). Unsurprisingly, as they argue about the calculability of love, the protagonist insists that “man muss sich ihrer zu bedienen wissen, man muss wissen, wie man es anstellt, um ans Ziel zu gelangen, ein paar Tricks können nicht schaden” (109) while Lorenzo asserts that these “Techniker des Exzesses... dürfen nicht Kosten aufrechnen gegen den zu erwartenden Nutzen, das nämlich wäre unter Liebenden verpönt” (110). However, Lorenzo also admits that he nevertheless believes to have found a lasting partner in Anne, a contradiction in logic that bothers not Lorenzo but the protagonist. The same knowledge Lorenzo shared with him later

becomes the weapon with which he attempts to destroy his friend's relationship (and also his vitality). Without any morality outside of the economic sphere, this knowledge becomes a resource to be exploited for furthering the protagonist's own interests. "[I]ch werde Mittel und Wege finden, ... ich bin mit Schwächen und Sehnsüchten vertraut, sagte ich mir, auch dank Lorenzo: ich danke dir, Lorenzo, ich muss nur die Stelle zum Einhaken finden" (165). His careful seduction of Anne is indeed technically flawless and cunningly planned and successfully disproves Lorenzo's conviction that it is possible to distinguish feigned from sincere love.

The protagonist's market-driven rationality, based on individualism, self-responsibility, competition, and profitability, perpetuates a masculinity that is reminiscent of the traditional masculine bourgeois values of "authority; social conservatism; compulsory heterosexuality; ... strongly marked, symbolic gender differences; and emotional distance between men and women" (Connell and Wood 348). It has, however, undergone a neo-liberal facelift that transforms authority into power and control, and social conservatism into financial conservatism. Although neoliberal principles seem genderless because every individual is called upon as an entrepreneur who follows the rationality of market deregulation and individualism, *Alles bestens* suggests that the entrepreneurial self is certainly a gendered – male heterosexual – self. The new male heroes are hence those who conquer the market as entrepreneurs. This neo-liberal rationality also creates a hierarchical disconnect amongst men by perpetuating "die kompetitive, hierarchisch geordnete ... Struktur bürgerlicher Männlichkeit" (Kreisky 153) that radicalizes the performance of individualism on all levels of social interaction and excludes the possibility of solidarity or support. This traditional image of masculinity hence serves to affirm and perpetuate a market-driven rationality that relies on the

civic responsibility of self-reliable individuals who accept the continuous withdrawal of state responsibility.

Although the protagonist drives away every important person in his life, loses his position as chief editor of his journal, and knowingly puts his life at risk, he fails to question his actions or beliefs according to which he performs and only reinforces both his masculine and entrepreneurial self-understanding. Throughout his entire narrative construction of himself as a successful entrepreneur, he attempts to hold on to a self-destructive, market-driven individualistic worldview, seeing no signs of crisis. Although he continually sways between self-preservation and self-destruction, self-awareness and self-denial, he is satisfied to live the illusion and ultimately appears convinced that even upon his death, it is not he but the world that will be left with nothing. “[I]ch steige aus, und die Umwelt hat das Nachsehen, ich werde nicht wieder einsteigen können, aber das weiß ich ja im Moment des Aussteigens nicht, ich finde, es gibt Leute, die schlimmer dran sind als ich” (Hammerthaler 285). As the literary embodiment of an *Ich-AG* and an enthusiast according to Ulrich Bröckling’s typology of the entrepreneurial self, the protagonist holds on to the myth of the self-made man and the market as universal structuring principles despite the disintegration of his body and mind. Uncovering the protagonist’s internalization of an economized perspective on himself and his life exposes the *Ich-AG* as both a technology of domination in the form of self-judgement and a technology of the self with which he persistently attempts to exercise control over his thoughts and conduct. By drawing on his desire to become more successful, richer, and more powerful, the *Ich-AG* is an effective tool to form political practices in which individuals themselves contribute to a system in which they are both governed and govern themselves according to neoliberal principles. The onset of the protagonist’s hallucinations, which disrupt his self-

governing towards greater self-control and self-responsibility, expose the autonomy of the entrepreneurial self for which he continually strives as a paradox whose mechanisms effect, on the contrary, his helplessness and loss of self.

4 *Das Ende des Kanzlers: Economizing the Mittelstand*

In this chapter, I investigate the protagonist Hans Hansmann in Reinhard Liebermann's novel *Das Ende des Kanzlers. Der finale Rettungsschuss* as a literary figure who is portrayed as a site of struggle between a mercantile and an entrepreneurial self and whose self-understanding as a self-employed *Mittelständler* draws on both social market and free market principles. Hansmann's conflict is situated at the time the Red-Green coalition introduced the *Mittelstandsoffensive*, a labour market reform that responded to the market's dictate for the increasing growth of mid-sized businesses and that aimed at entrepreneurializing the German *Mittelstand*. I will provide an overview of the *Mittelstandsoffensive* introduced by the Red-Green government that will illustrate the significance of this political measure not only as a government program but also as an incarnation of the entrepreneurial self. Subsequently, I will argue that his narrative ridicule as a stereotypically German and bourgeois *Mittelständler* and of his inability to figure out not only the demands of the market but also his own position within it and his subsequent failure as a drugstore owner can be interpreted as a literary commentary on Germany's current social market economy as an out-dated socio-economic model.

Hans Hansmann, the protagonist in Reinhard Liebermann's *Das Ende des Kanzlers – Der finale Rettungsschuss*, is the owner of the drugstore 'Drogerie Hansmann' in Hammelstadt that has been owned and run by his family for four generations. Proud of being self-employed and a member of the middle class, he fiercely tries to guard his reputation as a successful business owner and sole provider for his wife and two daughters. As he faces the increasing difficulty of keeping his store profitable, he also learns that the chain drugstore Super-Drug will soon settle in the area, threatening to ruin Hansmann's drugstore and, perhaps more

importantly, his reputable social status in Hammelstadt. While he expects his community to show solidarity and help him stay in business, everyone from his bank advisor to the chief editor of the local newspaper to his car dealer to the mayor withdraw their financial, moral, and political support. Soon, Hansmann realizes that Super-Drug's interests correspond with the city's interests, namely the promotion of capital accumulation and the creation of jobs. The culprit is easily identified: In Hansmann's mind, it must be the Chancellor, whom he disrespectfully calls "Winzling," the midget, who is to blame for all that is going wrong in German politics. To relieve some of his anger at the Chancellor, he plans the Chancellor's imaginary assassination at one of his election campaign speeches in Hannover. Carried away by his hypothetical plan, Hansmann indeed assassinates the Chancellor without being identified or prosecuted by the police. After his return to Hammelstadt, however, a journalist approaches him at his drugstore shortly before closing time and confronts him about the Chancellor's assassination. On behalf of the Chief of Police in Hannover - who found out that it was Hansmann who committed this crime - and a group of political beneficiaries, the journalist offers Hansmann 500,000 SFR in a Swiss bank account in exchange for his permission to publish a story about this scandalous crime. The journalist offers to publish it as a fiction novel in order to protect Hansmann, who accepts the offer. As was expected, the novel causes a political scandal that leads to new elections, which bring the political opposition closer to being in power. The novel ends as Hansmann returns to his regulars' table at the local pub, months after having closed his drugstore, where he announces that he has decided to start a new career – as the new mayor of Hammelstadt.

Although the novel does not identify Gerhard Schröder by name, the parallels between him and "der Winzling" (Liebermann 6) are striking, leaving hardly any doubt about the

identity of the character's real-life model. Most obviously, Hansmann's recounting of the "midget's" (6) predecessors – Helmut Schmidt, Helmut Kohl, and Helmut Schröder – points towards Gerhard Schröder himself despite the change of his first name to Helmut. Matching his first name to his predecessors' first names furthermore suggests that Schröder is, alongside previous German chancellors, an interchangeable and hence insignificant politician who is unable to make a noteworthy contribution to German politics. The midget chancellor is also credited with the implementation of the reform package *Agenda 2010*, which was arguably Gerhard Schröder's most drastic and controversial undertaking in domestic and reform policy (Thompson 10, Weishaupt 117). "Der Winzling war seinem politisch propagierten Ziel, der Agenda 2010 schon sehr nahe gekommen. Spätestens 2010, davon war Hansmann überzeugt, war der Staat eine Bananenrepublik und die Armut überall" (Liebermann 14). Similarly, Hans Hansmann criticizes the "midget" for having failed to solve the problem of more than one hundred thousand insolvencies of mid-sized companies between 2000 and 2003 with his "Mittelstandsoffensive als Rezept gegen die Arbeitslosigkeit" (47), another policy of the Schröder government.

Because of these striking similarities between Liebermann's midget chancellor and Gerhard Schröder and because of this character's fictional assassination, former Chancellor Gerhard Schröder obtained two injunctions against publisher Betzel and stopped the novel's distribution shortly after its publication. The first injunction from the Regional Court of Hamburg was obtained only two weeks after its release and prohibited Betzel from distributing the novel as long as its cover still showed a blurred portrait of the Chancellor behind the hairline cross of a gun sight ("Kanzler erschossen", "Fiktiver Kanzlermord", "Schröder stoppt"). Although Betzel changed the cover image to meet the requirements of the first ruling

and resumed distribution, Schröder had a second injunction issued by the Hanseatic Higher Regional Court, which prohibited the novel's distribution as long as it described the planning and execution of the Chancellor's assassination ("Schröder lässt Kanzlermord-Krimi verbieten"). The second sentence was equivalent to a ban, effecting the novel's withdrawal from sale entirely. The reason for the second injunction was that the novel presents "eine schwer wiegende Beeinträchtigung des Persönlichkeitsrechts, die auch durch die Kunstfreiheit nicht zu rechtfertigen ist" ("Schröder lässt Kanzlermord-Krimi verbieten"). The judges identified an encroachment of his personal rights because "Schröder werde in dem Roman zum bloßen Objekt degradiert. Seine Tötung werde nicht als Verbrechen, sondern als Rettungstat bezeichnet. Zudem könne der Roman geeignet sein, die ohnehin wegen des Amtes bestehende Gefährdung des Kanzlers zu erhöhen, indem er eventuelle Nachahmer auf den Plan rufe" ("Schröder lässt Kanzlermord-Krimi verbieten"). The only publicly available copies now are located at the State Library of Lower Saxony in Hannover and the German National Library in Frankfurt am Main, where I obtained a photocopy in 2010. *Das Ende des Kanzlers* has since not been republished. Because of the novel's early censorship and the emphasis the media placed on Schröder's injunctions, there was hardly any opportunity for readers, literary critics, and scholars to examine its literary, cultural, and socio-political significance.

Upon closer examination, Liebermann's novel constitutes an important and noteworthy element of the literary dialogue on the implications of market-driven Red-Green politics for individuals. It illustrates the life of a bourgeois, middle-class business owner whose reputation as a respected and successful druggist is of the utmost importance to him. Although he is a self-employed business owner who appears to have much in common with an *Ich-AG* because he has no employees or apprentices, his struggle to keep his business profitable is not

equivalent to the ambition of following the call of the entrepreneurial self. Instead, Hansmann's character encompasses two divergent and conflicting entrepreneurial models rooted in social liberalism on the one hand – that is the belief that liberalism must ensure social justice – and neoliberalism on the other. On the one hand, Hansmann refuses to accept personal responsibility for his drugstore's impending failure. Not only does he construct himself as a victim of the Chancellor's free-market policies – in particular the *Mittelstandsoffensive* – that promise to help his business but, in his opinion, are what cause its demise; he also feels entitled to receive the support of the state in his fight against Super-Drug's overpowering competition. On the other, he attempts to keep his failing drugstore profitable by increasing prices to supply and demand and expanding the range of products to attract more customers, thereby governing himself – without acknowledging it – in conformity with the same market-driven principles that he so fervently criticizes. Despite his efforts to call upon the solidarity of Hammelstadt's media and its political and financial leaders, Hansmann is doomed to fail in his endeavour to save his drugstore; as a small fish in the shark tank of the free market, he is defenceless against the vast capital and buying power of the corporation and drugstore chain Super-Drug, which also has Hammelstadt's leaders convinced of its overall significance for the town. Illustrating the fall of the bourgeois, middle-class drugstore owner Hans Hansmann in *Das Ende des Kanzlers* asks questions about the economic, political, and social compatibility of Germany's large middle-class that is rooted in Germany's post-war social market economy with market-driven governing practices developed especially under the Red-Green coalition. Through the character of Hans Hansmann, *Das Ende des Kanzlers* can be read as an illustration of one of numerous subjectivities that arise from governing oneself and being governed according to market-driven principles. Vis-à-vis the imperative of the entrepreneurial self that Hansmann

encounters in the form of the *Mittelstandsoffensive*, he constructs himself as an exploited and oppressed victim or, according to Bröckling's typology of entrepreneurial selves (2008), as a melancholic who copes through lamentation and contempt. "[Der Melancholiker] klagt ... über den neoliberalen Staat, der sich den Kräften des Marktes kampflos ausliefert, statt sie zu bändigen, über das Leitbild des Unternehmers, in dem er das Schreckbild des ebenso rücksichts- wie geistlosen Ellenbogenmenschen erblickt" (85). Blinded by his resentment of the state's market-centred governing practices when they place him at a disadvantage, Hansmann is not only unable to understand his own participatory role in the economization of society – not least through his contempt that affirms the market's societal centrality – but also realizes that he cannot escape the call of the entrepreneurial self. No one, the novel seems to suggest, can evade the force and appeal of neoliberal governmentality because an individual's desire for professional success and a respectable social standing can only be achieved by following the path of the entrepreneurial self. His attempt to position himself as morally superior to the politics of the Red-Green coalition is undermined and ridiculed both by the narrator, who reveals Hansmann's most private thoughts that expose his often inconsistent and stereotypically petit bourgeois beliefs about, for instance, gender and social standing, and by the other characters who are critical of him; these elements foreshadow and accelerate his inevitable failure. His wish to become a politician after having failed to assert himself in a free-market economy can be read as a continuation of his attempt to establish himself as a successful and reputable entrepreneur in the sphere of politics that, as the novel suggests, is equally powerless in the face of the market.

Besides the focus on Hans Hansmann as a traditional *Mittelständler* in *Das Ende des Kanzlers*, the novel also sheds light on the way government initiatives like the

Mittelstandsoffensive are interwoven with the imperative of the market. Although Hansmann realizes that the *Mittelstandsoffensive* cannot serve as a “Rezept gegen die Arbeitslosigkeit” (47), he believes this is due to the discriminating and self-serving practices of politicians on whom he depends and thus overlooks the role of the market as a driving force of government. More than merely a support mechanism that appears to establish new politico-economic boundaries to assist mid-sized businesses, the *Mittelstandsoffensive* is a reaction to the market’s dictate for the increasing founding, growth, and expansion of mid-sized businesses. What Hansmann perceives as the selfish practices of those on whom he depends – the revenue office, his wholesaler, his car dealer, his financial advisor, Hammelstadt’s mayor, and ultimately the Chancellor – are in fact personified instances of the forces of the market imperative that determine everyone’s and every institution’s actions. *Das Ende des Kanzlers* examines the way the logic of the market permeates the lives of individuals, families, businesses, and politics alike and thus points to the complexity and extensiveness of neoliberal governmentality during the time of the Schröder government.

4.1 The *Mittelstandsoffensive* As Manifestation of the Entrepreneurial Self

The *Mittelstandsoffensive* that Hansmann criticizes so fervently in *Das Ende des Kanzlers* was spearheaded by Wolfgang Clement, Federal Minister of Economics and Labour during Schröder’s second cabinet from 2002 until 2005, who introduced this reform in a document entitled “Wiesbadener Erklärung” in January 2003.

Clements “Wiesbadener Erklärung” plädiert im Grundsatz für „eine kluge Kombination aus Angebots- und Nachfragepolitik, die das wirtschaftliche Wachstum stärkt, die internationale Wettbewerbsfähigkeit unserer Unternehmen fördert, den Spielraum für öffentliche und private

Investitionen erweitert und die Arbeitsmarktpolitik modernisiert“. Mittelständler sollen künftig Unterstützung bei Innovationen und bei der Expansion auf Auslandsmärkte erhalten. Im Rahmen eines „Masterplan Bürokratieabbau“ will Clement für die Mittelstandsförderung zudem eine zentrale Anlaufstelle schaffen und den Föderalismus der Fördertöpfe abschaffen. (“SPD beschließt Mittelstandsoffensive”)

This reform actually comprises several reforms aimed at *Mittelständler*, that is, owners of small and mid-sized businesses, to encourage them to increase their national and international growth and competitiveness. The plan for achieving this goal involves finding a middle ground that unifies the monetarist model of supply with the Keynesian model of demand, an approach to the small and mid-sized business sector that implements Schröder’s politics of the *Neue Mitte*. While monetarism argues that “irrespective of current macroeconomic conditions, the stock of money should be made to grow” (McCallum) through the lowering of barriers to the production and supply of goods and services, the Keynesian model of demand argues for the necessity of state intervention to regulate and “stabilize the economy” because macroeconomic fluctuations can be caused if decisions regarding output are left to the private sector alone; such fluctuations can “significantly reduce economic well-being” (Blinder). The program’s main tools are the loosening and reduction of bureaucratic regulations to facilitate investment as well as the introduction of massive tax reductions and micro loans managed by the newly established *Mittelstandsbank*, a bank that manages specifically the finances of small and mid-sized businesses.

Darüber hinaus fasst das Papier bisherige Reformen wie die Schaffung einer Mittelstandsbank und die Hartz-Reformen zusammen und nennt weitere bekannte Pläne wie die Minimalbesteuerung von Kleinstunternehmen, Mikro-Darlehen für Mittelständler und den Abbau von Bürokratie. Clement und Bundesfinanzminister Hans Eichel (SPD) wollen

außerdem Existenzgründer und alle anderen Kleinstunternehmen steuerlich entlasten und ihnen eine einfachere Gewinnermittlung ermöglichen. (“SPD beschließt Mittelstandsoffensive”)

Furthermore, the *Mittelstandsoffensive* aimed at reforming the *Handwerksordnung*, the German trade and crafts code, to allow craftsmen without a *Meisterbrief*, the master craftsman certificate, to found a business. This change not only reduces the time a craftsman must spend in training, but also aims at easing “den unternehmerischen Generationswechsel” (“Die Wiesbadener Erklärung der SPD”), the switch to a new entrepreneurial generation. In a nutshell, the main goal of the *Mittelstandsoffensive* is – as described in the German media by politicians of the Red-Green government – to relieve the German middle class of some of its perceived burdens, most significantly the burden of high taxes and excessive red tape, in order to increase business capital, growth, expansion, and competitiveness (Reinhold, Bockstaller).

It is worth taking a look at the name of this government program in order to understand the Red-Green government’s approach to reforming the German *Mittelstand*. The term “Offensive” is taken from the discourse of military combat and denotes the attack on a group or entity that is considered an enemy. It emphasizes the aggressive approach of the government towards reforming the *Mittelstand* that is considered to be fraught with problems that must be eliminated to ensure its efficient functioning and to avert its threat to the overall strength of the German economy. Within this context, the *Mittelstandsoffensive* appears noticeably as a technology of domination that attempts to direct small and mid-sized business owners towards a more entrepreneurial kind of conduct that is oriented towards free market practices. Despite Clement’s plea for a combination of monetarist and Keynesian economics, the *Mittelstandsoffensive* is not designed to strike a balance between the private sector’s regulated and unregulated growth, but rather to introduce policies that, across the board, stimulate the

desire of business owners to strive for economic growth. Within Germany's market-driven economy, this growth can only be achieved by increasing business owners' willingness to take entrepreneurial risks that may – or may not – lead to the promoted outcomes of increased capital, expansion, and competitiveness. Neither the responsibility nor the entrepreneurial risk involved in such an undertaking – ranging from founding a small business to adapting existing business practices to the reforms in order to capacitate, stimulate, and administer the growth of capital and employees – are mentioned in the “Wiesbadener Erklärung.” As a program that both encourages individuals to take entrepreneurial risks and places the responsibility for this risk entirely on the individuals who are willing to take them, the *Mittelstandsoffensive* is an exemplar of a market-centred governing tool and a technology of the self whose primary function is the stimulation of entrepreneurialism.

4.1.1 Reforming the German *Mittelstand* in the Image of the Entrepreneurial Self

Without the continuous growth of the *Mittelstand*, the national economy would collapse, as Clement implies in a press release of the Federal Government: “Der Mittelstand ist das Herz der Sozialen Marktwirtschaft und der Motor für mehr Wachstum und Beschäftigung. Dieser Motor muss möglichst auf Hochtouren laufen. Das tut er derzeit nicht. Deshalb müssen wir den Mittelstand kräftigen und ihm die Arbeit erleichtern, wo und wie es machbar ist” (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Arbeit “Clement: Heute startet Offensive”). Although since the late 1990s, the *Mittelstand* has been facing major difficulties due to weak domestic demand, declining revenue, decreasing employment rates and investments, as well as pessimistic forecasting (KfW Bankengruppe), it is still central to Germany's economy: it comprises more than 99% of all businesses that are subject to sales tax, about 60% of all

employees who are subject to social insurance contributions, and about 40% of the national revenue (“Schlüsselzahlen”). The aim of the *Mittelstandsoffensive* is hence not to strengthen the small and mid-sized business sector for the benefit of those who run it but to make use of it as an enabling mechanism and driving force of national economic growth and employment.

On closer examination, this program goes even further than promoting the *Mittelstand* as a driving force of increased economic growth and employment. When conceptualizing the *Mittelstand* as the heart of Germany’s economy and as the motor for growth and employment, the program also implies a reconceptualization of the *Mittelständler* who are cumulatively represented by the term *Mittelstand*. By characterizing the *Mittelständler* in terms of their vital role and responsibility for keeping both their own businesses and the German economy and its employment-dependent residents alive and well, this programme equates individuals with their economic roles as business owners and employees. If *Mittelständler* are the heart of Germany’s economy and the motor for growth and employment, they cannot be allowed to stop functioning and must be continually stimulated by programs, such as the *Mittelstandsoffensive*, in order to operate at full stretch and at all times. Because the government’s assessment is that the *Mittelständler* are not functioning at full capacity, the program is tantamount to an imperative that demands that they continually improve their entrepreneurial conduct in order to promote the government’s market-centred goals of deregulation, capital growth, and an increased workforce. This imperative placed on *Mittelständler* is the imperative of the entrepreneurial self that both requires and enables individuals’ desire to strive incessantly for greater economic strength and entrepreneurial success. The role and responsibility of the state within this initiative remain in the background. As self-proclaimed facilitator of this transformation, the state has shifted the responsibility not only for success but also for failure

onto the *Mittelstand*, which basically undergoes a transformation from one of several socio-economic classes to the declared saviour of the country and its economy.

Traditionally, the *Mittelstand* was first grounded in a mercantile and later in a social market economy model. While merchants are tied to the heavily regulated German Trade Register, the *Handelsregister*, entrepreneurs are only tied to the civil code of Germany, the *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*, and have more economic freedom of decision when it comes to their business operations. The *Mittelstandsoffensive* does not move away entirely from the principles of a social market economy, and the attempts of the Red-Green government are not novel in Germany's post-war history. The same was the case with its predecessor, Helmut Kohl's coalition government of Christian Democrats and Economic Liberals, that focused on economic growth "durch Rückbau des die unternehmerische Freiheit erstickenden Regulierungsnetzes, ... Schutz vor der Diskriminierung durch öffentliche und private Angebots- und Nachfragemacht ... [und] Förderung der Selbständigkeit durch Existenzgründungskredite" (Hamer). The novelty of Clement's program lies in the understanding of the role of government, which had shifted away from a traditional SPD stance of ensuring strong social policy through state intervention towards ensuring the growth of the market and a market-driven approach to social security. Despite changes towards a market-focused understanding of the *Mittelstand*, the program nevertheless adheres to a social order grounded in a social market economy in that it acknowledges the societal importance of social security, labour unions, and apprenticeship. While a system of social security – albeit to a lesser extent – is retained, the government targets the owners of small and mid-sized businesses as entrepreneurs and aims at shifting social responsibilities formerly carried by the state onto the *Mittelstand*, thereby including this group in a neoliberal marketization program that, on the

one hand, encourages *Mittelständler* to compensate for this change through the growth of their businesses and, on the other, discourages to make use of social security provided by the state.

4.2 Between Social Market and Free Market Order: Hans Hansmann as Hybrid Entrepreneur

It is this transition from a mercantile to an entrepreneurial approach to the *Mittelstand* which Liebermann's *Das Ende des Kanzlers* processes. Its protagonist Hans Hansmann is depicted and caricatured as a traditional, bourgeois *Mittelständler* whose name invokes the characters of *Hanswurst*, *Hans im Glück*, or Hans Hansen in Thomas Mann's "Tonio Kröger" ([1903], 1932). While not providing deeper insights into Hansmann's character, these literary and cultural "relatives" contribute to his stereotyping as a naïve and comic figure. His narrative portrayal resembles a list of clichés ranging from his understanding of gender-specific social roles, rights, and responsibilities to his belief in virtues reminiscent of the Protestant, Prussian, and bourgeois traditions. As the fourth-generation owner of a small drugstore that was passed down to him, Hansmann deems himself a successful "Selbstständiger und Mittelständler" (Liebermann 26), a man of high social status whose success allows him to be the sole provider for his family. Additionally, outside the family sphere, Hansmann pursues the stereotypical activities of a bourgeois traditionalist. During the opening hours of his drugstore, he manages and controls his business with what he considers to be the utmost professionalism.

Pünktlich um vierzehn Uhr schloss Hansmann die Landentür auf. ... [Die Glocke] bimmelte immer beim Öffnen der Tür. ... Er hätte es sich nicht verziehen, wenn ein Kunde die Drogerie betreten hätte, ohne dass er ihn vernommen hätte. ... Sollten doch die in den Supermärkten an ihren Selbstbedienungstheken und Fließbandkassen machen, was sie wollten. ... Mit dem stets

prüfenden Blick über die Regale durchschritt Hansmann seine Drogerie. Er freute sich über die Ordnung... (10-11)

The description of Hansmann's work routine serves largely to ridicule him for his unshakable belief that order, cleanliness, industriousness, and punctuality are the virtues of a good business owner although, as he himself points out, the standards of entrepreneurialism have changed and moved towards large-scale enterprises that operate with automated systems in order to manage large numbers of customers. Troubled by the decreasing sales in his drugstore but convinced that his entrepreneurial practices are superior to those of large corporations, Hansmann sees no need to adapt his business model to the changed market on which he faces bitter competition by large chain drugstores. As a prime example of Bröckling's melancholic, he believes that "die Hölle der *enterprise culture*, das sind immer die anderen" ("Enthusiasten, Ironiker, Melancholiker" 85). His marketing strategy can be summed up by the mottos "eine Hand wäscht die andere" and "sehen und gesehen werden" and his finance strategy is guided by his father's saying that "nur ein Kaufmann, der Schulden hat, ist ein guter Kaufmann" (Liebermann 9) so long as the debt can be amortized by private capital, a condition that Hansmann is no longer able to fulfil. Regardless of his realization that business practices have changed over time, Hansmann decides to stay on the same course he has known for years and counts on the reputation of his family business and the loyalty of his customers to pull him through the slow season. "Man kannte ihn ja und die Drogerie Hansmann, das älteste Fachgeschäft am Ort in der vierten Generation" (10). After closing his drugstore "wie immer pünktlich um halb sieben" (19), Hansmann either spends his evenings watching the news and reading the local newspaper or goes to his local gun club where he attends board meetings and enjoys the occasional Sunday morning drink together with fellows he perceives to be like-

minded. “Zu seiner Frühschoppenrunde gehörten in erster Linie die Stammtischler des Schützenvereinsvorstandes, ergänzt um einige weitere ehrenwerte Männer dieser Stadt. Ja, sie waren ehrenwert. Ehrenwert, unbescholten und redlich, so wie er selbst. Zu diesem Kreis der Ehrenmänner zählte sich Hansmann” (50). Again, the overemphasis of Hansmann’s self-perception as a man of honour simply because he is a board member of his local gun club serves to ridicule him and his out-dated understanding of proper moral behaviour. Moreover, his belief in bourgeois virtues and the importance of belonging to a group of men who share a membership at the local gun club and meet regularly at their local pub mark him as a stereotypically “German” male. On the one hand, his portrayal as stereotypically German – an image that is ever-present in his stereotypically German name – serves to further ridicule Hansmann as he strives to construct himself as a first-class husband and business man by modelling his conduct on characteristics evocative of clichéd 18th century Prussian virtues that continue to contribute to an essentializing conceptualization of “Germanness” as “Prussianness.” On the other, his striving to embody a stereotyped image of a “German” *Mittelständler* can be interpreted as a commentary not only on his out-dated mercantile business practices but also on the mercantile business practices themselves. Because, as Clement emphasized, the *Mittelstand* is considered to be at the heart of Germany’s social market economy, Hansmann’s ridicule as a stereotypically German *Mittelständler* can be read also as a commentary on Germany’s current social market economy as an out-dated socio-economic model. From this perspective, Hansmann’s failure as a drugstore owner is not inevitable because the *Mittelstand* has lost relevance in Germany’s economic landscape but because Hansmann is unable to transition from the mercantile to the market-driven model of entrepreneurialism.

When he first hears about the *Mittelstandsoffensive*, his business is already in deep financial trouble, a problem that this government program attempts to remedy. However, the *Mittelstandsoffensive* is unable to help Hansmann save his business. With his drugstore facing decreasing sales, Hansmann is already caught in the free-market downward spiral of fewer discounts and shorter payment terms imposed by his wholesaler and inadequately high advance payments on taxes relative to his profit, which make it impossible for him to maintain competitive prices and cause further decreasing sales due to price increases. Unwilling to accept this economic model based on the self-interest of each individual element, he challenges the elements' interplay and its socially unjust consequences for those with insufficient capital. "Die Paradoxie ließ ihm die Galle aufsteigen: Das Finanzamt verlangte von ihm mehr Geld, obwohl seine Umsätze rückläufig waren und er Ende des Jahres Geld zurückfordern konnte, der Großhändler wollte von ihm schneller Geld, eben weil die Umsätze zurückgingen" (26). Although Hansmann realizes that he is not in a position of economic power but must follow the rules that are laid out for him, he fails to understand that these rules are not paradoxical but rather market-oriented. Because the market drives the financial decisions of the wholesaler and the tax revenue agency, Hansmann also fails to understand that, similar to him, his wholesaler has to adapt his prices according to Hansmann's ability to purchase goods from him because it affects his own buying power on the market and the wholesale business's profitability. It is ultimately not the wholesaler who determines Hansmann's prices but rather both Hansmann and the wholesaler who are dependent on the market and its unpredictable fluctuations. Both are not as much in control of their pricing and profit as it may seem to Frau Meissner, the consumer who comments on the price increase in Hansmann's drugstore. "Ich kann an den Preisen nichts machen," entgegnete er verlegen. ... Ganz so war es zwar nicht, aber so richtig

falsch auch nicht. ... Den Rabattverlust musste er halt irgendwie ausgleichen. ... Insofern, so rechtfertigte sich Hansmann, war die Preiserhöhung doch durch seinen Großhändler vorgegeben" (14). Because he is eager to continuously prove his own virtuousness as a solidary, fair, and righteous *Mittelständler* and citizen and quick to point out the flaws of others, his own participatory role in the affirmation and execution of market-driven practices remains invisible to him and shines through in many of his thoughts and actions as a business owner, colleague, friend, husband and father that are only made visible to the reader.

Bröckling's description of the melancholic is, again, surprisingly fitting. "[E]r [sieht] sich in jedem Fall durch ebenso furchterregende wie unbegreifbare Mächte von außen [bedroht]. Abwehr bedeutet hier Externalisierung: Die Gestalt des unternehmerischen Selbst mag ihn noch so sehr schrecken, er ist sich gewiss, selbst keines zu sein" ("Enthusiasten, Ironiker, Melancholiker" 85). Although his untimely values seem to be irreconcilable with the imperative of the market he so despises, their contrasting untimeliness rather seems to create the illusion in Hansmann that he is unsusceptible to the market imperative. But the boundaries between bourgeois virtues and the imperative of the market are, according to Liebermann's novel, all but distinct; instead, many views held within a bourgeois value system are also intricate elements of a market rationality. This intersection of discourses becomes apparent when Hansmann visits his friend and fellow tradesman Seelmann in his bakery, whose oncoming closure foreshadows the closure of his drugstore. It is in particular Hansmann's understanding of responsibility that illustrates the discourses' similarity and interconnectedness.

Seelman war halt das Opfer eines politisch gewollten Verdrängungswettbewerbs geworden. Ein Einzelkämpfer, der gegen die Wirtschaftskrise und Vorschriften nicht mehr ankam. 'Sicher,

auch ich habe momentan einige finanzielle Probleme, aber ich habe ... rechtzeitig neue Produkte ins Sortiment genommen, früh genug investiert und muss nur die Talsohle durchschreiten', dachte er sich. ... Die Selbständigen, die Deutschland mit ihren kleinen Betrieben nach dem Krieg aufgebaut hatten, wurden in der Politik kaum noch beachtet. Von Unterstützung konnte gar keine Rede sein. Wenn Politiker von Subventionsabbau sprachen, dann meinten sie ..., dass sie die Subventionen der Großen ... sich holen mussten von denen, die noch etwas Geld in der Tasche hatten; nämlich von den Selbständigen aus dem Mittelstand. (Liebermann 43-45)

Hansmann uses the notion of responsibility to present arguments in favour of state responsibility for individuals as well as personal responsibility of individuals. While his reasoning may seem contradictory at first sight, Hansmann in fact exemplifies both the adaptability and practicality of neoliberal governmentality. On the one hand, he believes that the failure of Seelmann's bakery was caused because he was forced into an unfair competition with large-capacity bakeries whose interests are backed up by the government, which is demonstrated by the high taxation of mid-sized businesses that is used to subsidize such large corporations. On the other, he nevertheless holds Seelmann accountable for the bakery's closure while implicitly criticizing him for not having entered into unexploited markets and expanding his range of products when difficulties began to arise; thus he implies that it is only Seelmann's responsibility to ensure the bakery's economic well-being. Correspondingly, Hansmann still believes that he is a prudent businessman who has taken all the necessary precautions by introducing new products into his product range, thereby avoiding Seelmann's grave mistake. Repeatedly pointing out what he perceives to be the moral weaknesses or incompetence of others, he attempts to position himself as superior to others while overlooking his own significant role in executing and reaffirming the same neoliberal practices he so

fervently criticizes. Although he believes that he is able to resist the call of the entrepreneurial self by rejecting market-driven entrepreneurial practices, he nevertheless strives for an image of the entrepreneurial self that, by idealizing the past, allows the self to ignore its own market-driven conduct.

While he considers unfavourable policies to have contributed to Seelmann's bankruptcy, Hansmann nevertheless refuses to give the same benefit of the doubt to a homeless man whom he sees begging for money on his daily walk to the bank. Condemning him on the assumption that being unemployed and homeless must be due to his unwillingness to work, he neither feels sympathy nor does he wonder about the reasons for the man's situation. "So lange ihm der Mensch nicht zu nahe kam, sollte er machen, was er wollte. Praktizierte Liberalität war dieses Verhalten in seinen Augen. ... Schließlich war er ja Kaufmann und als solcher kreativ, Neuerungen gegenüber aufgeschlossen, ein Mittelständler, der sich in der freien Marktwirtschaft behauptet hatte" (40). The liberalism to which Hansmann refers and that he ties to a free market economy within which he firmly positions himself, is clearly based on the market-driven principles of self-interest and personal responsibility, the same principles he dismisses when he deals with his wholesaler or when he reasons about Seelmann's bankruptcy. Hansmann's character can be understood as a literary figure who is portrayed as a site of struggle between two competing worldviews and self-concepts, that is, as a hybrid between a mercantile and an entrepreneurial self whose self-understanding as a self-employed *Mittelständler* draws on both bourgeois and market-centred principles. While Hansmann appears to be able to negotiate and unify these conflicting principles within his subjectivity, he struggles to maintain its fragile stability. His conflict between social market and free market principles points not only at an individual's futile attempt to reposition himself successfully

vis-à-vis a government program without any alternative such as the *Mittelstandsoffensive*; it also mirrors the government's attempt to balance two opposing economic and societal models and its consequences for individuals and the society at large. Hansmann's failure illustrates the severe conflicts that arise from the confrontation with the neoliberal demand to adapt to a market-driven economy that increasingly responsabilizes the individual and deresponsibilizes the state as welfare provider. When he recognizes that the existence of his own drugstore is threatened when Super-Drug, a large chain of drugstores, announces to settle in the area, the deep conflict between social-market and free-market principles within Hansmann's reasoning is uncovered.

Although he feels that the responsibility to ensure the operation of his business lies with himself only, he feels entitled to the mayor's help because his drugstore has not only been "ein redlicher und zuverlässiger Steuerzahler" but is also a domestic business that deserves – "im Sinne der Bürger" (80) – protection from a foreign business. While it is not the community's good but only his own that is on Hansmann's mind, he argues against the free market and in favour of a social market economy, demanding state responsibility and intervention as well as the prioritization of the public good to which citizens like himself have a right because they contribute to the state's finances by paying taxes. However, his demand that the government regulate the market in order to ensure the survival of his business fails to sway the mayor's opinion in his favour. Instead, the mayor rejects any responsibility for Hansmann and responds with the same argument with which Hansmann had justified his lack of responsibility towards the homeless man. "Für seine Existenz ist in der freien Marktwirtschaft jeder selbst verantwortlich" (81). Without questioning his own previous affirmation of the same free market that now threatens the existence of his drugstore, Hansmann grudgingly accepts the

task of fighting for his business but not the responsibility for its survival, which he continues to lay into the hands of the state. As he strives to become a more successful entrepreneur to save his drugstore, he faces the problem of finding a suitable successor and attempts to get a loan; these are issues that the *Mittelstandsoffensive* claims to remedy in order to enable greater business success and growth. So doing, Hansmann involuntarily puts the much-discussed *Mittelstandsoffensive* to the test, a futile endeavour that uncovers this program of the Red-Green government as a mechanism that achieves the opposite of what it claims to seek. By increasingly imposing more free-market principles on the *Mittelstand*, it ignores the economic disadvantage of small and mid-sized businesses in terms of capital and resources and therefore contributes to stalling rather than enabling their growth while strengthening financially-sound corporations like Super-Drug.

After Hansmann leaves the mayor's office, he is approached by a city councillor of the "schwarze Fraktion" (82), in other words, the Christian Democratic Party that had lost its power on the federal level to Schröder's Social Democratic Party, who seizes the opportunity to further poison Hansmann's mind against the mayor. Claiming to give him secret information about the plans of the mayor and his "rote Freunde" (83) – that is, the Social Democratic Party that is also in power at the municipal level – to favour Super-Drug because of business tax revenue and the creation of jobs, he incites Hansmann to write a letter of complaint to the Chancellor in which he asks him "wie dieses Handeln seiner Genossen in Hammelstadt zu vereinbaren ist mit seiner so genannten Mittelstandsoffensive" (85). Because Hansmann is blind towards his own participatory role in the affirmation and execution of market-driven practices, it appears to him that there must exist a powerful, external decision-maker like the Chancellor who, in Hansmann's view, fails to fulfil his moral obligation to restore the

country's economic strength. "Der Winzling war seinem politisch propagierten Ziel, der Agenda 2010, schon sehr nahe gekommen. Spätestens 2010, davon war Hansmann überzeugt, war der Staat eine Bananenrepublik und die Armut überall" (14). It was the government's introduction of reforms such as the *Agenda 2010* and the *Mittelstandsoffensive* that aim at improving the status quo that convinced Hansmann to vote for the "Winzling" and his party. "Der Winzling hatte ihn damals überzeugt, als er behauptete, den von der christlichen Partei angerichteten Scherbenhaufen habe er in seiner ersten Wahlperiode aufgekehrt, in der zweiten würde es endlich wieder aufwärts gehen" (40). Although the notion of reform implies both the active intervention of the reforming body in the state of affairs and that the change will improve a previously faulty condition or situation, the meaning of improvement and the means to achieve it as well as the future role of state intervention remain ambiguous in Hansmann's rendition of Schröder's reform policy. With his vote and his taxes, Hansmann believes, he relegates the responsibility to achieve this upward trend to the state. However, the *Mittelstandsoffensive* – together with the Red-Green coalition's *Ich-AG* and employability training measures – aim at putting regulations in place that allow for less state intervention and increased citizen responsibility. Although Hansmann attempts to act upon himself as an entrepreneur and strives towards more self-responsibility and risk-taking by asking for a loan and searching for means to prolong the existence of his drugstore, he ultimately relies on the state to protect his interests.

After unsuccessfully requesting the editor of the local newspaper to write an article about the mayor's plans and, on the following day, reading a positive newspaper article about a large donation made by Super-Drug to Hammelstadt in anticipation of the store's quickly-approaching settlement, Hansmann realizes that the editor's and mayor's interest is to promote

Super-Drug. When his financial adviser also refuses to support him with a loan with which he could afford to further expand his range of products and services and therefore his competitiveness – a central element of the *Mittelstandsoffensive* – and, moreover, demands the fast repayment of his outstanding loan and mortgage, Hansmann believes he has uncovered a conspiracy against him. “Es kann natürlich nicht in eurem Interesse sein, dass ‘Super-Drug’ nicht finanziell über die Runden kommt. Denen habt ihr sehr viel Geld in den Rachen gestopft. Also lasst ihr mich über die Kippe springen” (100). Left to his own devices, Hansmann attempts to capitalize on his brother’s sudden death; unable to mourn, he understands this event as an opportunity to acquire capital. “[B]ei Gerd [war] bestimmt was zu holen. ... Des einen Leid, des anderen Freud, fiel ihm ein” (110). Even at this point, Hansmann still fails to recognize that he is not the victim of a conspiracy led by the powerful who take advantage of the powerless. His understanding of government fails to account for the fact that it is necessary for individuals to participate in a system that is based on the fulfilment of self-interest. Disappointed that his inheritance is not sufficient to repay his entire debt and angered by the bank adviser who refuses once more to grant him a loan, he feels empowered by the possession of his brother’s two unregistered guns, with which he imagines taking revenge on the one man whom he perceives to be the root of his misfortune. “Der Winzling ganz oben, das war die Wurzel allen Übels. ... Zumindest in Gedanken wollte er durchspielen, was er könnte, wenn er wollte. ... Sollte die Zukunft seiner Drogerie und seine eigene ungewiss sein, so würde auch die Zukunft des Winzlings ungewiss sein” (121-22). Only through his self-construction as a victim of the Chancellor’s politics and his plan for revenge is Hansmann able to regain a sense of control over his life, which he increasingly perceives to be governed by external, market-oriented forces. His belief in a categorical distinction between victim and perpetrator is

reminiscent of a Bourdieudian understanding of power – as a force that is imposed on the powerless – and therefore Hansmann fails to understand the intricate relationship of power and responsibility that characterizes the imperative of the market, which relies on individuals' concurrent exercise of self-control and self-responsibility. Unable to see through the call of the entrepreneurial self, Hansmann wants to have it both ways. At the same time as he wishes to profit personally, he wishes to be protected when he incurs losses.

The conflict between social-market and free-market principles within Hansmann's reasoning, however, remains unresolved until after he assassinates the Chancellor. Realizing that the mechanisms that govern politics cannot be traced back and attributed to one man, regardless of the political power of his position, he takes on a fatalist perspective on politics that rejects the possibility of agency. "In Hansmann wuchs die fatale Erkenntnis, dass sich nichts ändern würde. Ob mit oder ohne Winzling, seine Zukunft war kaputt. Der Staat blieb so marode wie er war" (174). From this perspective, state intervention is merely an illusion and the market – while conceptualized negatively as a downward spiral – is a self-regulating entity that must be respected as such. Still unable to see his own role in affirming the market as a regulatory and organizing principle of society, this perspective allows him to maintain his ignorance and distance himself from the failure of his business, ascribing it solely to forces beyond his control.

The failure of his business is a comment not only on the inadequacy of the *Mittelstandsoffensive* as an aid for the German *Mittelstand* but also on the unconditionality of this market-driven governing practice. Although Hansmann uses market-oriented means to regulate the prices in his drugstore and attempts to take out a second loan with his bank to expand his range of goods and services, his failure as a *Mittelständler* remains inevitable

because his means to ensure the survival of his business are grounded in the social market principle of state intervention, a principle from which the Red-Green coalition seeks to distance itself. While he decides to withdraw from self-employment altogether, his decision to enter politics is not a critical comment on the inadequacy of the idealized entrepreneurial notion of continual recovery after failure. On the contrary, Hansmann's ability not only to recover from, but also to capitalize on his failure in his intended career by running to become the new mayor of Hammelstadt frames his financial and social ruin in a positive light and points to a continuation of his entrepreneurial conduct in the realm of politics. Regardless of the ambiguity of his intentions as a mayor who would "endlich mal den Mist auskehren" (182), the narrative of Hans Hansmann concludes with a seeming success story that constructs the tragic failure of Hansmann's drugstore as an entrepreneurial fairy tale in which Hansmann remains oblivious to his own entrepreneurial conduct.

4.2.1 The Bourgeois Masculine Body

Throughout the novel, Hans Hansmann is fixated on managing and controlling his own body, which serves as a central element of his social display of bourgeois virtues. Because these virtues are inextricably tied to his self-understanding as a notably German *Mittelständler*, his body image is also shaped by his "Germanness" that functions as an overarching principle of self-conception. His bourgeois "Germanness" informs the way he regards and disciplines his body, which he prides himself in appearing orderly, clean, and professional. "[N]och ein Blick in den Spiegel im Treppenhaus, ein Zurechtzupfen der dezenten Krawatte über dem weißen Hemd und ein Ausrichten des grauen Sakkos. Der Scheitel saß genau im leicht angegrauten braunen Haar. Er sah ordentlich aus, freute sich Hansmann" (10). The omniscient narrator

identifies Hansmann's body as a masculine body. What marks it as masculine, however, are only his garments that are traditionally associated with men's clothing, more specifically, with white-collar worker men's clothing; a description of his body or of his experience of physical sensation remains mostly unmentioned throughout the novel. When it is mentioned, it serves mostly to emphasize this striking absence of physicalness. "Im Bett hauchte Karin ihm einen flüchtigen Gute-Nacht-Kuss auf die Wange. Er überlegte kurz, ob er sie an sich ziehen sollte. Aber dann ließ er es. So attraktiv war seine Frau nicht mehr und großes Verlangen spürte er heute auch nicht" (21). Hansmann uses his body exclusively as a tool to accomplish his white-collar work as the owner of a drugstore. While he works, according to his own judgement, "wie ein Stier [, der] von morgens acht bis abends achtzehn dreißig ... in der Drogerie [stand] und ... die Kunden [bediente]" (6), his work is free from any exertive manual labour.

The portrayal of Hansmann's body as an image of bourgeois virtues, lacking any signs of sexuality and other physical experiences, is reminiscent of what David McNally calls the "bourgeois body" (5) that is "almost wholly cleansed of any association with the degrading world of labour. Not only do bourgeois bodies not labour, they are largely lacking in any of the usual markers of biological being" (Mooers 5). McNally argues that "the bourgeois body is a sanitized, heroic male body of rational (nonbiological) creatures; it does not break under the strain of routinized work; ... it does not feel the lash of the master's whip; it does not suffer and die. The bourgeois body is, in short, an idealist abstraction" (5). Its manifestation in the character of Hansmann, however, offers a variation of McNally's bourgeois body in that it can be interpreted as sanitized, rational, and resilient; at the same time, however, it suffers and, most importantly, it is not an idealistic, but rather a ridiculed abstraction. The effect of this bourgeois body is, similar to his entrepreneurial masculinity, the construction of Hansmann as

an out-dated and backward-looking merchant whose appearance justifies the narrator's ridicule and contempt. It is this ridicule and contempt for the bourgeois *Mittelständler* Hansmann that also serves to evoke ridicule and contempt for the social market principles that Hansmann stubbornly attempts to uphold, thereby implicitly validating the market-driven principles that Hansmann believes to counter.

Hansmann's bourgeois body image but also his image of masculinity is inextricably linked to his self-understanding as a traditional *Mittelständler*. He considers himself to be "ein richtiger guter Mann in den besten Jahren" (Liebermann 6) and casts himself in the role of the sole breadwinner and patriarch of the family as whom he determines – seemingly out of generosity towards his wife and children – what they are to do and whether they succeed. "Er war stolz auf seine Familie, stolz darauf, alleine für den Unterhalt aufkommen zu können, ohne dass seine Frau eine Arbeit aufnehmen musste. Karin war die Frau eines selbständigen Drogisten. Sie hatte es nicht nötig, für andere zu arbeiten. Sie hatte den Haushalt zu führen, die Kinder zu erziehen. Und sie hatte ihre Sache gut gemacht" (8). Although Hansmann demands of his wife Karin an exclusive performance of the supporting roles of mother, housekeeper, and sexual partner, casting her in the role of a "typisches Heimchen am Herd, gut für den Alltag in Küche und Bett, aber nicht gut genug für den Feiertag" (7), she is aware of the drugstore's financial problems and the resulting need for her to contribute to the household earnings in order to sustain the family's standard of living. While Karin's suggestion to take on a part-time job as a cleaning woman is hence reasonable from an economic perspective, Hansmann asserts his position as patriarchal head of the family and rejects it at once on the grounds that it will ruin his reputation as a business owner. "Was meinst du, was die Leute denken, wenn sie hören, dass du eine Putze bist? Die sagen doch sofort, der Hansmann ist pleite, der muss schon

seine Frau losschicken, damit der was zu fressen hat. Nein, und nochmals nein” (23). A domestic tyrant not only towards his wife who anxiously submits herself to his rants, he also applies his view of gender-segregated socio-economic roles to his daughters, whom he regards as inferior to men both in terms of their capabilities as workers and their ability to reason and make economically-sound decisions. Disappointed that his wife bore two daughters, “aber zu seinem Leidwesen keinen Sohn” (8), he is sceptical about his daughters’ interest in working in the family business after his retirement. Although they plan to pursue higher education instead, Hansmann believes that they will naturally follow in the footsteps of his wife, regardless of their wishes. He is unable to envision that his daughter Gerda might not become a wife and mother and regards her wish to study as a mere waste of her time and his money. “Eine Lehre, das würde auch für Gerda reichen. Was sollte ein Studium, wenn sie anschließend doch heiratete und eine Familie gründete? Mit Schrecken dachte er daran, im Falle eines Studiums auch noch monatlich ihre Kosten übernehmen zu müssen” (59). When Gerda suggests financing her studies with a government student loan, she is met with her father’s disapproval on the grounds that, again, this will damage his reputation in Hammelstadt. “Was sollten denn die Leute denken, wenn sie erführen, dass nicht er, sondern der Staat das Studium der Tochter finanzierte? Das BAFÖG war für die Kinder armer Leute gedacht, und sollten die Hammelstädter glauben, er sei arm?” (59). Hansmann’s masculinity rests, similar to the protagonist in *Alles bestens*, on the traditional masculine bourgeois values of “authority; social conservatism; compulsory heterosexuality; integration with a family division of labor; strongly marked, symbolic gender differences; and emotional distance between men and women” (Connell and Wood 348). However, at the same time as he establishes a rigid, authoritative,

and gender-segregated division of labour and social roles, he also subordinates his family to a free market logic that prioritizes profit and his own interests over his family's wants and needs.

Because a gender-based division of labour is also upheld in a neoliberal free market economy, Hansmann's traditional understanding of family roles remains unchallenged when his drugstore goes bankrupt. Although he gives in to his wife's wish to work, he does so not because he respects her as his equal but because he is unable to continue being the sole provider for his family. "Hansmann gab ihr bereitwillig die Erlaubnis, sich nach einer Arbeitsstelle umzusehen, bei der sie Geld verdienen konnte, seinetwegen sogar bei 'Super-Drug' oder dem schon bestehenden Drogeriemarkt auf der grünen Wiese" (Liebermann 172). Despite the seeming gender equality caused by the demands of the free market, Hansmann remains the family's patriarch.

Although Hansmann aspires to be a successful entrepreneur, his inability to figure out not only the demands of the market but also his own position within it plays a significant role in his failure as a *Mittelständler*. Rather than being incapable of seeing through the complex power relations that constitute neoliberal governmentality, Hansmann's metaphorical blindness is characterized by a self-imposed ignorance that allows him to continue demanding the possibility both to seek out personal profit that works to his advantage and to externalize the responsibility for the risks intrinsic to his actions. The determination with which Hansmann positions himself between two competing worldviews and self-concepts is reminiscent of Immanuel Kant's notion of the individual's "selbstverschuldete Unmündigkeit", self-imposed immaturity. In his seminal essay "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?" (1784), Kant describes the fear to think for oneself as the reason for remaining dependent on and directed by others.

Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit.

Unmündigkeit ist das Unvermögen, sich seines Verstandes ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen. *Selbstverschuldet* ist diese Unmündigkeit, wenn die Ursache derselben nicht am Mangel des Verstandes, sondern der Entschliebung und des Mutes liegt, sich seiner ohne Leitung eines andern zu bedienen. *Sapere aude!* Habe Mut, dich deines *eigenen* Verstandes zu bedienen! ist also der Wahlspruch der Aufklärung. Faulheit und Feigheit sind die Ursachen, warum ein so großer Teil der Menschen, nachdem sie die Natur längst von fremder Leitung freigesprochen [A482] (*naturaliter maiores*), dennoch gerne zeitlebens unmündig bleiben; und warum es anderen so leicht wird, sich zu deren Vormündern aufzuwerfen. (53, original emphasis)

Hansmann's failure as drugstore owner is in part caused by his inability to understand his situation and the reasons for his struggling against the challenges of the free market that he interprets as the viciousness not only of his financial advisor, the newspaper editor, and Hammelstadt's mayor but also the revenue office, his wholesaler, and his car dealer. Because of his ignorance, he fails to understand the rules of the market and hence remains dependent on the actions of those around him without being able to recognize their underlying rationality.

Caught in the transition towards an increasingly deregulated market economy brought about by the policies of the Red-Green coalition in which the state withdraws from its responsibility as a provider of social security, the character of Hans Hansmann oscillates between a mercantile and an entrepreneurial self who draws on both social market and free market principles. A melancholic according to Bröckling's typology of the entrepreneurial self, he is unable to acknowledge his own participatory role as a business owner in affirming market-driven governing practices and constructs himself as a victim of what he perceives to be the Chancellor's self-serving free-market policies, particularly the *Mittelstandsoffensive*.

Externalizing his responsibility for the entrepreneurial risks he takes throughout the course of the novel, he demands of the state and his community to prevent the impending failure of his business. Through the portrayal of Hansmann's rise and fall as a successful entrepreneur during the Red-Green era, *Das Ende des Kanzlers* questions the compatibility of Germany's *Mittelstand* with the market-driven governing practices introduced by Schröder's government. Hansmann puts the *Mittelstandsoffensive* to the test by striving to be a more successful *Mittelständler*, thereby not only exposing it as a technology of domination and the self but also as a program that has, contrary to its proclaimed goals, a detrimental effect on the market competitiveness of the *Mittelstand*. Despite the bankruptcy of Hansmann's drugstore, however, his narrative of failure is transformed into a success story and ultimately serves to affirm the validity of the discourse of the entrepreneurial self.

5 *Schule der Arbeitslosen: Economizing Education*

In this chapter, I examine Joachim Zelter's novel *Schule der Arbeitslosen*. I argue that the character of Karla serves to unveil the inhumanity and claim to absoluteness inherent in the all-encompassing rationality of the market as it becomes apparent in the Red-Green coalition's appeal for *Weiterqualifizierung*. After giving a synopsis of the plot, I will analyze the notion of *Weiterqualifizierung*, a central element of the Hartz laws and Schröder's political reform package *Agenda 2010*, as a technology of domination and the self that creates both the possibility and need for individuals to regard themselves as ever-improvable human capital and that is hence central for the preservation of the image of the entrepreneurial self. Then, I will show that this becomes evident through Karla, a character who is pathologized in an effort to reconceptualise her non-compliance to no longer challenge the primacy of the market but integrate it into its rationality as a negative example of failure and deficiency.

In a dystopian vision of Germany in the year 2016, Joachim Zelter's *Schule der Arbeitslosen* tells the story of a mostly anonymous mass of unemployed persons from all over Germany who participate in training measures enforced by the *Bundesagentur für Arbeit*, the Federal Employment Agency, that aim at improving their skills as job applicants. In large tour buses, of which there are many throughout Germany, which bear the iconic Agenda 2010 slogan "Deutschland bewegt sich" (Zelter 12), "Germany on the move", they are transported to Sphericon, a car radio factory turned job centre in a remote industrial area specifically provided for this purpose. Although the measures are proclaimed to be voluntary, the price of refusing to participate is to forfeit any claims to the *Bundesagentur für Arbeit* and hence any assistance with finding employment, exposing the choice to participate as a mere illusion. Because unfilled positions have become scarce in 2016, competition for those few jobs is fiercer than

ever. Only those who are willing to subordinate themselves to a punitive lifestyle and training that centre on constant self-improvement and aim at rendering the unemployed “stabilisiert, euphorisiert, flexibilisiert” (6) will, so the agency promises, have a chance to succeed. Under the school administration’s motto of “Diversität, Novität, Kontingenz” (21), the unemployed are renamed and transformed into trainees who are to turn themselves into desirable commodities on the labour market. Only two students, Karla Meier and Roland Bergmann, attempt to challenge Sphericon’s training program but eventually break under the program’s pressure and disciplinary measures. While Roland secures a position the *Bundesagentur für Arbeit* creates at Sphericon and becomes an exemplar of a successful entrepreneurial self, Karla and all other trainees are boarded onto airplanes and flown to Sierra Leone where they will, so they are told, spend a holiday. Although the final scene remains unresolved, it is suggested that, due to the lack of jobs, the *Bundesagentur für Arbeit* deports the unemployed, simply removing them from society and the labour market and glossing over the systemic problem of chronic unemployment.

Upon its publication, Zelter’s novel was much discussed in the German media. Although it is set only ten years after it was published and portrays existing government institutions, locations, and pop-cultural phenomena, most critics regard *Schule der Arbeitslosen* as a dystopia. Its contemporaneity creates an uncanny picture that makes visible and unambiguous certain structures that already exist but often remain unseen. The novel was oftentimes reviewed as an alarmingly timely novel and was even considered to be “the novel of our time”. “Den eigentlichen Roman zur Zeit hat Joachim Zelter geschrieben... Als solcher ist er heute beängstigend aktuell” (Geißler). Describing it as “eine Geschichte der Entsorgung”, a story of disposal, Dorothea Dieckmann regards the novel as a processing of the widespread

present-day concern “nichts mehr wert zu sein, wenn man kein multifunktionales Teilchen der längst überholten Arbeitsgesellschaft mehr ist.” Although the notion of an inextricable connection between work and self-worth is certainly one of the conclusions that can be drawn from Zelter’s novel, it glosses over the need to look at its existing wide-ranging and less visible consequences for individuals, that is, the effects of the economization of one’s life, spanning not only work but also social interactions and relationships, the body, health, and gender. Similarly, Dieckmann’s belief that the societal emphasis on work as a defining characteristic of a successful life is obsolete turns a blind eye to the reasons why the notion of “Arbeitsgesellschaft” still maintains such present-day popularity and the willingness of individuals to participate. By imagining a scenario in which the boundaries between compulsion and voluntariness are blurred, Zelter’s novel points at the element of individual participation within neoliberal governing practices. Although the *Bundesagentur für Arbeit* in Zelter’s novel is successful at urging unemployed persons to partake in its training measures – not least because it is a condition to continue making use of the agency’s assistance – the vast majority of Sphericon trainees are portrayed not only as willing participants but also as fierce and merciless competitors who not once hesitate to further their personal advantage in their search for success and happiness. Along the same lines as Dieckmann, reviewer Jens-Christian Rabe discusses the “möglichst marktkonforme Zurichtung der Schüler” in Zelter’s novel while Winfried Rust postulates that it portrays a “New-Economy-Diktatur” by amplifying well-known phenomena of the contemporary unemployment crisis and accurately identifying the oppressive nature of government policies that are part of “neoliberal-autoritäre Maßnahmenregime.” Merely two reviews stand out in their discussion of *Schule der Arbeitslosen*. As the only reviewer who calls attention to its weaknesses, Klaus Ungerer mainly

points out Zelter's interlinking of a criticism of capitalism and media with the language of the Third Reich, as for instance becomes obvious in the ever-present slogan "Work is Freedom" (28, 29, 71) and its reversal "Freedom is Work" (30, 71), and emphasizes its banality: "Dass dieses Buch aber gar zu dicht und gar zu scharfsinnig auf unser Heute reagiere – also da muss man doch bitten. Zu wohlfeil ist es, die derzeitigen Probleme unseres Kapitalismus und unserer Medienrealität mit der Sprache des Dritten Reiches zu verschränken – da bleibt die Analysentiefe doch recht seicht" (Ungerer). While Ungerer's criticism of Zelter's trite use of Third Reich rhetoric might be appropriate, he overlooks the function of this interlinking of discourses, namely the illustration of how language borrowed from one discourse contributes to constructing power relations and subjectivity in another. Christian Rakow appreciates the author's use of management rhetoric because of its significance for illustrating how the notion of work is constructed as a "gesellschaftliches Kernkonzept", a core concept of society, not only through ways of thinking and speaking but also through understanding and structuring one's realm of experience on the basis of work and employment.

Constructing work as a core concept of society lies at the heart of the entrepreneurial self, a notion that is crucial to understanding Zelter's novel as an examination of the notion of *Weiterqualifizierung* and its consequences for the self-conceptualization of individuals as entrepreneurial selves. In *Schule der Arbeitslosen*, the call of the entrepreneurial self is no longer covert and elusive but has become an explicit and aggressive demand on everyone, a perspective that – through exaggeration – makes visible the internalization of external demands made by the market. It comments on the significance of the notion of *Weiterqualifizierung* for the image of the entrepreneurial self that relies on the individual's wish for constant self-management and self-improvement. Instead of coercing individuals to undergo such training

measures, the notion of *Weiterqualifizierung* creates the need to improve one's never-sufficient qualifications for employment and hence stimulates individuals to act upon and guide themselves in the pursuit of success and well-being without calling into question their perceived autonomy. In Zelter's novel, the "Anreizsysteme" (*Das unternehmerische Selbst* 106), which aim to stimulate the unemployed who are to be trained at Sphericon to turn them into more successful job applicants, are not only intended to help individuals find employment but also to help them improve their lives because Sphericon "[ist w]eit mehr als nur eine fachliche Schulung. Vielmehr eine Lebensschulung" (Zelter 6). This reference to an all-encompassing economization of the self through such training measures sets the tone for Zelter's novel, which can be read as a critical commentary not only on *Weiterqualifizierung* as a market-driven governing practice that encourages individuals to strive towards becoming successful entrepreneurs of their own lives but also on its normalizing effect on individuals. *Schule der Arbeitslosen* imagines the effects of the normalization of subjectivity in the name of entrepreneurial success through the language of incapacitation – that is, the language of physical, mental, and emotional immaturity. This language of incapacitation is used not only by the trainers at Sphericon when they address and treat the unemployed as pupils, patients, or prison inmates but also by the omniscient narrator who thereby constructs a reality in which unemployment and incapacitation condition each other and have become interchangeable. It acts as a pervasive technology of thought that "seek[s] to delineate, normalize, and instrumentalize the conduct of persons in order to achieve the ends they postulate as desirable" (du Gay and Salaman 626), namely the normalized, perfect job applicant. Because of the novel's focus on the role of language in the construction of power relations and entrepreneurial subjectivity, the analysis of *Schule der Arbeitslosen* in this chapter places particular emphasis

on its commentary on and construction of the discourse of the entrepreneurial self through language as a technology of thought.

5.1 *Weiterqualifizierung* as Activation of the Entrepreneurial Self

With a tour bus marked “Deutschland bewegt sich” and training measures imposed by the *JobCenters* of the *Bundesagentur für Arbeit*, Zelter’s novel makes unequivocal references to the labour market measures included in Schröder’s well-known reform package *Agenda 2010*, which forms the political backdrop for its plot. The reform of labour market policy is a central element of the *Agenda 2010* and was designed by the Hartz commission under the leadership of Peter Hartz, former human resources executive at Volkswagen AG and later advisor to Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. Schröder’s coalition government aimed at creating an “aktivierender Staat” and a corresponding “aktivierende Arbeitsmarktpolitik” (Oschmiansky) that focuses on the responsabilization of the individual, who is called upon to take all steps the state deems necessary to find a way out of unemployment. In line with this approach, the Hartz commission based its reform suggestions to the labour market on the 2001 *Job-AQTIV-Gesetz*, a law that reorganizes the Employment Promotion Act according to the principles of “Aktivieren, Qualifizieren, Trainieren, Investieren, Vermitteln” and prescribes that “Schritte der Wiedereingliederung” of the unemployed should be executed as early as unemployment is filed (Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung).

For inclusion in the *Agenda 2010*, the Hartz commission suggested several laws that focus on the “Integrationsleistung der Arbeitslosen, die durch das Dienstleistungs- und Förderangebot gestützt und abgesichert wird” (Hartz-Kommission 19). It is the unemployed who must achieve their reintegration into the labour market and who are responsible for

ensuring the success of their endeavour while the state's role is reduced to providing support for this undertaking. The report of the Hartz commission further explains that state support – financial or otherwise – for the unemployed is always contingent upon the willingness of unemployed persons to take up any kind of employment or participate in further training, an approach that is summed up by the motto of the Hartz laws “Fördern und Fordern” (Weise).

Die angebotenen Dienstleistungen – von der Übernahme einer Zeitarbeit und der Teilnahme an einer Weiterqualifizierung bis hin zur Annahme einer Beschäftigung – setzen Arbeitslose in die Lage, selbst im Sinne des Integrationszieles tätig zu werden. Im Gegenzug hilft das integrierte System der Beratung, Betreuung und materiellen Absicherung, diese Handlungsoptionen zu nutzen. (Hartz-Kommission 19)

Welfare is no longer a right for those who are unemployed but is considered a service in return for one's personal initiative and contribution to finding any kind of new employment. Evident in this section of the Hartz commission's report is not only the government's focus on increased individual responsibility and limited state responsibility regarding the provision of social welfare; the notion of individual autonomy on which this provision is based is inherently paradoxical, as can be shown on closer consideration of the labour market policy motto “Fördern und Fordern.” The demand of unemployed persons to use government services that enable them to act autonomously of state support and that must, ironically, be used in order to receive this essential material support cannot result in autonomy because all actions towards greater independence remain contingent on these demands. Moreover, autonomy cannot be achieved “[weil] die Förderung von Handlungsoptionen ... nicht zu trennen [ist] von der Forderung, einen spezifischen Gebrauch von diesen ‘Freiheiten’ zu machen, so dass die Freiheit zum Handeln sich oftmals in einen faktischen Zwang zum Handeln oder eine

Entscheidungszumutung verwandelt” (Lemke, Krasmann, and Bröckling 30). This help-to-self-help approach ensures that the responsibility both for the achievements and failures of the unemployed cannot lie with the state but remains with the individual.

The four Hartz laws that fall under the *Gesetze für moderne Dienstleistungen am Arbeitsmarkt*, commonly referred to as *Hartz I*, *Hartz II*, *Hartz III*, and *Hartz IV*, were introduced gradually between January 2003 and January 2005 (Hartz-Kommission). While *Hartz I* and *Hartz II* created, for example, the *Ich-AG* as well as types of minor employment called *Mini-* and *Midi-Jobs* that allow for no (or low) health and employment insurance payments and decrease the amount of unemployment assistance while increasing health insurance premiums, *Hartz III* introduced the restructuring of the *Bundesanstalt für Arbeit* into the *Bundesagentur für Arbeit*. *Hartz IV* is considered the most expansive reform law that merged former long-term unemployment benefits with welfare benefits, leaving the new unemployment benefits at the lower - and arguably insufficient - welfare benefits level. Evidently, one of the Red-Green coalition’s goals when introducing the Hartz laws was to urge the unemployed to take up any kind of employment and ensure that “[n]iemandem ... wird künftig gestattet sein, sich zu Lasten der Gemeinschaft zurückzulehnen: wer zumutbare Arbeit ablehnt, der wird mit Sanktionen rechnen müssen” (Schröder).

5.1.1 Forming the Subject in the Image of the Entrepreneurial Self

One of the central elements of this activating labour market policy is the notion of *Weiterqualifizierung* – a term that emphasizes the goal of improving one’s qualifications for employment rather than one’s education, as emphasized in the term *Weiterbildung* – which aims at further training those who are considered “schwer vermittelbar” (29) so that placement

becomes easier. Such programs are offered by local employment agencies, renamed *JobCenters* by the Hartz commission, and determine the “Beratungs- und Betreuungsbedarf und [die] frühzeitige Einleitung erforderlicher Maßnahmen” for all unemployed individuals (22). The Red-Green coalition considers further training a “Garant für die Beschäftigungsfähigkeit von Arbeitnehmerinnen und Arbeitnehmern” that receives much attention, in particular in the policies outlined in the *Agenda 2010* (Bundesanstalt für Arbeit 9). It is believed to be a safe tool not merely to improve but even to enable individuals as employees and increase access to jobs previously considered inaccessible. The notion of *Weiterqualifizierung* hence creates its own legitimacy by instilling first the fear of not being able to secure a job without the necessary qualifications and then the reassurance that the tools and practices it offers are guaranteed to be one’s “Geheimwaffe gegen Erwerbslosigkeit” (Mrusek). This kind of training shares hardly any similarities with education. It is an “instrumental notion that focuses on ... individual knowledge formation and accumulation“ that builds one’s human capital and “as such ... often ignores and glosses over contextual and personal dimensions” (McGarry and Schmenk). While education generally aims at transmitting and negotiating knowledge, skills, customs, and values, training aims at forming individuals’ capacities to function better within the rationality of the market.

Similar to the *Ich-AG* and the *Mittelstandsoffensive*, practices of *Weiterqualifizierung* act both as a technology of domination and the self in that they direct the conduct of individuals at the same time as they provide tools with which they are encouraged to act upon themselves in order to adapt to the demands of the market. As one of the goals of Schröder’s government was to make the labour market more “flexible” (Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung 54) – in other words, less regulated, less stable, and more competitive –

individuals are urged to expand their skill repertoire through further training to be able to respond “flexibly” to a fluctuating and unpredictable market, a challenge that Richard Sennett critiques in his book *The Corrosion of Character* (1998) as a concept that

is used today as another way to lift the curse of oppression from capitalism. In attacking rigid bureaucracy and emphasizing risk, it is claimed, flexibility gives people more freedom to shape their lives. In fact, the new order substitutes new controls rather than simply abolishing the rules of the past – but these new controls are also hard to understand. The new capitalism is an often illegible regime of power. (9-10)

The willingness of individuals to participate in “lifelong learning” is made possible through their conceptualization as human capital whose accumulation is paramount to maintaining one’s competitiveness. In fact, the provision of the possibility “mobiler zu sein und das Humankapital an den Erfordernissen des Marktes auszurichten” (Bundesanstalt für Arbeit 17) is one of the Red-Green government’s declared labour market goals. The government’s promotion of lifelong learning in what is considered our present-day knowledge-based economy emphasizes in particular the need for *Weiterqualifizierung*, as it is considered “ein wesentlicher Faktor” (21) and a vital resource of human capital. The relationship between individual responsibility for lifelong learning and *Weiterbildung* - the accumulation of one’s human capital - and economic growth are explicitly formulated in the programmatic texts by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) that have been adopted widely by politicians and that have had a strong impact on German labour market reforms.

“Human capital is associated with a wide range of both economic and non-economic benefits. Indeed, some of the biggest benefits may be non-economic; these include improved health, longer life spans and a greater likelihood of involvement in community life. Economically, the

returns to human capital can be understood in terms of the prosperity, both the individual's and that of the national economy" (OECD).

Because the notion of *Weiterqualifizierung* is based on the rationality of the market as an organizing principle of the state and the individual, its practices address individuals as entrepreneurial selves who must continually manage and improve themselves with the goal of adapting to its fluctuating and hence unpredictable nature. It forms part of the discourses on the entrepreneurial self that rely on the strategy of constantly stimulating individuals to strive towards becoming more successful entrepreneurs of their own lives. *Weiterqualifizierung* functions as a strategy for the constant stimulation of market-oriented conduct. Always promoted as a voluntary measure at the same time as it is endorsed as a crucial factor for the accumulation of one's human capital, the notion of *Weiterqualifizierung* is grounded in the paradox of autonomy that also underlies the market-focused measures of the *Ich-AG* and the *Mittelstandsoffensive*. Although such measures appear as mere political programs, they reach deeply into the private sphere in order to responsabilize individuals as entrepreneurs of their own lives, determining not only their sense of material security but also their relationship to their bodies and minds.

5.2 Entrepreneurial Self-Management in Joachim Zelter's *Schule der Arbeitslosen*

The novel *Schule der Arbeitslosen* examines the notion of *Weiterqualifizierung* and its consequences for the subjectivity of individuals who are constantly called upon as entrepreneurial selves to control and improve their bodies, minds, and emotions. Defined merely by their socio-economic status as unemployed, most characters are reduced to an anonymous mass of trainees whose only response to the demand to manage themselves as

human capital is to sheepishly accept it in the hope of regaining employment. Without the previously provided net of social security, they have little choice but to accept patronization and instruction on how to improve themselves through training in order to become better entrepreneurs of their own lives as who, so they believe, will be able to achieve success, wealth, and wellbeing. Because Sphericon proclaims to be a “freiwillige und freie Schule” (26), the responsibility for self-improvement lies with the trainees. When they fail, they embrace what they believe is their fate and hold no one but themselves accountable. The trainees’ self-understanding as individuals who follow the call of the entrepreneurial self because they believe to be at its mercy suggests their integration into Bröckling’s typology of the entrepreneurial self (2008) as social lemmings who “move unthinkingly and unceasingly toward eventual destruction – of themselves, their environment, their culture, their society, and their civilization” (Palmatier 253). Unquestioningly, they follow the prescribed daily routine and obey the school’s dress code, moving simultaneously from one task to the next. While they, at first, merely follow the trainers’ instructions on how to become better applicants, they soon begin to internalize them and continue – without explicit urging and seemingly voluntarily – to undertake tasks with the goal of improving themselves. “An den Wochenenden findet kein Unterricht statt. ... Nur kleinere Hausaufgaben und Arbeitsaufträge durchziehen die Samstage und Sonntage. Ansonsten ist Zeit zur freien Verfügung. Nicht wenige sitzen an einem Computer und arbeiten an autobiographischen Konzepten” (92). The destruction of themselves and their environment, culture, society, and civilization takes place on a metaphorical level where the economization of society renders any activity an investment in one’s human capital and signifies society’s subtle yet fundamental transformation. In this economized world of Sphericon, employment is a desirable end in itself and is considered, as one of the school’s

mottos “*labor improbus*” (91) says, to conquer all. As an all-encompassing form of experience, “ein körperliches, ein psychologisches, ein soziales Erlebnis”, it must be simulated “von den ersten Sekunden des Aufstehens, bis zur letzten Minute vor der Bettruhe” (91).

The pervasiveness and perpetuity of the appeal to regard not only oneself but everything and every person around oneself as a resource that must be taken advantage of and maximized in order to reach the ultimate goal of employment is expressed in the school’s continuous broadcasting of a TV show called “Job-Quest.”

Die ewige Serie fortwährender Suche, die Suche nach Arbeit, mit wechselnden Protagonisten, die auf abenteuerlichsten Wegen nach Arbeit suchen und sie am Ende auch finden. Sie suchen mit eigenen Papieren oder mit geliehenen Papieren oder mit gefälschten Papieren: zu Lande, zu Wasser, in der Luft; mit Freunden, ohne Freunde, gegen Freunde ... (43)

The continuous feeding of trainees with a narrative, images, and sounds that mediate the search for employment as an ever-lasting and all-encompassing experience constructs a normality in which individuals see themselves as protagonists of their own job search. At the same time as “Job-Quest” produces and normalizes knowledge about the subjectification of individuals as job hunters that is continually validated and affirmed by the context in which it is broadcasted, it not only justifies Sphericon’s existence but also its power and authority because it constructs itself as a crucial resource necessary for succeeding in hunting down a job. Moreover, “Job-Quest” validates the popularized image of the job market as a “hidden” job market that must be unearthed, a challenge that requires skills not specific to a particular job but to the job search itself. As school principal Benkdorff points out in his welcome speech, “die eigentliche Arbeit ist heute nicht mehr die Arbeit selbst, sondern die Suche nach Arbeit” (34). Similar to the interviews conducted to fill a trainer position at Sphericon later in the novel, “Job-Quest”

points to the paramount role of media in the production of normality and truth that merges individuals' mediated experience with their lived experience and thereby aestheticizes the experience of unemployment.

This reversal that aestheticizes unemployment and even, paradoxically, reconceptualizes it as employment, lies at the heart of school principal Benkdorff's speech. Reminiscent of a government statement that announces the dawn of a new age, Benkdorff's speech creates the need to implement policy changes and then posits its political program as a viable and mandatory solution, which becomes evident when Benkdorff informs the trainees of the state of affairs.

Während der gesamten Menschheitsgeschichte war die Arbeit a priori gegeben. Sie hat die Menschen Jahrtausende lang begleitet, belagert, verfolgt. In den letzten Jahren hat sich dies verändert. Die Arbeit verfolgt nicht mehr. Wir verfolgen sie. Wir fahnden nach ihr. Mit allen Mitteln. Wie nach einem kostbaren Rohstoff. Wie Jäger nach Beute. Die eigentliche Arbeit ist heute nicht mehr die Arbeit selbst, sondern die Suche nach Arbeit. Ein arbeitsloser Mensch ist *nicht* ein Mensch ohne Arbeit. Im Gegenteil. Er ist ein Mensch mit einer ungleich schwierigeren Arbeit, der Arbeit, überhaupt Arbeit zu finden. ... Alle Mittel der Arbeitssuche sind deshalb erlaubt. Nicht nur erlaubt, sondern in letzter Instanz notwendig. (34)

In this cynical mimicry of a government statement, the school principal bases his definition of employment and its role in society on an image of a glorified past when employment was abundant and this past's juxtaposition with the present-day in which, as all unemployed trainees know, employment has become scarce. Within this image, employment is personified as an entity that used to pursue humans but that is now pursued by humans who try to hunt it down like prey or a valuable natural resource – an image that alludes to the dependence of

individuals on employment as a vital means to ensure their existence. Because employment is constructed as such an integral part of life itself, the decreasing odds of finding it necessitate that the search itself be reconceptualised and elevated to the status of employment, leaving no escape out of the discourse of employment. Instead, this paradoxical mechanism of framing unemployment as employment is rationalized as a necessary and hence logical means to preserve the pervasive rationality of the market that keeps demanding the increase of labour activity, a literary scenario that can be read as a commentary on the contradictory nature of the Red-Green government's demand that individuals continually self-improve through further training because this constitutes a "Garant für ... Beschäftigungsfähigkeit" (Bundesanstalt für Arbeit 19).

Zelter's novel can be read as a cynical commentary on the total economization of life through the market imperative that is represented by the *Bundesagentur für Arbeit* and the trainers at Sphericon who, reminiscent of the motto of the Hartz laws "Fördern und Fordern," urge their trainees to voluntarily participate. "Sie überlassen den Arbeitslosen die Entscheidung – raten aber dringend zu. Und deuten an, dass sie nicht jedem ein solches Angebot unterbreiten" (8). By situating the plot in a "Maßnahmen-Center" that implements training measures prescribed by the "Job Centers der Bundesagentur für Arbeit" (Zelter 5-6), the novel references both existing and fictional agencies affiliated with the *Bundesagentur für Arbeit* and thereby creates an uncanny yet familiar picture that blurs the boundaries between fiction and reality. Within this construction of reality, where unemployed individuals spend three months away from home at a *Maßnahmen-Center* to become "stabilisiert, euphorisiert, flexibilisiert" (6), the call of the entrepreneurial self is no longer tacit and internalized but has become an explicit and aggressive demand. It is never silent, and it is inextricably tied to every waking

moment. “In *Sphericon* gibt es keine Freizeit, aber Zeit: Zeit zum Tun, Zeit zum Machen, Zeit zum Verbessern, Zeit zum neu Anfangen” (28). More important for an understanding of *Schule der Arbeitslosen* as a processing of Red-Green neoliberal governing practices than its classification as a dystopian novel is the examination of its cynical use of the language of human capital that is interlinked with a language of incapacitation. Together, they construct a reality in which individuals are regarded as human capital, that is, in terms of innate and acquired elements such as “knowledge, skills, health, or values” (Becker 16) that enable them to perform labour and generate economic value. Because every action and experience can be translated into an investment into oneself as human capital, individuals are subjectified as self-responsible, yet always lacking entrepreneurial selves who must govern their conduct in order to increase the return on the investment in themselves. At *Sphericon*, the trainees’ résumés therefore exhibit not only

Ausbildungs- oder Berufslücken, sondern auch andere Lücken: Extracurriculare Lücken, Hobby- und Freizeitlücken, Interessenlücken, Sprachlücken, Auslandslücken, Reiselücken, Computerlücken, Persönlichkeitslücken, emotionale Lücken, menschliche Lücken und zwischenmenschliche Lücken ... Diese Lücken gilt es zu schließen..., zu übermalen, zu gestalten, umzudeuten. (Zelter 59)

Through the abundant use of words derived from the discourse of human capital as well as the use of invented words that share many of their characteristics, the novel uncovers, on the one hand, the hollowness of this language. On the other hand, it uncovers the fact that it is precisely this hollowness that makes these concepts difficult to define and contextualize but gives the user a more prestigious social position. Such words can be understood as *Plastikwörter*, plastic words, a category of words that Uwe Pörksen describes as “äußerlich den Termini der

Wissenschaft verwandt, ... freilich ... [ohne] deren präzise definierte, von einem Assoziationshof freie Bedeutung. Die Verwandtschaft liegt in der angenommenen Konstanz der Bedeutung, in der genormten Selbständigkeit dieser Wörter” (118). Like the words “stabilisiert, euphorisiert, flexibilisiert” (Zelter 6), such plastic words sound scientific but in fact blur meaning and “disable common language” (Rev. of *Plastic Words*) because their referent “ist mit anderen Worten nicht leicht zu fassen; die Wörter sind gegenstandsarm, wenn nicht gegenstandslos” (Pörksen 119). Because the referent of *Plastikwörter* is unclear, they can be used to create “Wirklichkeitsmodelle” (121) which, as is the case with the language of human capital, economize reality through scientific-sounding words with positive connotations but without tangible meaning.

Because the language of human capital has entered the language of everyday life, it leaves no possibility of escaping its effect but, moreover, fosters its internalization by reaching deeply into the private sphere of the unemployed. This all-encompassing permeation ranges from the construction of space as “*coaching zones, training points, recreation sectors*” (5) that functionalize every activity as a step towards the improvement of one’s human capital, to the regulation of the kind and even amount of food trainees are able to buy with “*Bonus Coins*” (33) – a type of performance-based currency trainees receive as “Lohn für Arbeit” (33) in the spirit of the motto “[w]er nicht arbeitet, soll nicht essen” (188) – to the set-up of “Weekend-Suite I und Weekend-Suite II” (100), two rooms that are reserved for trainees who wish to have casual sex. Just like the construction of space and regulation of food, these rooms are part of the total economization of the individual as human capital in that they urge trainees to understand all of their actions as conducive to their training as the perfect job applicant. It is this creation of analogies between the discourse of employment and discourses of basic human

needs that makes their interlinking so seemingly self-evident and their internalization so effective.

Similarly, the subjectivity of the self-responsible yet lacking individual continues to be produced and affirmed by the framing of all unemployed individuals at Sphericon as “Schüler” or “Trainees” (Zelter 6). As the novel’s title *Schule der Arbeitslosen* indicates, Sphericon is a school for the unemployed, referring not only to the German synonym “Schulung” (6) for *Weiterqualifizierung* but also to the implied need for the unemployed to continually learn and be taught. “Sphericon ist eine Wohnschule für arbeitslose Erwachsene. Die erwachsenen Schüler gehen nach dem Unterricht nicht nach Hause, sondern werden ganztägig begleitet und betreut. ... Die Unterrichtsfächer werden den Schülern (Trainees) nicht vorgegeben, sondern je nach Bedarf entwickelt” (6). Here, the language of human capital has appropriated the language of schooling through which it constructs the unemployed as pupils, positioning them not as adults with a range of experiences and skills who seek training but as children who have to be normalized into a particular kind of subjectivity that shapes their conduct and self-concept as entrepreneurs of their lives. At the same time, however, because Sphericon insists on being a “freiwillige und freie Schule” (26), its pupils are urged to seek the reason and assume responsibility for their need to be trained within themselves; the moment of this realization underlies the understanding of individuals as self-responsible managers of their human capital and is pointedly emphasized by the narrator. “Einsicht in ein falsch begangenes Leben. Beziehungsweise in ein fehlgeplantes, ja fehlgeschlagenes Leben. Gleich der Einsicht von Strafgefangenen oder Drogenabhängigen: *Wir haben falsch gelebt. Falsch!*” (12). Because the notion of human capital encompasses the totality of one’s life that can only be managed and controlled by the carrier of this capital, every aspect of life becomes amenable to

modification and improvement that can be effected through self-management. The notions encapsulated in the school's many mottos "[n]ichts soll so bleiben, wie es ist" (21), "Diversität, Novität, Kontingenz" (21), and "Beweglichkeit, Elastizität, Unvorhersehbarkeit" (22) show Sphericon to be a literary embodiment of the appeal to continually adapt to the market through self-improvement, which is central to the notion of human capital as it is promoted in the market-oriented politics of the Red-Green coalition.

Besides the anonymous mass of the unemployed at Sphericon, there are only three notable characters, or rather character types: the trainees Roland Bergmann and Karla Meier and their trainer Ansgar Fest, whose characters can be read as varying facets of the possible subjectivities that arise from the positioning of individuals vis-à-vis the image of the entrepreneurial self. While Ansgar Fest embraces the market imperative and manages himself as human capital in the belief that he is able to make particularly advantageous, market-oriented choices – a "flexible" individual par excellence whose name ironically evokes just the opposite of flexibility and in fact suggests stability –, Karla and Roland are hesitant to follow the call of the entrepreneurial self. Although it appears on the surface that the relationship between Ansgar, Roland, and Karla is based on a rigid division between governor and governed, their interaction reveals more complex dynamics that mirror the power relations in Foucault's notion of neoliberal governmentality, which is described as an act of governing that includes the governing of both others and the self according to the market imperative. Ansgar Fest's character functions as an enforcing authority of the *Bundesagentur für Arbeit* that determines Sphericon's training measures as well as the market imperative it promotes, a role that becomes apparent through his aggressive commands that are oftentimes permeated by the language of the entrepreneurial self and that discipline the trainees to think and act like

entrepreneurs. “Suchen Sie sämtliche Tote, die nach 1970 geboren wurden! Besser noch nach 1975. Suchen Sie! ... Rufen Sie an! ... Fragen Sie nach dem Arbeitgeber! ... Jederzeit können Sie einspringen... Sie sind jung ... gesund ... und bereit!” (52-53). Like all the other trainers and the school’s principal, he is portrayed as a personified image of the entrepreneurial self whose characteristics make him appear not as an individual with strengths and weaknesses but as an ideal trainer and candidate for almost any kind of employment.

Geboren in London, aufgewachsen in Deutschland, Studium in Harvard. Tätigkeit als Anwalt. Autor eines Buches. Ein Buch über Bewerbung und Meditation. Leiter eines Campingplatzes in Südfrankreich. Einfach so. Aus einer Laune heraus. Wie zum Beweis äußerster Beweglichkeit. Anpassungsfähigkeit und biographischer Offenheit. Sein Lebensmotto: *Fest sei, was Fest sein soll*” (31).

An exemplary entrepreneur of his own life, Ansgar Fest is not only a multilingual cosmopolitan who has studied at one of the most prestigious academic institutions in the world, he is also said to unite the two conflicting approaches that are demanded of a successful entrepreneur, “kreativer Nonkonformist und pedantische Krämerseele in einer Person” (Bröckling, *Das unternehmerische Selbst* 125). With extensive experience in the varied areas of law, research and writing, and property management, he exhibits the quintessential characteristics of the entrepreneurial self that moulds itself according to the demands of the market: mobility, adaptability, and openness. These *Plastikwörter* with no precise meaning or definition belong to the language of human capital and deliver only one message: be the entrepreneur you ought to become, an imperative that encourages individuals to never cease acting upon themselves as entrepreneurs of their own lives as expressed in Ansgar Fest’s life motto “Fest sei, was Fest sein soll.” It is life in its totality that Ansgar Fest targets with his

training when he commands his trainees to dig their own grave as a symbol of their departure from their previous life and self. “Es gilt ein verfehltes, ein in Sackgassen verranntes Leben offen zu bekennen – und dann zu Grabe zu tragen. ... Jedes Grab ist ein Neuanfang. Und jeder Neuanfang ist ein Abschied, ein Abschied von der Vergangenheit und von sich selbst. Sich selbst neu erfinden” (38).

As the epitomized entrepreneurial self, an image that is congruent with his role at Sphericon of enforcing the demand to regard oneself as human capital that must be adapted to the needs of the market, Ansgar Fest is unable to question the validity of his economized understanding of life. It is this rigidity and inflexibility of the market imperative that stands in paradoxical contrast to Fest’s hollow claim that it is open and flexible that the character Karla exposes by undermining Fest’s authority and therefore also the market imperative’s claim to exclusivity. Almost diametrically opposed to the character of Ansgar Fest, Karla is portrayed as an unemployed woman in her mid-thirties who repeated or missed grades in school, dropped out of university, has no visible interest in sports or spending time abroad – a life that appears not only fragmentary in the eyes of Ansgar Fest but represents the antithesis of the image of the entrepreneurial self – and furthermore, who refuses to conform to the notion of employment as a desirable end in itself. Although friendships are strictly forbidden at Sphericon, she and Roland, a biologist and former research associate in his late thirties, develop a friendship that allows them to avoid, at least temporarily, the constant pressure to mobilize themselves as perfect job applicants. They do this by sharing their thoughts and feelings about the training and their previous lives by sending secret e-mails or by holding private conversations in the “Weekend-Suite” (100), although this behaviour is immediately punished. In these conversations, Karla is portrayed as a character with flaws, doubts, and wishes that do not

conform to the demand of the entrepreneurial self while Roland, on the contrary, seems to have already internalized the demand to condemn his previous life. “Zu vieles falsch gemacht. Falsch studiert falsch gearbeitet, die falschen Bücher gelesen. In falschen Vorstellungen gelebt” (140).

Separated from everything that is familiar, from family, friends, and even fellow trainees who arrived on the same bus, Karla and Roland are, together with the other trainees, exposed to a situation in which they are expected to reinvent themselves as market-worthy human capital without reference to their previous lives. This conceptualization of the self implies that one’s identification with a particular and unchanging profession – made visible in the character of the florist who is unwilling to apply for just any job “[w]eil ich ... Floristin ... *bin*” (49) – is no longer considered appropriate or normal from a perspective that accepts the imperative of the market as an organizing principle of society. In other words, they are expected to live the myth of the self-made man who starts out from a socio-economically weak position and, against all odds but willing to work hard, overcomes all hardship and becomes a successful, wealthy, and respected member of society. This reinvention of the self, an idealized and pleasing concept that serves to affirm the appeal and achievability of the image of the successful entrepreneur, is conducted at Sphericon simply through the construction and reconstruction of one’s *Lebenslauf*, a word whose literal meaning emphasizes a résumé’s narrative and hence composed, functional character. “Der reine Erfolg, die äußere Wirkung eines Lebenslaufes, nichts anderes ist die Vorgabe. Kein Davor, kein Danach, weder Zukunft noch Vergangenheit, sondern nur das Hier und Jetzt, die innere Stimmigkeit deines Lebenslaufs. ... Alles Autobiographische ist autofiktional, und umgekehrt” (67). This credo is metaphorically echoed by the school principal’s favourite object used in class, the scissors.

“Die Scheren sind ein ständiges Thema. Ein Steckenpferd des Schulleiters. Er liebt Scheren. In von Benkdorffs Büro sollen sich Hunderte von Scheren befinden. In den unterschiedlichsten Farben und Größen. Er legt größten Wert auf Scheren. Jeder Trainee soll bei der Zeitungsanalyse über eine eigene Schere verfügen” (47). A metaphor for the ability to adjust the shape of one’s life, the scissors can be interpreted as a cynical look at the wilful construction of individuals’ self-concept that is malleable and adaptable from the perspective of the theory of human capital. This deliberate manipulation not only of one’s *Lebenslauf* but metaphorically also of one’s life by cutting it to size, cutting off undesirable parts, and cutting out gaps creates the loss of individuals’ perceived substance, a necessary prerequisite for the acceptance of the possibility of acting upon oneself as human capital. “Vieles lässt sich direkt übertragen oder gar austauschen, passt bei genauem Hinsehen besser zu dem einen als zu dem anderen Lebenslauf. Kombinatorische Phantasie nennt Fest diese biographischen Transaktionen” (65).

The competition for employment among the trainees escalates with the arrival of Friedrich Groener, the “Regionalleiter eines bedeutenden Bezirks ... – vergleichbar mit dem Rang eines Bischofs oder Ministerpräsidenten” (119) who announces the creation of a trainer position at Sphericon for which all trainees are allowed and at the same time are expected to apply, “[a]ls Auszeichnung und Ermutigung ... Für die hervorragende Arbeit von Sphericon ... In der Tat eine neue Sphäre, eine neue Welt der Bildung und Weiterbildung und Immerweiterbildung ... Das Leben als lebenslängliches Lernen und Immerweiterlernen” (125). Similar to the speech of the school principal, the speech of the regional manager is a cynical mimicry of and commentary on the government’s aimless but never-ending promotion of

lifelong learning that is justified and necessitated by the bleak war-like picture painted by the regional manager.

Er sprach von der allgemeinen Lage wie von einer schweren militärischen Lage: ... Die schwerste Lage seit dem Krieg ... Das Land in gnadenlosen Export- und Preiskämpfen ... Doch gebe es seit einigen Monaten erste Signale einer deutlichen Wende ... Es pulsierten vielverheißende Anzeichen eines Aufschwungs ... Noch nie dagewesene Innovations- und Exportoffensiven stünden bevor ... Er lobte die Arbeit der Ingenieure ... Vorkämpfer neuer Arbeit ... Es gelte nun ruhig und zuversichtlich zu bleiben ... Niemand verliere den Glauben ... An sich selbst sowie an das Ganze ... Unser aller Aufgabe sei ständige Bildung und Weiterbildung und Umbildung ... Dies unser wichtigster Rohstoff ... Unser größtes Kapital: Menschen. (123)

Making reference both to Schröder's "Innovationsoffensive" (Struve) that allowed for an increase in research spending and the introduction of so-called elite universities as well as his "Exportoffensive" ("Energie-Branche") that supports German companies exploring alternative energy markets, the regional manager's speech appears to imitate various market-oriented policies that were introduced during the era of the Red-Green coalition. The terms "Offensive" and "Lage", words taken from the discourse of military combat that denote an attack strategy and the military situation at a given time and place, respectively, contribute to the aggressive, militaristic tone of the speech, which can be read as a cynical imitation of speeches given by Gerhard Schröder in which he announced, for instance, that "[w]ir werden Deutschland entschlossen modernisieren und die innere Einheit vorantreiben. Voraussetzung dafür ist eine schonungslose Beurteilung der Lage, aber auch und vor allem das Besinnen auf die Stärken der Menschen in unserem Land und das Zutrauen darauf, daß wir es schaffen können" ("Regierungserklärung" 3). *Plastikwörter* such as "Innovation", "Offensive", "modernisieren",

and phrases such as “innere Einheit” and “Stärken der Menschen” create a pull-forward effect on the one hand, and the presence of a positive, important goal that must be reached on the other. Similarly, the Blair-Schröder Paper uses *Plastikwörter* to describe and at the same time create an economic threshold from one society to another that requires and justifies government action in response to this change.

Unsere Volkswirtschaften befinden sich im Übergang von der industriellen Produktion zur wissensorientierten Dienstleistungsgesellschaft der Zukunft. Sozialdemokraten müssen die Chance ergreifen, die dieser wirtschaftlicher Umbruch mit sich bringt. ... [Die Dienstleistungsgesellschaft der Zukunft] eröffnet Millionen Menschen die Chance, neue Arbeitsplätze zu finden, neue Fähigkeiten zu erlernen, neue Berufe zu ergreifen, neue Unternehmen zu gründen und zu erweitern, kurzum, ihre Hoffnung auf eine bessere Zukunft zu verwirklichen. (Blair and Schröder)

Without defining what the particular situations and goals are or outlining the responsibility of the government in facing them – neither in Schröder’s nor in the novel’s regional manager’s speech – the political message implies a great need for policies that achieve the necessary innovation through continual self-improvement that is portrayed as the only hope for a better future. It is this focus on the present day and the immediate future without considering the significance of society’s historicity that Paulo Freire (2001) identified as a central element of discourses of neoliberalism.

Es gibt eine Art „graue Wolke“, die die gegenwärtige Geschichte einhüllt und die verschiedene Generationen unterschiedlich trifft – eine „gräuliche Wolke“, die in Wahrheit die fatalistische Ideologie ist, undurchsichtig, angelegt im Diskurs des Neoliberalismus. ... Eine fatalistische Ideologie, die die Erziehung entpolitisiert, sie zur puren Übung im Gebrauch von technischen Fähigkeiten und wissenschaftlichem Wissen reduziert. (9)

This fatalist perspective on the present without a regard for its historicity insists on the urgency of the here and now which requires an exclusive focus on tools and strategies with which one is able to respond instantaneously. Although choosing self-improvement training as a tool during what Schröder identifies as a transition to a so-called knowledge economy is, without a doubt, a political decision grounded in the belief of the rationality of the market and the importance of human capital formation, it is functionalized as a necessary means to the most desirable end, namely a better future. The pertinence of Sphericon's school motto "labor improbus!" (Zelter 91) could hardly be more accurate as a description of a central feature of Red-Green politics.

Because the *Bundesagentur für Arbeit* considers Sphericon a model training school for "Bildung und Weiterbildung und Immerweiterbildung" (125), it grants the establishment of a new trainer position at Sphericon where it is decided that the position will only be open to applications from the school's trainees. Because "work conquers all," however, and opportunities for employment have become a scarce occurrence, this trainer position becomes the metaphorical prey hunted by trainees. A satirical imitation of popular German reality TV shows, the job interviews are framed not only as the ultimate form of scrutiny and competition but also of self-mockery, all of which serve to entertain those who are not subjectified but merely observe.

Die Vorstellungsgespräche finden samstagsabends statt, auf der Bühne der Schulhalle. Jedes Vorstellungsgespräch dauert 30 Minuten: Es beginnt mit einem fünfzehnminütigen Soloprogramm jedes Bewerbers in Form von Vortrag, Schauspiel, Revue, Tanz oder Musik. Dem folgt ein fünfzehnminütiges Kreuzverhör des Bewerbers durch Schulleitung und Trainerstab. Am Ende des Abends wird der am wenigsten überzeugende Bewerbungsvortrag per Votum des Publikums selektiert. ... Das Bewerbungsverfahren ist ausführlich, umfassend und demokratisch. (132)

Suggestive of a combination of the popular shows *Das Supertalent* and *Big Boss*, Sphericon's interview process is a form of edutainment, that is, a popularized form of entertainment that aims at being both educational and amusing. Combining the premise of staging a talent such as acting, singing, or dancing from *Das Supertalent* and of presenting one's entrepreneurial skills from *Big Boss* in addition to relying on the audience to eliminate candidates by popular vote, the portrayal of Sphericon's interview process can be read as a cynical commentary on job interviews not as a method for selecting the best-suited, but rather the best-performing candidate for a job position. Similar to "Job-Quest", this media-driven interview process creates a normality in which individuals' perception of reality is not only strongly influenced by media images but in which individual lives and experience merge with and are thereby undermined by their medial construction, a reconceptualization of individuals' experience that aestheticizes and enhances the oftentimes deeply demoralising experience of unemployment. The tension between the interview's elements, a seemingly voluntary artistic performance and a seemingly involuntary trial-like question period that parallels a cross-examination, may appear contradictory and comical at first; it points, however, to the trainees' merely illusory choice to apply for the trainer position that is only uncovered and challenged when Karla refuses to apply. "Ich weiss nicht, ob ich mich auf die Stelle bewerben *will*" (148).

Feeling overwhelmed by the relentless demand to keep altering oneself for the slightest possibility of finding employment and repulsed by the enticing promise of success and prestige, Karla eventually resorts to silent opposition.

Hiermit bewerbe ich mich ... Irgendwann schrieb sie: *Hiermit entwerbe ich mich ...* Um diese Stelle und um jede andere Stelle. Später schrieb sie: *Hiermit verwerbe ich mich um jede weitere Stelle. Ich verwerbe und verwahre mich gegen euer Hochglanzleben.* Sie schrieb dies als E-

Mail an Roland Bergmann und löschte all ihre Bewerberfotos. *Delete! Delete!*

Verabscheuungswürdig. (156-57)

But her rebellion remains voiceless, a mere instance of non-compliance and withdrawal from the expectations placed on her by Fest. “Sie sind 36 Jahre alt. Sie sind seit Jahren ohne Stelle, vielleicht für den Rest Ihres Lebens, und Sie stellen ernsthaft die Frage, ob Sie sich auf die Stelle bewerben sollen.’ ‘...’ ... ‘Ist es das, was Sie mir sagen wollen?!’ ‘...’ ‘Ist es das, was Sie mir sagen wollen?!’ ‘Ja.’” (147). At the same time as Fest is unable to instil in her the desire to see herself as an entrepreneur of her own life, she is unable to voice her rejection of this image and assert her self-perception and hence navigates herself into a position in which she must inevitably fail. On the one hand, she is willing to submit herself to the worldview not only of Fest but also Lichtenstein who, as will be shown in one of the following sections, pathologizes her non-compliance as an intellectual and emotional deficiency that causes her unemployment. She accepts her economization through others and can thus also be understood as a social lemming with regard to her subject position vis-à-vis the image of the entrepreneurial self. On the other hand, she is forcefully subjected to the explicit and merciless demand of the entrepreneurial self that spares no one at Sphericon. “Man würde ihr stillschweigend bedeuten, dass sie als Trainee in Sphericon automatisch an dem Bewerbungsverfahren registriert sei, auch ohne eigene Bewerbung. Jeder Trainee hier ist ein Bewerber, ob er will oder nicht” (155). Her character serves to unveil the inhumanity and claim to absoluteness inherent in the all-encompassing rationality of the market. But regardless of opposition or participation, *Schule der Arbeitslosen* seems to suggest, everyone must follow the demands of the market. Because Karla refuses to accept the market imperative as a structuring principle of society and inadvertently challenges the status quo – an attitude

considered unacceptable at Sphericon – her decision not to apply for the trainer position is devalued and overridden by pathologizing her as an unfit individual whose presence alone symbolizes the threat of non-compliance, which warrants her exclusion through isolation. Her pathologization cannot be separated from her portrayal as a gendered and, strikingly, one of the only female character in *Schule der Arbeitslosen*, where she is positioned vis-à-vis the male characters Roland and Ansgar Fest who not only succeed within the rationality of the market and facilitate its thriving but also contribute, either through condemnation or absence, to her failure. When Karla is separated from the other trainees because “[i]hre bloße Präsenz wäre für die anderen Trainees eine ständige Vergegenwärtigung offener Verweigerung” (155), even her friend Roland blends into the mass of compliant trainees who strive to win the competition for the trainer position. For the rest of the novel, he only reappears as a character narrated through Ansgar Fest and the school’s principal when they talk about him as one of the five final job candidates and later as having successfully secured a minor janitorial position “mit erweiterten Kompetenzen” (196). The fact that Karla fails not only within the gendered dynamics between her, Roland, and Ansgar Fest, but also within the market dynamics within which the male characters succeed, can be read as a commentary on the gendering of entrepreneurial success as masculine and the silencing of the non-compliant female voice.

5.2.1 Gendering the Unemployed

At first sight, *Schule der Arbeitslosen* appears to portray the unemployed and unemployment in general as gender-neutral. Because all the unemployed characters are referred to as “trainees,” a term whose absence of grammatical gender conceals the gender of

the signified until it is revealed through context, all unemployed individuals appear to be viewed equally and solely in terms of their role at Sphericon, namely to be trained in how to improve their human capital. Moreover, neither Karla, nor Roland, nor anyone else appears to be in a relationship that would suggest a gendered conceptualization of the self. It becomes clear early on in the novel, however, that it is the gendered understanding of Sphericon's trainees that informs much of their construction as agents within the market. While the significance of gender for the trainees' construction as market-agents becomes apparent as soon as Ansgar Fest directs his trainees to their dormitory where they are segregated into separate areas for female and male trainees, the simultaneous emphasis on and problematization of their cohabitation and co-training in the school's house rules appears to be of similar significance.

Die weiblichen Trainees schlafen im hinteren Teil des Raumes. Er liegt im Sichtschutz der Stahlschränke, die quer aufgestellt sind. Sie bilden eine Art Grenze. Im vorderen Teil schlafen die männlichen Trainees. Ein Vorhang trennt die beiden Raumhälften. In der Hausordnung Sphericons steht zu lesen: *Zusammen lernen bedeutet zusammen leben. Und umgekehrt. In der Regel leben und lernen männliche wie weibliche Trainees in einer Gruppe. Und: Dies ist der Stand modernster Koedukation. Siehe auch: Koedukative Spannungen, koedukative Maßnahmen, Koedukative Vibrationen...* (23)

This tension between accentuating both the trainees' gender-based segregation and regrouping points not only to the trainees' gendering as an ever-present element of their training they cannot escape, but also to the problematization of the trainees as gendered individuals. The construction and simultaneous problematization of the trainees' gender necessitates their management and control in the realm of sexuality as well. Similarly, the trainees are simultaneously segregated while still sharing a common space that is divided by objects that

merely approximate a border between the two groups. Because the trainees' gender is constructed as inherently problematic in that it requires the school's surveillance and control, their encounters are expected to be fraught not only with interpersonal tensions but also with sexual desire as an expression of this tension. This expansion of control and reach into the trainees' sexuality culminates in the school's provision of "Weekend-Suite I, Weekend-Suite II", two rooms that serve exclusively as a space in which trainees are encouraged to have casual sex and that are considered to be "der pädagogische Glanz- und Höhepunkt der gesamten Schule" (95). In the same way that food and space are rationalized as elements conducive to the trainees' understanding and improvement of themselves as human capital, the trainees' sexuality is economized by Sphericon's school psychologist Dr. Lichtenstein, who provides a rationalizing, scientific-sounding explanation for casual sex as

eine eigene Form der Bewerbung ... Wer hier Fähigkeiten und Mut hat, der wird – so die Erfahrung – bei der Bewerbung um Stellen gleichfalls Fähigkeiten und Mut zeigen. Die Studien Lichtensteins zu diesem Thema sind eindeutig: Je erfolgreicher bei der Erorberung von Sexualpartnern, desto erfolgreicher bei der Stellensuche. ... Es fanden sich die Paare, und es trennten sich die Paare – ganz im Sinne von 'A New Life': Diversität, Novität, Kontingenz. Nichts soll so bleiben, wie es ist. (101-2)

The economization of sexuality through this analogy between the discourses of employment and sexuality plays a significant role in Sphericon's self-improvement training because it allows – similar to the economization of food and space – for an expansion of the reach of the notion of *Weiterqualifizierung* into the private sphere, where the rationality of the market is supposed to become the individual's guiding principle. Karla and Roland also make use of the "Weekend-Suite", only, however, to escape the school's insistence on 'A New Life' and to talk about their lives before coming to Sphericon. They reject the sexualisation of their friendship

and rename it “Speakend-Suite” (139), expressing their intense desire to spend time just speaking to each other. “Sturzbachartig fingen sie an zu erzählen, kreuz und quer, über Eltern und Geschwister, Liebhaber und Freunde, Kindheit und Jugend . . . , über jedes sich bietende Thema. . . . Für Momente saßen sie einander gegenüber ohne einen Gedanken an ihre Lage: an Sphericon” (116-17). Immediately after they use the “Weekend-Suite”, they are punished severely with a reduction in food and sleep allowances, as well as an increased amount of self-improvement training and separation from each other during classes, measures that aim at normalizing them as entrepreneurs who understand and act upon themselves as human capital.

Although Karla and Roland nevertheless continue their conversations via e-mail messages in which they voice their discontent with Sphericon to each other, they never make their voices heard outside of their private conversations. While Roland’s voice is as compliant during “simulierten Vorstellungsgesprächen . . . – in stundenlangen Verhören” (113-14) as his silence from the moment Karla is held in solitary confinement, Karla remains in a state of voiceless non-compliance throughout the course of the novel. Not only voiceless but also one of the few female trainees at Sphericon, Karla is portrayed as a passive and aimless woman with little formal education or ambitious interests, a path diametrically opposed to the one of entrepreneurial success. In contrast, Roland used to be a biologist and research associate at a university, a profession that – similar to the positions held by Ansgar Fest, von Benkdorff, von Lichtenstein, and Friedrich Groener – is not only traditionally associated with and performed by men but also linked to authority and entrepreneurial success. The image of the entrepreneurial self in *Schule der Arbeitslosen* is hence linked to a traditional image of masculinity that connotes authority and dominance over Karla, who is constructed as non-entrepreneurial and non-masculine. Her appearance as a woman, however, who is “groß,

schlank und attraktiv[, die] statistisch gesehen ... gar nicht arbeitslos sein [dürfte]" (88)

puzzles and challenges the statistics of school psychologist Dr. Lichtenstein, who fatalistically understands unemployment in connection with physical characteristics and therefore expects that Karla conduct herself according to particular gender stereotypes; in doing this, he constructs her as a sex object. "Nur 11,3 % eines weiblichen Jahrgangs mit einer Körpergröße von über 1,70 Metern werde bis zu ihrem vierzigsten Lebensjahr arbeitslos" (88). In order to uphold the verity of the rationality of the market and the notion of human capital on which Sphericon's existence is based, this conflict between Karla's statistical employability and her noncompliance as a trainee at Sphericon can only be resolved by, on the one hand, constructing her as a sexual object and, on the other, by pathologizing her non-compliance as an innate intellectual and emotional deficiency that cannot be changed but that must instead be controlled and managed. This tactic makes it possible to dismiss her non-compliance as a challenge to the imperative of the market by reconceptualising it and integrating it back into the market and its agents as an intrinsic, statistically verifiable element.

5.2.2 Pathologizing the Unemployed Body and Mind

Karla's non-compliance is pathologized by Lichtenstein not only when she is held in solitary confinement first in the "Weekend-Suite" and later in a small, windowless basement room with nothing but a "Gymnastikmatte, darauf ein Schlafsack" (176) but begins soon after her first encounter with Ansgar Fest during a class on "Biographisches Arbeiten" (59) in which he orders her to fill the many gaps in her résumé by reinventing her life. "Langsam finde ich an Ihrem Leben wirklich Gefallen. Der Aufbau, die Wendepunkte, die Praktika und Reisen..., all das finde ich gut inszeniert. Natürlich muss man an dem einen oder anderen Punkt noch feilen"

(67). For no apparent reason, Lichtenstein calls her into his office where he interviews her and questions her enthusiasm for the reinvention of her life at Sphericon. Instead of explaining his reasons for calling her, he refers to an internal school document and asks her why she decided to see him. “*Den Trainees nie den Eindruck vermitteln, man bestelle sie zu einem Psychologentermin. Vielmehr besteht ausgesprochen oder unausgesprochen der Konsensus, der Trainee suche das Gespräch aus eigenem Antrieb*” (80). This directive both pathologizes and at the same time places responsibility on Karla from the outset because it assumes not only that she needs to see a medical professional but also that it was she who decided that she must see him. Although it appears as though this practice seeks to insist on an individual’s autonomy and self-determination, it remains Lichtenstein who, leaving her in the dark about his intentions, drives the conversation and controls their interaction, during which he constructs her as a weak-willed and needy trainee. “‘Sie gehen auch nicht in den Fitnessraum?’ ‘...’ ‘Wie bitte?’ ‘Nein.’ ‘Oder ins Solarium?’ ‘Nein.’ ‘Ich sage das, weil Sie ziemlich blass wirken.’ ‘...’ ‘Die Bewerberfotos.’ ‘...’ ‘Es fehlen in Ihren Unterlagen überzeugende Bewerberfotos.’ ‘...’ ‘Mit den vorliegenden Fotos können Sie sich nicht bewerben. Dies nur nebenbei’ (82). When Karla refuses to act upon and improve herself through Sphericon’s techniques she is urged to utilize, Lichtenstein pathologizes her by using the language of medicine to rationalize and reconceptualise her unwillingness as incapability, constructing her not only as a needy trainee but also as a needy patient who is incapable of ending her own unemployment. By questioning whether she sincerely seeks employment and – despite her protest against his claims – suggesting that she is simply unaware of her fear of taking up employment, he is able to pathologize her by drawing on his authority and claiming knowledge of her that at the same time denies her knowledge of herself.

Ob sie ernsthaft eine Arbeitsstelle anstrebe? ... Karla antwortet mit einer plötzlichen Vehemenz: Natürlich wünsche sie Arbeit ... Lichtenstein schaut sie an und sagt: ‘Trotzdem frage ich mich, ob Sie im tiefsten Inneren nicht vielleicht doch Bedenken haben ... oder Angst. Eine Aversion gegen die bloße Vorstellung eines Tages eine Stelle tatsächlich zu bekommen.’ (83-84)

Lichtenstein’s self-serving intentions are only made visible when his questions for Karla turn to topics seemingly unrelated to her unemployment. “‘Sie sind nicht verheiratet?’ ... ‘Sie haben auch keine Kinder?’ ... ‘Sie haben auch keinen Freund?’ ... ‘Trinken Sie Alkohol?’ ... ” (84-85). Uninterested in helping Karla, Lichtenstein is instead interested in proving his hypothesis about unemployment in his essay “über die Emotionen und seelischen Bedingungen arbeitsloser Menschen: *Psychogenese von Langzeitarbeitslosen*” (87). In this essay, Lichtenstein argues that “[d]ie Genese ihrer Erwerbslosigkeit ... einher [geht] mit Symptomen der Selbstverachtung und reduzierter Belastbarkeit. Die kognitiv-emotive Ausrichtung ist chronisch-pessimistisch; ... Ihre Gefühle sind weniger Folge als die Ursache ihrer eigenen Lage” (87). The portrayal of Lichtenstein as a doctor who both possesses and creates medical knowledge of the unemployed is reminiscent of the character of the “Doktor” in Georg Büchner’s *Woyzeck* (1879) who conducts cruel experiments with Woyzeck and subjects him to being the object of his medical studies. Like the “Doktor” in *Woyzeck* who believes that “in dem Menschen verklärt sich die Individualität zur Freiheit” (8) – giving individuals the power to exercise control over all of their actions – Lichtenstein believes that individuals are capable of overcoming all hardship through willpower alone because “[a]lle Menschen fühlen sich fortlaufend überfordert, und sie handeln dennoch” (151). This characteristically liberal and neoliberal belief in the freedom of thoughts and actions as an absolute and innate human principle allows Lichtenstein to construct unemployment as a choice that can be reversed

through willpower alone, while employment serves as proof of its existence. The normalization of this belief in absolute freedom also creates a space of abnormality in which individuals who are unable to overcome hardship are considered to be lacking and, like Karla, are characterized as deficient. Positioned in front of a window that allows Karla to see only his contours, Lichtenstein looks like a god-like figure whose “medical gaze,” as Foucault argues in *Birth of the Clinic* (1973), “is supported and justified by an institution, ... endowed with the power of decision and intervention” (89). The incorporation of the language of medicine into the discourse of the entrepreneurial self that becomes apparent in Lichtenstein’s essay allows for a reconceptualization of her non-compliance as an unalterable mental and emotional weakness, a deficiency which must no longer be understood as a challenge to the primacy of the market but which can be integrated into its rationality as a negative example of failure, incapability, and dependence that affirms, not threatens, the desirability of success, performance, and self-responsibility. Self-contempt, pessimism, and the reduced ability to cope with stress and pressure are no longer understood as an effect of unemployment – as it diminishes not only one’s material security but also one’s social standing – but as its cause, which allows a further responsabilization of the individual and a deresponsibilization of the state as welfare provider. This reversal of cause and effect regarding unemployment that is at the heart of Lichtenstein’s pseudo-scientific research can be read as a cynical commentary on the eager attempt of those in support of a market-driven economy to rationalize structural unemployment not as an effect of the market imperative but as a valid cause for its safeguarding. Lichtenstein’s hypothesis allows the reader to imagine the implications of such unbending support for the validity of the market as an organizing principle of society for the subjectification of unemployed individuals. Reducing Karla to a mere case study for his research and abusing their conversation as an

opportunity to collect data for the support of his hypothesis, Lichtenstein regards her as an individual who is responsible for her unemployment because she is, according to his conversation with her, indifferent towards improving herself. “Ihr Leben ist kontaktarm. Sie treiben keinen Sport. Sie schauen nicht ‘Job Quest’. Sie zeigen nicht wirklich Interesse an der Bearbeitung ihres eigenen Lebens. ... Sie zeigen kaum Interesse an irgendetwas. Weder an sich. Noch an anderen. Und Sie sind ohne Arbeit. Schon seit einigen Jahren” (86). What Lichtenstein fails to see is that Karla in fact blames herself for her failure to find employment. Reflecting on Lichtenstein’s questions, Karla finds the answers that she was unable to express just hours earlier.

Zum Beispiel die Frage, ob sie ernsthaft Arbeit anstrebe? Derart zahllos waren die Absagen auf ihre jahrelangen Bewerbungen gewesen, dass sie irgendwann damit angefangen hatte, sich auf eine ausgeschriebene Stelle nicht mehr unter ihrem eigenen Namen, sondern mit den Namen und Lebensläufen von Verwandten und Freunden zu bewerben. ... Um mit einer Absage nicht mehr alleine zu stehen. (90)

Despite her non-compliance with Sphericon’s demand to transform and improve her self-concept in order to adapt to the demands of the market, it is evident that she is unable to escape the call of the entrepreneurial self and assumes self-responsibility for events that are ultimately outside of her control. She constructs herself as a social misfit who is destined to lose every opportunity at happiness and success and must hence capitulate. “So nannte ich mich gegenüber meinen Freunden: eine Zuspätsprechende. ... Meine Antworten habe ich oft erst lange nach den entscheidenden Momenten eine Gesprächs gefunden, wenn es für Antworten viel zu spät war...” (142).

When yet a second attempt by Lichtenstein to make Karla assume responsibility fails and Ansgar Fest realizes that she is continuing to refuse to prepare an application for the trainer position at Sphericon, she is sent into solitary confinement not only because her mere presence signifies open non-compliance, but “[a]uch aus Ratlosigkeit, darüber, wie mit ihr weiter zu verfahren sei” (159). Instead of deleting her file and leaving her “ohne Status und Plan” (159) as Sphericon had previously done in the case of non-compliant trainees who would not, as hoped, disappear but wander around as “marodierende Arbeitslose” (159), Sphericon first locks Karla into one of the luxurious “Weekend-Suites” and then in a small, sound-insulated basement room without windows or a toilet. Her persistent refusal to conform is punished severely, as this behaviour is unexplainable within the discourse of the entrepreneurial self.

Es gab fürchterliche Tage. Sie hielt den engen Raum nicht mehr aus. Sie wusste kaum, ob Tag oder Nacht. Ob sie das Licht aus- oder wieder ein- oder wieder ausschalten sollte? ... Sie kauerte mit Unterleibsschmerzen auf der Matratze. Ob er [der Hausmeister] ihr etwas bringen könne? ‘Ich brauche ein Klo ... Ich brauche ein Klo ...’ Er nickte und sagte: ‘Ich weiß.’ Und gab ihr zu trinken. (179-80)

Through the character of Karla, Zelter’s novel chips away at the shiny lustre of the market-driven rationality and technologies popularized by the Red-Green coalition’s labour market policies and exposes its unforgiving claim to absoluteness that disregards the individuality of human experience. Unable to withstand the unbearable pressure to conform to the rationality of the market and to disregard her own needs and desires, she is not only pathologized but ultimately also directs her resistance against herself. When she and all other trainees are asked to board a plane to Sierra Leone where they are to spend a vacation sponsored by Sphericon as a graduation gift, Karla understands that she is not sent off into a vacation and will not return

home. While she follows nonetheless and willingly self-destructs, her experience is – similar to the protagonist in *Alles bestens* and Hans Hansmann in *Das Ende des Kanzlers* – made to appear as a success story. Against her will and without having completed the self-improvement measures at Sphericon, she is handed the same graduation certificate as all other trainees and is hence incorporated into the discourse of the entrepreneurial self.

With Sphericon, *Schule der Arbeitslosen* imagines a sphere in which the boundaries between coercion and individual initiative, or the government of others and the self, are difficult to identify. Its trainees are defined not only as unemployed but also as always lacking individuals who are called upon to understand themselves as human capital that is amenable and manipulable according to the demands of the market. Constructing employment as a scarce resource in 2016 that has become virtually untraceable and inaccessible, Zelter's novel allows questioning the validity of the Red-Green government's demand of individuals to continually improve themselves in order to maintain their so-called employability. Through the abundant and cynical use of *Plastikwörter* that emerge not only in the school's house rules but also in the language used by the school's trainers, the principle, and the representative of the *Bundesagentur für Arbeit*, the novel illustrates not only their permeation of everyday language but also of the language of the Red-Green coalition. But because the theory of human capital on which the notion of *Weiterqualifizierung* is built presupposes that individuals are composed of an ever-adaptable, ever-renewable stock of physical, intellectual, and emotional attributes, the call to improve oneself spares no one. Moreover, through the character of Karla, it is shown to also deny those who refuse to follow it the possibility of adducing valid reasons for their rejection and silences them in order to uphold its legitimacy. Despite her non-compliance with the demand to transform herself into a desirable commodity in the labour market, Karla has

internalized the demand inherent in the image of the entrepreneurial to assume personal responsibility for her inability to be that desirable commodity. A social lemming like the other trainees, she silences herself and accepts her pathologization and mistreatment through the school's authority figures, exposing the brutality and claim to absoluteness inherent in the all-encompassing rationality of the market as it becomes apparent in the Red-Green coalition's appeal for *Weiterqualifizierung*.

6 Conclusion and Outlook: Reconstructing the Literary Facets of the Entrepreneurial Self in the Red-Green Era

The previous chapters have shown that the three novels *Alles bestens* (2002), *Das Ende des Kanzlers. Der finale Rettungsschuss* (2004), and *Schule der Arbeitslosen* (2006) cast light on a variety of facets related to neoliberal governmentality and the specific forms of subjectivity it promotes and enables. Due to the concrete historico-political situatedness of the three novels in the Red-Green era of German politics between 1998 and 2005, they can be regarded as portrayals and literary (re-)constructions of subjectivities available to individuals under specific historico-political circumstances. As such, they capture the *zeitgeist* dominated by neoliberal market-oriented discourses that penetrate almost all layers and facets of selfhood.

In this final chapter, I will reconsider the three novels and the versions of the entrepreneurial self they construe, arguing that together they can be taken to represent a spectrum of possible subject positions available to individuals in a primarily neoliberal, market-driven society, whose overarching discourse of entrepreneurialism penetrates individual lives and selfhood far beyond the domain of labour. At the same time, viewing the three novels as symptomatic of a particular sociocultural, political, and historical context allows me to look at them as literary constructions of neoliberal governmentality and how this may affect subjectivity. I will first discuss the portrayal of the entrepreneurial self in light of the specific political context (re-)constructed in each of the novels. Because all three novels refer to specific aspects and developments of the Red-Green era, their analysis yields important insights into facets of the *zeitgeist* of the Red-Green era. The novels capture specific moments of this era while also constructing a literary mosaic of subjectivities – that is, individual hopes, fears, dreams, and motivations – under those conditions. The novels can thus be regarded as a

literary laboratory in which potential and actual impacts and implications of Red-Green politics and the discourses of entrepreneurialism are scrutinized. I will then look at the spectrum of subject positions construed in the novels within their specific historical and political context, taking Bröckling's typology of entrepreneurial selves as a starting point. I will conclude with a discussion of the specific gender representations of the entrepreneurial self, as this has proven to be a salient feature of the respective subject positions construed in the three novels.

6.1 A Literary (Re-)Construction of the Red-Green Era

The novels *Alles bestens* (2002), *Das Ende des Kanzlers* (2004), and *Schule der Arbeitslosen* (2006) process the era of the Red-Green coalition as a time of transition towards a neoliberal, free-market rationality that responsabilizes individuals as bearers of risk and their own welfare while deresponsibilizing the state to provide social security. By highlighting particular programs introduced by the Schröder government – namely the *Ich-AG*, the *Mittelstandsoffensive*, and measures related to *Weiterqualifizierung* – and their impact on the characters, they not only position themselves within the Red-Green era but they also inscribe themselves into the discourses surrounding it that produce knowledges and truths about the market, the individual, and their interplay. The literary processing of the *Ich-AG*, the *Mittelstandsoffensive*, and measures of *Weiterqualifizierung* affords the opportunity to understand them not only as government programs but also as technologies of domination, technologies of the self, and technologies of language that simultaneously create normality by making it thinkable and manipulable, determine the conduct of individuals, and enable them to act upon themselves in order to “produce the citizen best suited to fulfil those governments’ policies” (Mayhew 224). It is through these technologies that the rationalities on which the

programs and measures of the Red-Green coalition are based become manifest. As ways of knowing or reasoning that manifest themselves in a widely accepted a priori fashion, they claim the status of truth and reject other possible truths on the basis of their own internal logic and rationality.

Vital to the understanding of the politics of the Red-Green coalition is the rationality of the market that manifests itself in the seminal Blair-Schröder Paper and other documents publicized by the Red-Green coalition as well as in the specific measures discussed above. This rationality posits the necessity of stimulating market growth by encouraging individuals to conduct themselves as entrepreneurs of their lives, hence contributing to the marketization and neoliberalization of society at large and selfhood in particular. In my analyses of the Blair-Schröder Paper and the “Deutscher Beschäftigungspolitischer Aktionsplan,” for instance, I have revealed an emphasis not only on individual entrepreneurial success as a vital part of a deregulated neoliberal market economy, but also on the extension of this market rationality deep into the selfhood of individuals who are addressed as bearers of human capital that must be aligned with the needs of the market. According to the rationality of the market, this will ensure not only the prosperity of individuals and the growth of the economy; the claim is that the conduct of individuals as entrepreneurs of their lives extends into many realms of human social and societal experience where it will ameliorate grave problems such as social exclusion and improve the condition of issues such as environmental sustainability.

The Red-Green governments’ measures that are referenced in all three novels are attempts to stimulate and enable the construction of individuals as self-responsible entrepreneurs who act upon themselves and are willing to take risks as market actors. The *Ich-AG* is perhaps the most prominent of these attempts to encourage individuals to see themselves

as self-responsible entrepreneurs. It is masked as an opportunity – further simplified by the reduction of bureaucratic hurdles – for unemployed persons to effect positive change in their lives that equates individuals’ desire to secure their material existence with the desire to become self-reliant. Thus, the *Ich-AG* is in fact a means to encourage individuals to assume all responsibility for their welfare while carrying all the risks associated with founding a business. With the end goal of lowering social security costs and expanding the work force that actively contributes to rapid economic growth, the state’s interest in individuals taking over these responsibilities is connected to its interest in lifting its own responsibilities. Once self-employed, entrepreneurs must acquire enough knowledge of the market to be able to sustain their business, which is now inextricably tied both to their selfhood and their livelihood. Through the protagonist in *Alles bestens* – who can be interpreted as a literary embodiment of the *Ich-AG* – this novel scrutinizes the impact of this responsabilisation on the individual by construing a character who relentlessly exercises self-control and self-responsibility as an entrepreneurialized individual and calculates the cost and benefit of every action. On the narrative level, his life and his perpetual search for lucrative economic relations merge into one and form an entity that is often promoted in a nonchalant way, namely to be an *Ich-AG* instead of merely founding one. It is the protagonist’s self-conception as a corporation that marks his character as a market-embracing incarnation of the entrepreneurial self, while the tragic decay not only of his livelihood but also of his selfhood expose its detrimental impact on the individual.

While the *Ich-AG* urges non-entrepreneurs into entrepreneurship, the *Mittelstandsoffensive* calls upon already self-employed owners of small and mid-sized businesses to embrace the free market principles of risk and market expansion in order to

increase the growth of their businesses. As an aggressive labour market measure, as the name suggests, that aims at accelerating the *Mittelstand's* transformation from a mercantile to a neoliberal market-driven model of entrepreneurialism, the *Mittelstandsoffensive* attempts to stimulate the desire of business owners to strive for economic growth by increasing their readiness to take entrepreneurial risks. Because the *Mittelstand* is at the heart of Germany's economy and is considered to be the motor for economic growth and employment, it cannot be allowed to function inefficiently and must be continually stimulated in order to promote its growth and, most of all, its profitability. Through the placing of responsibility on the *Mittelständler* in the image of the entrepreneurial self, the *Mittelstandsoffensive* attempts to stimulate the growth of the *Mittelstand*. The portrayal of the *Mittelständler* Hans Hansmann in *Das Ende des Kanzlers*, who prioritizes personal profit and yet rejects personal responsibility for the impending failure of his family-owned drugstore, tests the implications of the measure's responsabilisation of the individual and deresponsibilisation of the state for the *Mittelständler*, who is forced to negotiate this transition. Through Hansmann's inability to do so and his subsequent failure as a *Mittelständler*, *Das Ende des Kanzlers* unmasks the measure's destructive force for those who are unable to adapt to the neoliberal imperative of the market.

While the *Ich-AG* and the *Mittelstandsoffensive* call upon and enable individuals to take up entrepreneurialism as a profession, the notion of *Weiterqualifizierung* functions on a broader level in that it encourages individuals to constantly improve themselves through further training. Grounded in the notion of human capital on the one hand and in the labour market motto "Fördern und Fordern" on the other, *Weiterqualifizierung* functions as a covertly coercive means to stimulate the constant adaptation of individuals' conduct to the endlessly fluctuating needs and demands of the market. The Red-Green coalition's promotion of

constantly improving one's never-sufficient qualifications for employment legitimizes itself by claiming its importance as a guarantee for employability, a hollow and cruel supposition that is reduced to absurdity in Zelter's *Schule der Arbeitslosen* through the portrayal of the mass of relentlessly self-improving unemployed individuals at the job centre Sphericon and of Karla Meier in particular. Under constant pressure to improve herself and increase her employability after countless rejection letters, the character of Karla Meier represents the ideal candidate for the government's self-improvement measures. Her unwillingness to accept their validity and her subsequent mistreatment, however, not only question the effectiveness of the Red-Green government's motto "Fördern und Fordern" but, more importantly, also uncover its disregard for human experience when it is non-compliant with the demands of the market.

6.2 Situating the Novels: A Typology of Entrepreneurial Selves (Bröckling)

As the analysis of the three novels has shown, the image of the entrepreneurial self emerges in numerous literary manifestations. In *Alles bestens*, it manifests itself in the protagonist whose blind striving for this ideal is expressed by his internalization of an economized perspective on himself and his life that results in his self-conception as a corporation. As an enthusiast according to Bröckling's typology of the entrepreneurial self (2008), he embraces the market as a universal structuring principle and a metaphor for his own life that ultimately falls apart because of his fear of losing the successful yet emotionally void life to which he has grown accustomed. In *Das Ende des Kanzlers*, the image of the entrepreneurial self comes to light through the protagonist Hans Hansmann who embraces free market principles without, however, fully understanding the demands of the market and his own position within it. As a melancholic according to Bröckling's typology, he constructs

himself as an exploited and oppressed victim who is unable to relinquish his reliance on the state as a protector of his interests, thus externalizing the responsibility for the risks intrinsic to his actions. In *Schule der Arbeitslosen*, the image of the entrepreneurial self as it takes shape in the protagonist Karla Meier is articulated in its all-encompassing and merciless claim to absoluteness that reconceptualises all individuals as human capital. All trainees at the school, without exception, can be understood as social lemmings – an additional subject position proposed for inclusion in Bröckling’s typology of the entrepreneurial self – as they willingly follow and internalize instructions for their self-improvement. Even the protagonist Karla Meier who distinguishes herself through non-compliance is, albeit forcedly, reconceptualized as a social lemming who ultimately follows the demands of the school as a personified instance of the market imperative.

The three novels can therefore be seen as representing a variety of subject positions available to the entrepreneurial self. According to Bröckling’s identification of various subjectivities that arise vis-à-vis the image of the entrepreneurial self and that normally overlap or appear as “Mischformen” (83), individuals’ responses to the call of the entrepreneurial self can be approached and investigated from a sociological perspective. As categories used for the examination of the characters in *Alles bestens*, *Das Ende des Kanzlers*, and *Schule der Arbeitslosen*, however, the protagonists appear mostly as prototypes that share little overlap. While this entrepreneurial stereotyping must remain a hypothetical exaggeration within the realm of sociology, it can be transformed into a literary testing ground within the realm of fiction. The creation of literary prototypes allows the novels – precisely because of the characters’ simplistic and overstated traits – to create a literary rehearsal space that affords the opportunity to imagine and simulate various forms of subject positions and, more importantly,

make visible their effects on and implications for the subject. Because most characters are prototypes of the entrepreneurial self, they stand in seeming contrast and distance to “reality” and hence allow for reflection on and a questioning of normality. The only character who exhibits, to some extent, signs of individuality, is Karla Meier in Zelter’s *Schule der Arbeitslosen*. Although she is, at times, aware of her subjectification as a social lemming and shows signs of protest against it, she nevertheless submits to her pathologization. The other trainees at Sphericon, however, including Roland Bergmann, remain unaware of their subjectification as social lemmings and blindly follow the demand for self-improvement that is placed upon them.

While the characters examined in the analysis represent but three facets of the entrepreneurial self among numerous possible images, they provide a sense of the vast spectrum of the images of the entrepreneurial self because they differ greatly from each other. This spectrum is an expression of the differing responses to the call of the entrepreneurial self that includes “zwischen Euphorie und Verzweiflung hin- und her[zu]switchen” as much as “sich ganz auf eine Seite [zu] schlagen und zur jeweils anderen mit aller Kraft Abstand zu halten versuchen” (83). The protagonist in *Alles bestens* who thinks and acts like a corporate being and signifies the epitome of the free market-embracing individual can be positioned at one end of the spectrum. He believes himself to be an autonomous entrepreneur who is free to think and act without any constraints and is therefore able to make rational choices that best serve his self-interest. At the same time as he strives to be an economically-rational individual who calculates the benefit of every action he takes and every relationship he enters, however, he loses the ability to draw on meaningful and supportive relationships or look to anyone for help, thus carrying the principle of self-responsibility to destructive extremes. In contrast to the

protagonist in *Alles bestens*, Hans Hansmann in *Das Ende des Kanzlers* is unable to see himself as a self-responsible individual when he faces a crisis. As a bourgeois *Mittelständler* who aspires to be a successful entrepreneur, Hansmann's character is caught between two conflicting entrepreneurial models that are rooted in social liberalism on the one hand and in neoliberalism on the other. While his conduct serves the satisfaction of his self-interests and the achievement of personal profit, he feels entitled to the protection of the state when the existence of his drugstore is threatened. Because he is unable to figure out not only the demands of the market but also his own position within it, he is unwilling to accept that the role of the state no longer includes the protection of the welfare of individuals but rather the preservation of the market. Compared to the protagonist in *Alles bestens* and the character of Hans Hansmann, Karla in *Schule der Arbeitslosen* – if only for a brief moment – defies the call of the entrepreneurial self and its demand for self-improvement. However, because she is unable to direct her non-compliance against anyone but herself, she remains a passive and submissive character who capitulates to the power and authority of those who fulfil the demand she rejects.

Although all of these characters are subjectified by market mechanisms in different ways, they all fail in the end, not despite but because of their efforts to follow the call of the entrepreneurial self. Their failure to reach the goals they set out to achieve speaks to the impossibility for individuals to, on the one hand, evade this failing operation and, on the other, to secure sufficient entrepreneurial success. Ulrich Bröckling describes this twofold impossibility in his essay on the typology of the entrepreneurial self as follows: “So wenig es ein Entkommen gibt, so wenig gibt es ein Ankommen” (“Enthusiasten, Ironiker, Melancholiker” 82). The failure and decay of the protagonist in *Alles bestens* speaks most drastically to the

destructiveness and illusion of the neoliberal notion of self-responsibility as a means to make free choices and achieve autonomy, success, and wellbeing. The self-responsibility encouraged by the Red-Green government reduces the protagonist to an economically-rational and instrumentalized being who is urged to merge his self-interests with the interests of the market, thereby discouraging conduct and interactions that are not compliant with the imperative of economic rationality. Although he is a successful entrepreneur and leads a life considered to be successful from the perspective of a market rationality, he is unable to hold on to his success. Stripped of the ability to experience himself outside of an economizing worldview, his body and mind decay. Because self-responsibility and self-control are vital for achieving entrepreneurial success, he continues to craft his narrative of success on the outside while experiencing failure and decay within himself. It is ultimately his *Unmündigkeit* as an enterprising individual - that is, his lack of awareness and ignorance of the consequences of his striving to be an ever-more successful entrepreneur - that renders his failure inevitable. It is also the *Unmündigkeit* of the character of Hans Hansmann that contributes to his failure as an entrepreneur. This unawareness of his own market-oriented conduct and its implications attests to his inability to see through the call of the entrepreneurial self, which he follows without noticing it until his personal advantage is threatened. Hansmann remains ignorant of the mechanisms of the market and is unable to understand that, regardless of his actions, his small drugstore is doomed to fail in an increasingly deregulated market. He is defenceless not only against the economic strength of a large corporation like Super-Drug but also against the self-interest that also governs the conduct of Hammelstadt's leaders, who welcome Super-Drug's settlement because it will stimulate the town's economic growth. Although Hansmann participates as an active player on the market by striving towards more self-responsibility and

risk-taking when searching for means to keep his drugstore profitable and aspiring to be a successful entrepreneur, he plays by the wrong rules when he relies on the state to protect his interests and, as a consequence, loses his stake. This uncompromising, absolutist market rationality that leaves individuals an only illusory choice to participate is also brought into focus through the character of Karla Meier. Despite her rejection of Sphericon's demand for self-improvement and her resulting non-participation, Karla never rises to the challenge of removing herself from this sphere of direct influence on her conduct and willingly accepts not only her placement in solitary confinement but also her mistreatment. A counter-image to the other protagonists, she constructs herself as a social misfit and takes personal responsibility for her failure to find employment, giving in to her subjectification as a social lemming as whom she contributes – despite her disapproval – to the preservation and stabilisation of the rationality of the market. Just like all the other trainees, Karla leaves Sphericon with a school certificate that nullifies her unacceptable failure and transforms it into a success.

The call for neoliberal self-governing as depicted in the three novels sheds light on the detrimental impact of the responsabilisation on individuals. Ultimately, all entrepreneurial selves – regardless of the level of their entrepreneurialism and their individual success as entrepreneurs – are defeated, or more precisely, defeat themselves. The novels portray the image of the entrepreneurial self as a destructive one that renders individual happiness and success an impossible goal. Because the detrimental impact on individuals remains masked by, for instance, the still-prevalent myth of the self-made man and the neoliberal notion of self-responsibility that insists not only that “life is what you make it” but also that “life is what you fail to make it,” the call of the entrepreneurial self continues to be answered by individuals and entire societies alike. At the same time, the call of the entrepreneurial self continues to be

answered because the choice to participate in neoliberal market-driven governing practices is in fact – without the previously-provided net of social security – a non-choice between social exclusion, poverty, and illness (among many other negative consequences), and the possibility to achieve, if only temporarily, success and happiness.

6.3 Gendered Representations of the Entrepreneurial Self

As suggested in Zelter's *Schule der Arbeitslosen*, the rationality of the market purports to be gender-neutral, that is, it appears to place emphasis on the market and its actors alone. Through the use of grammatically-neutral labels loaned from the English such as “trainee” (Zelter 6), for instance, the impression of gender-neutrality is validated through language and its function as a technology of thought. Yet, the novel's characters – as well as the protagonists in *Alles bestens* and *Das Ende des Kanzlers* – are always constructed as gendered characters, a portrayal that challenges this supposition. While images of the successful entrepreneur – like the protagonist in *Alles bestens*, Hans Hansmann, and also Ansgar Fest and Roland Bergmann – are masculinized images, in the same way that Nicole, Karin Hansmann, and Karla Meier are feminized. This gender signification shown in the analysis of the novels clearly suggests that the rationality of the market in fact affirms traditional gender roles rather than gender-neutrality. While it is not the main focus of this analysis, the examination of gender as it interconnects with the image of the entrepreneurial self is a useful tool for understanding both the complexity and the wide-ranging implications of neoliberal governing practices and the various ways in which images of masculinity and femininity validate images of the entrepreneurial self.

An examination of the protagonist's image of masculinity in *Alles bestens* has shown that it plays an integral role in his self-construction as a successful and powerful entrepreneur. His masculinity rests on traditional masculine images that allow him to regard himself as superior to both women and other men, exposing his entrepreneurial subjectivity as strongly gendered. Portraying himself as rational, successful, independent, self-involved, and superior, he uses his encounters with both men and women to reframe his story of failure and decay as a story of success and strength. Because he evaluates not only each of his actions but also his relationships as instances of economic activity - that is, in terms of their cost and benefit to him - they are void of emotional intimacy and genuine support. While his numerous sexual encounters with women – including his affair with Nicole – allow him to feel superior and powerful, he regards the men in his life as frail and weak, like his friend Lorenzo, or economically irrational, like Nicole's father Jens Wettrich. This economized understanding of relationships mainly serves to secure his masculinized entrepreneurial status. Despite the seeming gender-neutrality of neoliberal principles that call upon all individuals as entrepreneurs, the protagonist in *Alles bestens* illustrates that the entrepreneurial self is certainly a gendered self: more specifically, a male, heterosexual self. This linking of a traditional image of masculinity to the image of the entrepreneurial self affirms and perpetuates a masculinized, market-driven rationality that requires the participation of individuals who regard themselves as possessing the traditionally masculine traits of rationality, self-responsibility, risk-taking, self-interest, and competitiveness.

While Hansmann's masculinity rests, similar to the protagonist in *Alles bestens*, on traditional masculine values, his self-concept is closely tied to a bourgeois worldview and Prussian virtues, marking him not as a market-embracing, but rather as a mercantile

entrepreneur. Void of any signs of physical experience or sexuality, he constructs his masculinity by casting himself in the role of the sole breadwinner and patriarch of the family whose right it is to determine the conduct of his wife and daughters. A domestic tyrant, he applies his view of gender-segregated socio-economic roles to his wife and daughters, whom he regards as inferior to men both in terms of their capabilities as workers and their ability to reason and make economically-sound decisions. Just as the protagonist in *Alles bestens*, Hans Hansmann is portrayed in the image of a gendered, male, and heterosexual entrepreneurial self. Besides the evident linking of traditional masculinity with the image of the entrepreneurial self these two characters share in common, there is a striking continuity between the mercantile, bourgeois, and seemingly out-dated version of the entrepreneurial self personified by Hans Hansmann and the market-embracing version of the entrepreneurial self personified by the protagonist in *Alles bestens*. This continuity further illustrates the significance of the traditional image of masculinity as a means of historical and social cohesion that functions as an overarching, powerful mechanism that affirms the validity of neoliberal governing practices.

Although the trainees in *Schule der Arbeitslosen* appear to be portrayed as gender-neutral at first sight and although none of the characters appears to be in a relationship that would suggest a gendered conceptualization of the self, it is in fact the understanding of these characters as gendered individuals that informs much of their construction as agents within the market. On the one hand, sexuality as such is economized through the analogy between the discourses of employment and sexuality, which allows the notion of *Weiterqualifizierung* to reach deeply into individuals' private sphere where it continues to guide their conduct and impact the formation of their selfhood. On the other, the characters of Karla Meier, Roland Bergmann, and Ansgar Fest are portrayed as gendered characters whose femininity and

masculinity are linked to their images of entrepreneurial selves. While Karla is portrayed as an uneducated, disinterested, and aimless woman – a path diametrically opposed to the one of entrepreneurial success – Roland Bergmann and Ansgar Fest, among other male characters, are portrayed as occupying considerably high professional positions that are not only traditionally associated with and performed by men but that are also linked to authority, power, knowledge, and entrepreneurial success. The image of the entrepreneurial self is hence also linked to a traditional image of masculinity in *Schule der Arbeitslosen* where it connotes authority and dominance, while Karla's character is constructed as a non-compliant, non-masculine, and hence feminized counter-image to the successful entrepreneurial self.

6.4 Concluding Remarks and Outlook

Applying Foucault's theory of governmentality in the analysis of literary works that reference and reconstruct facets of politics in the Red-Green era and its neoliberal underpinnings allows us to call into question the self-evidence of formative norms, power relations, and forms of knowledge. It affords us the opportunity to open a space for critical reflection regarding our own roles within the system of governing and to develop a sense of awareness of the consequences and effects of our conduct. Foucault offers an understanding of neoliberal governmentality that goes beyond regarding neoliberalism as merely a theory of free-market entrepreneurialism – which has hitherto dominated literary analyses of neoliberalism and the so-called New Economy – or as an oppressive discourse in the Bourdieudian sense. Because such studies have thus far neglected an investigation into the complex mechanisms of the relationships of power between the economic sphere and individuals' subjectification, often assuming that the economic sphere merely inscribes itself

onto the powerless individual, they remain implicitly affirmative of the neoliberal discourses under investigation. Using Foucault's theory of neoliberal governmentality to challenge this notion of neoliberalism as a dominant, oppressive discourse synonymous with free-market economy, this dissertation opens a new avenue examining the processing of neoliberal discourses in works of literary fiction. With this dissertation, I hope to have shown that literary works can shed light on the impact neoliberal political practices may have on subjectivity and self-constructions, allowing us an intimate glimpse into the ways large-scale political transitions permeate and shape the subject in its entirety. Because neoliberalism has become a powerful and pervasive phenomenon not only in Europe but also throughout the Western world, Foucault's theory of neoliberal governmentality is a productive and meaningful approach for examining its practices and mechanisms.

While this dissertation focuses on investigating three contemporary German works of fiction that make concrete reference to the measures of the Red-Green coalition as a neoliberal government, the same approach would also be fruitful for analysing contemporary German-language works that process the neoliberalization of society via other mechanisms, such as the mechanisms that effect a loss of self and language in Ernst-Wilhelm Händler's *Wenn wir sterben* (2002) or the implications that arise from individuals' perceived choice and autonomy for the volatility of moral codes in Katharina Hacker's *Die Habenichtse* (2006). Comparative analyses of French and German literary works that process, for example, the interconnections of gender and immigration and labour policies, such as Olivier Adam's *À l'abri de rien* (2007) and Jens Petersen's *Die Haushälterin* (2005) could shed light on their consequences for subjectivities in a globalized world on the one hand and the subjectivities' particular historico-political conditions on the other.

My analysis of three contemporary German literary works only begins to uncover the pervasive mechanisms of neoliberalism that shape the selfhood of individuals and thereby also societal structures and norms, exposing only the proverbial tip of the iceberg. Permeating the *zeitgeist* not only during the era of the Red Green coalition but also during the past decades of government throughout the Western world, neoliberal practices often manifest themselves as naturalized conduct and hence continue to remain barely visible. Precisely because Foucault's theory of governmentality problematizes neoliberalism as a multifaceted phenomenon, it is a particularly fruitful approach for explorations of other cultural artefacts that illuminate the less visible and complex ways in which neoliberal governing practices infuse the government of others and the self with the principles of the market.

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