

**Disability Drama:
Semiotic Bodies and Diegetic Subjectivities
in post-WWI German Expressionist Drama**

by

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Author's Declaration

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Abstract

In this dissertation, I examine discourses on disability and the body in three German Expressionist dramas written directly after WWI both for the discursive work they do in this context and for their relevance today: Ernst Toller's *Die Wandlung: Das Ringen eines Menschen* (1918) and *Der deutsche Hinkemann* (1923) as well as Karl August Wittfogel's *Der Krüppel* (1920). I analyze how these plays draw on ideas about disability in post-WWI Germany in the midst of a broad-ranging critique of the violence inherent in nationalistic, militaristic, economic, and rehabilitationist discourses. The analysis contributes to the current discussion on how to dismantle what are referred to in disability studies as "disabling discourses," that is, those discourses that lend support to discrimination against bodies marked as disabled. I contend that the use of representation to subvert bodily norms and resist "the medical model of disability" did not begin only after the emergence of the disability rights movement. I demonstrate how these three Expressionist plays indeed resist disabling discourses in ways that were both feasible and intelligible in their context. I argue that not only was the discourse on disability in this time and place multiple, but also that the primary texts use of a variety of (literary) strategies to resist normative paradigms that privilege able-bodied, aesthetically-pleasing, and economically-productive bodies. The analysis shows how these representations pose a challenge the medical mode of understanding the body, critically engage the social stigma that often accompanies the presence of disability, and offer alternative ways of reading and valuing the body. I argue that literary representations of disability can serve to de-naturalize ideas about ability and other ideals of embodiment, and that

even the hyperbolic bodies one encounters in these Expressionist dramas can help readers to better understand processes of disablement. This project will also demonstrate that literary representations of disability are of importance for disabled and non-disabled persons alike because they reveal and critically engage various techniques that are used to categorize and assign value to all bodies in a society in which ideals of ability, beauty, and utility are used to assess the value of life.

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List of Abbreviations

DdH = *Der deutsche Hinkemann*

K = "Der Krüppel"

W = *Die Wandlung: Das Ringen eines Menschen*

Part One

Introduction

During and directly following the First World War, German society experienced a sudden, unprecedented increase in the number of persons with disabilities visible in everyday life. As thousands of soldiers returned home with a variety of acquired impairments and sought a return to civilian life, disability became not only more visible, but also a highly politically charged phenomenon. Because of the need to rehabilitate and reintegrate individual bodies in a society that was itself thoroughly broken, both physically and mentally, disability was theorized as never before in the fields of law, medicine, and rehabilitation science. In the realm of culture, too, artists, filmmakers, and authors were both portraying the physical presence of disability in their society as well as critiquing contemporary discourses on disability and the body. In short, the sudden appearance of thousands of men with physical, mental, and sensory disabilities acquired during the war had a significant impact on the discursive atmosphere of post-WWI Germany.

As Carol Poore has emphasized throughout her 2007 book *Disability in Twentieth-Century German Culture*, the bodies of disabled veterans often became a site at which national memory and collective identity were negotiated in both the political and cultural spheres. From the left, they were viewed as victims of an unjust society¹ while from the right they were viewed as national heroes. These men were also caught up in broader discourses on the body. For instance, Eugenicists, who wanted to engineer a healthy body politic, were concerned that all of the “healthy,

¹ Ernst Friedrich’s *Krieg dem Kriege!* (*War Against War*), originally published in 1924, constitutes one example of how the left utilized the bodies of disabled veterans in order to bolster the anti-war movement.

productive” men had been killed or injured in the war, leaving only the “unfit and unproductive” to re-build the national population (Poore 45). Furthermore, the newly founded Weimar Republic had need of strong, healthy, able bodies to re-build the post-war economy. Just as the bodies of the disabled veterans had been made functional as soldiers within the military, rehabilitation science was making great progress in the re-functionalization of their bodies so that, with the help of prostheses, physical therapy and re-education, these men could become productive workers. In short, the call to rehabilitate individuals in post WWI-Germany was wrapped up in the larger project of rebuilding the collective body, a project that often emphasized individual overcoming and compensation in the interests of the collective good.

In the midst of the complex political, social, and economic discourses that pervaded this historical moment, Germany was also experiencing the symptoms of a society-wide trauma. In *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War* (2009), Anton Kaes describes the physical and psychological consequences of the war that were experienced both on the individual and collective level:

In four years, seventy million people were called to arms, and close to nine million died on the battlefield. Two million German men never returned home. . . . Twelve million soldiers came back physically disabled, and untold numbers endured long-term psychological damage. . . . The term “shell shock,” which doctors used to diagnose frontline soldiers suffering nervous breakdowns, provides a metaphor for the invisible though lasting psychological wounds of World War I.

(3)

Kaes' analysis of Weimar films he identifies and analyzes as "shell shock cinema" highlights the ways in which the filmic genre made it possible for the trauma of the war to be indirectly expressed and processed. He demonstrates how topics such as loss and grief were dealt with in ways that did not explicitly reference or portray the war, but that nonetheless tapped into collective war experiences, pointing out that: "In the 1920s, the war was a reality so profoundly immediate and pervasive that it did not need to be mentioned by name . . . it was present all the time" (Kaes 4).

While Kaes' study focuses on the aesthetic responses of the filmic genre to the crises of the day, an in-depth study of the ways in which other genres responded to them is still needed. Scholars such as Poore have made significant progress in identifying the sheer breadth of the cultural processing of one aspect of the trauma of the war, namely, the prevalence and visibility of disabilities acquired during the war. However, in this dissertation I will go further by demonstrating the intricate discursive work that is done by representations of disability in three works of Expressionist drama written in the years following WWI. In doing so, I will demonstrate the role of literature in the cultural processing of disability and the meaning(s) of the body in the early Weimar Republic.

The plays I have selected for analysis are particularly fascinating for a study on representations of disability and the body because the literary bodies therein defy one-dimensional readings of these bodies as mere metaphors or allegories. Instead, the complex interplay between their semiotic and diegetic dimensions serve to foreground both discourses on disability and the body as well as the experiences of disability that become possible within them as well as the disabled subjectivities that

emerge from them. Thus, I argue that Ernst Toller's *Die Wandlung: Das Ringen eines Menschen* (1918) and *Der deutsche Hinkemann* (1923) as well as Karl August Wittfogel's "Der Krüppel" (1920) draw the reader/viewer into engagement with the visible effects and embodied experience of disability and disabling discourses both within the world of the drama as well as within the historical-discursive context in which these plays were written. Thus, these plays provide us with a unique opportunity to not only study contemporary discourses on disability in post-WWI Germany, but also to identify and appreciate the complex ways in which these discourses were negotiated in an artistic medium and literary epoch that were so influenced by the Great War. I position the analysis at the intersection of several fields, including cultural disability studies, linguistics, and literary studies. This allows me to highlight the structural violence inherent in discourses on the body and disability. My analysis will show that the primary texts contribute valuable insights to theoretical discussions as well as serve as a testing ground for political strategies when it comes to resisting "disabling discourses."

My contribution to cultural and literary studies as well as to disability studies involves demonstrating that the primary texts use literary representation to subvert scientific-medical discourses on the body and foreground embodied experience. Furthermore, I argue that the literary works I examine were indeed resisting disabling discourses in post-WWI Germany. In this way, they show that "the discourse on disability" in this time and place was complex and negotiable, and that literary authors were making use of a variety of (literary) strategies to resist ideological paradigms that established normative ideals of embodiment.

The literary representations of disability I am examining not only challenge the medical mode of understanding the body, critically engage the social stigma and exclusion that often accompany the presence of disability, but also offer alternative ways of reading and valuing the body. By analyzing literary representations of disability, I will further the goals of disability studies by de-naturalizing ideas about “able-bodiedness,” “disability,” “impairment,” “normality,” and “abnormality” and by demonstrating the porous, though resilient nature of the conceptual binaries according to which bodies - both literary and physical - are typically read. Although the fictional bodies we encounter in literature are not “true,” they are nonetheless “in the true” because they are constituted by the same discursive forces that give rise to embodied experiences and subjectivities in the physical world. The constructedness of literary bodies as well as the ways in which these structure reality provide opportunities to identify the ways in which bodies have meaning and the ways in which textual representations of bodies serve both as discursive formations and as transformative forces that act upon and within discourse.²

The overarching goal of this project is to demonstrate that these literary representations of disability are not only relevant, but of central importance for contemporary discussions on disability and the body because they reveal and engage discursive techniques - such as hierarchical binaries - that are used to categorize and assign cultural capital to bodies. The strategies of resistance to disabling discourses I identify in the primary literature can indeed be used to subvert and resist

² I will use the term *discourse* in the sense established by Michel Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), namely as: “the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements” (80).

contemporary discourses that create a variety of barriers for persons with disabilities. I will also show that they offer further insights into theories of the body and serve as a testing ground for various strategies of resistance to discrimination that could be of use to many other minority groups. Thus, the “non-real” context of literature can open up possibilities for how we think, act, and relate to others in the “real” world, though I will not treat these as strictly dichotomous realms.

The field of disability studies currently finds itself positioned between the reality of disability and efforts to promote self-representation on the one hand, and the notion of disability as a construct that is constituted in language and a product of discourse on the other. While this position may be uncomfortable, it also seems to be filled with all kinds of productive tensions that can serve to enrich the field and help to transform discourses in our society. The cultural model of disability in particular stands to make a unique contribution to the field by interpreting the myriad meanings of the body that are (re-) produced in language as well as in cultural artifacts such as literature and art. For instance, scholars G. Thomas Couser (2005) and Beth A. Ferri (2011) see “life writing” as a way to bring the body and embodied experience back into our understanding of textual representations of disability. The many genres that fall under the category of life writing provide ways for people to tell their stories and interpret the meaning of disability based on their individual experiences; indeed, this kind of storytelling is of central importance for the political goals of disability studies.

At the same time, scholars in cultural and literary studies are beginning to value the complexity of literary and artistic contributions to discourses on disability, regardless of whether their creators were disabled or non-disabled (Joshua and

Schillmeier, *Disability in German Film, Literature, and Theater* 2010). While life writing is important because it allows persons with disabilities to tell others about their experiences and participate in shaping the discourse on their bodies, literary storytelling is useful for understanding discourses on disability without relying on naturalized notions of identity and the body that claim the status of pre-cultural and self-evident “truths of the body” - for these are the very notions that have been used to maintain value-laden categories as well as legitimize discrimination against bodies marked as disabled.

However, remnants of social constructionism - as well as a kind of neo-essentialism - persist in cultural disability studies when scholars attempt to peel away the layers of negative meaning in a particular cultural artifact in order to access the “true” meaning of disability or to re-inscribe the disabled body with positive meaning. Sometimes life writing - and particularly the scholarship on it - tends toward what Robert McRuer (*Crip Theory*, 2006) has termed a “cultural progress narrative” (177) that celebrates a realistic mode of representation as the only acceptable way to portray disability. In his monograph, Robert McRuer argues that disabling discourses are just as much a result of “the cultures of upward distribution we currently inhabit” as they are a product of the negative cultural meanings of disability (76). In other words, discourses that disable are discourses that privilege healthy, strong, economically productive, and otherwise “useful” bodies. Seen from this perspective, critiques of the negative cultural connotations of disability will be ineffective if they do not simultaneously critique the utilitarian way of thinking about bodies that is an integral component of capitalist societies.

Following this reasoning, a particular strength of the literary texts I examine in this project is that the representations of disability therein frequently connect cultural meanings of disability with critiques of various economic and aesthetic discourses give rise to hierarchical categorizations that privilege some bodies over others. For instance, some of the disabled characters in *Die Wandlung* are portrayed as victims who suffer under the discursive techniques of the military/medical complex that are aimed at utilizing them to achieve national goals. Simultaneously, these characters reject the production of knowledge about their bodies from the perspective of scientific/medical experts and religious leaders while shifting attention to their experiences of disability as loss and suffering. Other characters, simply by means of their presence in the narrative, demonstrate that able-bodiedness is an ideal that remains unachievable not only for persons with disabilities, but in fact for the fragile and vulnerable human body in general.

In “Der Krüppel,” the disabled protagonist goes up against the militaristic, charitable, and capitalist discourses that are embodied by the other symbolic figures he encounters. Despite the caricature-like portrayal of both the protagonist and the other figures, “Der Krüppel” presents a clear challenge to modes of knowledge production about disability that originate outside of experience. *Der deutsche Hinkemann* features a disabled protagonist who despairs because he is unable to establish a respected position for himself in his society. His downfall is portrayed on the one hand as a result of the trauma of violence and loss he experienced during the war and on the other as a result of his discursive exclusion from the categories of ability and masculinity upon returning to civilian life. These kinds of literary

strategies have the potential to be transformative because they go beyond a surface critique of the representational symptoms of disabling discourses and strike instead at the various ideological currents that give rise to them.

While scholars like McRuer and others have explored non-essentialist approaches to understanding the phenomenon of disability in society (see Tremain 2005), this approach can also be fruitful in the analysis of disability in literature. By focusing on *how* disability is portrayed and *to what ends* it is portrayed in literature, it is possible to discover and explore a variety of strategies to subvert disabling discourses. While disability scholars have emphasized the importance of the lived experience of authors who engage in life writing, for instance, my analysis places greater emphasis on the ways in which the “disability dramas” I examine negotiate discourses on the body. Thus, I am reading the primary texts not for what they communicate about the experience of any particular individual, but for the ways in which they both portray and negotiate discourses on disability and the body in a specific time and place.

In disability studies, there has been considerable resistance to moving beyond a focus on who has the right to speak about and represent disability. Since activism is dependent upon groups of subjects in the humanist sense, it is understandable that in disability studies - and even in its cultural branch - one is hesitant to discard the notion of an autonomous, pre-cultural subject for fear that the struggle for inclusion and accessibility will lose its philosophical footing. On the other hand, it is important to remember that the data with which one works in literary studies are not real-world statistics, but rather artistic portrayals of realities and subjectivities. These may be

imbued with qualities that remind us of the real world, but yet they do not and cannot fully represent it as it is. Thus, the search for alternative paradigms for valuing bodies can be conducted through the analysis of literary representations without the risks associated with political action in the physical world. At the same time, such analyses can uncover alternative approaches and strategies that may or may not be of use in the physical realm. In this dissertation, I make use of theories and analytical tools that respect this tension between the literary and the physical and that are appropriate for the type of data taken up in the analysis as well as the goals of the project.

Currently, there are alternative foundations upon which critical readings of literary representations of disability could be built. For example, concepts and interpretive strategies from fields ranging from philosophical posthumanism to cultural and literary animal studies could be adopted and adapted to account for disability. To name one instance of how this interdisciplinary transfer is relevant, Cary Wolfe, in *What is Posthumanism?* (2010), speculates that it is time to rethink our strategy when it comes to securing rights for particular groups of individuals. Pointing out that current strategies always tend to leave someone out, he reflects on two groups who have traditionally been excluded from the privileged circle of rights that is grounded in Renaissance humanism. He writes:

Most of us would probably agree that . . . people with disabilities deserve to be treated with respect and equality. But . . . the philosophical and theoretical frameworks used by humanism to try to make good on those commitments reproduce the very kind of normative subjectivity - a specific concept of the human - that grounds

discrimination against nonhuman animals and the disabled in the first place. (xvii)

The insufficiency and problematic nature of the notion of personhood as a requirement for the securing of rights is also something that Margrit Schildrick discusses in her chapter entitled “Critical Disability Studies” in the 2012 *Disability Studies Handbook*. She writes that “the conventional demands for an extension and solidification of rights for disabled people, and for a more inclusive culture, fall short of a more radical move that . . . contest the very nature of the standards that underpin their normative operation” (32).

This ties back into how literary analyses can enrich and inform theoretical and strategic discussions. As a limitless testing ground for concepts and strategies, literature can highlight the workings of disabling discourses, portray the advantages and disadvantages of various forms of subversion, and draw attention to alternative ways of thinking about and valuing bodies. Cary Wolfe’s posthumanist critique and Margrit Schildrick’s CDS perspective are useful for my project because the authors whose work I examine use their storytelling to question the normative subjectivity of the rational, human subject, point out the objectifying practices of the medical model and the techniques of rehabilitation science, demonstrate the pitfalls of the belief in technological and social progress, and illustrate how valuing bodies based on aesthetic ideals or economic productivity is particularly - but not exclusively - detrimental to persons with disabilities.

Since discrimination is supported by dichotomies that are always already hierarchical, the work of Jacques Derrida offers an approach that does not re-produce

the boundaries that can be used to justify exclusion, discrimination, and exploitation. In *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2008, French original 2006), Derrida writes that his strategy consists “not in effacing the limit, but in multiplying its figures, in complicating, thickening, delinearizing, folding, and dividing the line precisely by making it increase and multiply” (29). In the context of disability studies, this would mean that, instead of claiming that physical and intellectual differences are not significant for subjectivity, or, at the other extreme, that they constitute the essence of a person’s identity, we would seek to dismantle the notion that there exist two opposing, homogenous groups called “disabled” and “non-disabled,” instead emphasizing that all living beings share some things in common and are at the same time divided along various axes of difference.

These multiple axes of similarity and difference defy simplistic dichotomies and pave a way for an alternative framework for identity politics. They also make it possible for identity politics to go beyond the narrow goal of securing rights for particular interest groups and address the political-economic forces that allow for discrimination. Lennard Davis has noted the need for such an alternative framework in his 2001 chapter on “Identity Politics, Disability, and Culture” in the *Handbook of Disability Studies*. He asserts that “disability, by the unstable nature of its category, asks us to redefine the very nature of identity and ‘belonging’ to an identity group. Only when identity is stripped of its exclusive nature and becomes part of the larger reformation of oppression can we all safely feel that we have truly regained our identity” (544).

Therefore, this dissertation will take the view that “complicating the boundaries” is an approach to dismantling discrimination that literary texts are well positioned to do. Literary bodies enter into discourses on bodies in the physical world in a way that is simultaneously real and non-real. Writing about this phenomenon as it relates to cultural representations of disability, Joshua and Schillmeier have pointed out that such representations indeed “generate new models and regimes that are hypothetical and realistic at the same time” (7).

The way in which literature constructs and conveys knowledge - by means of storytelling - may be reminiscent of the identity narratives that are created with the intention of providing an accurate account of an individual’s experiences. The literary texts taken up in this project certainly take part in the discourse on what it means to have a disability and, more generally, to be embodied. However, it is crucial to remember that the “subjects” one encounters in those texts are simultaneously real and non-real, that is, they are textual bodies that may or may not echo subject positions in the so-called “real world.”

Furthermore, neither the characters nor the narrator are synonymous with the *authors* of the texts I analyze, which presents a challenge to the mode of interpretation that locates authority for literary content in the body of a text’s author. For this reason, I will need to engage what Foucault called the *author-function* in his 1969 essay “What is an Author?” His critical stance toward the role an author’s identity plays in literary criticism will be useful for this project because of the primary texts at its core. In short, the author-function helps to explain, at least in part, why these works are generally not privileged within both German literary studies and

disability studies. The concept of an oeuvre, of a “man and his work,” not only privileges texts that fulfill certain criteria, but also ties the identity and biography of the author to the production, and thus also to the interpretation of texts.

Foucault’s sentiments share some overlap with those Roland Barthes expresses in his 1967 essay “The Death of the Author,” in which he demonstrates how discourses have more agency than their authors in the creation of texts. Recent disability theory has been resistant to the idea that all symbolic behaviour is constituted in language because it is perceived to “[exclude] embodiment from the representational process almost entirely” (Siebers, *Disability Theory* 2). However, Barthes’ attempt to “free” texts from interpretations based on the notion of the author can actually be useful for disability studies research in the humanities, first of all because it opens up new interpretive possibilities for texts that have been long interpreted within a narrow framework.

For this project, this means that I am not obliged to limit my interpretation of the dramas of Ernst Toller and Karl August Wittfogel to sublimated autobiographical texts or personal ideological expressions. Furthermore, it allows me to account for the presence of subversive strategies that challenge what Siebers calls the “ideology of ability” (10) and techniques that challenge what McRuer has termed “compulsory able-bodiedness” (2) in texts that were written before the advent of disability activism. Finally, it means that I can consider the relevance of the social critiques and political strategies found in these literary works for the realm of disability activism.

In short, I am interested in how literary representations critique disabling discourses in a time and place where the forms of (activist) life writing with which

we are now so familiar did not yet exist. General questions that guide my analysis include: What were the possible forms such critiques could take? What in particular is critiqued, and which narrative strategies and literary devices are used to convey that critique? Although my approach takes a critical stance toward the authority of the author - as Barthes and Foucault did - this does not mean that I wish to devalue the life writing that is produced by persons with disabilities to convey to others a sense of their embodied experience and situated knowledge.

Rather, a post-structural approach gives me the tools to analyze discourses on the body and disability in literary representations in a way that broadens the scope of possible interpretations. Furthermore, it allows me to privilege any strategy - regardless of the identity of its creator - that could be used to critique disabling discourses and construct more inclusive ways of reading and valuing the body. Finally, by focusing primarily on the discursive work a text does within the context in which it was written, I acknowledge, with Bakhtin, the dialogic nature of all texts. Indeed, the works of literature I am analyzing are in dialogue with other texts - including scientific, medical, and legal texts - in the past, present, and future of post-WWI Germany, and were also written with particular goals in mind.

In the rest of this introduction, I will discuss some of the major themes and issues that are relevant for the study of literary representations of disability within current disability studies discourse. Following that I will briefly outline some key aspects of the primary literature and the historical-cultural context in which those texts were produced. This will lead into some further considerations that will guide the analysis of the primary texts.

Managing the (disabled) body in the age of scientific-medical discourse

In their 2006 book *Cultural Locations of Disability*, Mitchell and Snyder discuss the “Eugenic Atlantic” and examine how, “from the end of the eighteenth century to the conclusion of World War II, bodies designated as defective became the focal point of European and American efforts to engineer a ‘healthy’ body politic” (101). The techniques they identify by which the ideology of eugenics was transformed into practice in order to create a healthy social body constitute one aspect of what disability studies refer to as the *medical model of disability*. Historically, scientific-medical professionals had the power to determine the fate of persons with disabilities, and because of recent legislative improvements in Europe and North America that uphold the rights of persons with disabilities, narratives of overcoming, progress, and arrival have emerged as central themes in the disability rights movement (McRuer 178). Indeed, the idea of overcoming the medical model, overcoming discrimination, and overcoming environmental and social barriers to access and inclusion remain powerful, central goals of research in the branches of this field that deal with the experience of bodies in the physical world (Barnes, “Understanding the Social Model of Disability” 23).

However, there is evidence that the medical model, in the broadest sense of the term, is still alive and well. Even as the techniques through which the medical model acts upon disabled bodies are currently being transformed by neoliberal practices (Soldatic and Meekosha, “Disability and Neoliberal State Formations” 196), its sphere of influence extends well beyond efforts to diagnose, treat, and rehabilitate disability. Indeed, it could be argued that all bodies are increasingly “read” and

valued in scientific-medical terms within a variety of contemporary discourses, and individuals are increasingly called upon to constantly “govern” their bodies in order to achieve the highest possible level of “health” and “ability.” To cite a contemporary example, medical doctor David B. Agus writes in the introduction to his 2011 best-seller *The End of Illness*: “I want you to believe that you can live a long, fulfilling, disease-free life - because it is possible. The end of illness is closer than you might think” (3).

While the medical model, as it is often discussed in disability studies, refers to unjust top-down power arrangements in hospitals and other institutions, the current medical model is neoliberal in nature because it depends upon individuals to govern and manage their bodies in order to maintain the so-called normal functioning of the exceedingly complex system that is the body. This becomes apparent in the last line of Agus’ introduction when he calls upon his readers to take responsibility for increasing the health and ability of their bodies: “Only you can end illness” (12). This call to action demonstrates that the influence of the medical model - in its current neo-liberal form, which emphasizes the personal choice and responsibility to embrace and pursue the ideology of health and ability - now extends beyond the realm of disability to encompass all bodies.

Although Agus claims to present a whole new way of understanding the body and health in his book (4), the way he describes the body as a system to be managed echoes the language used by medical professionals in popular science one hundred years ago (Hau and Ash, “Der normale Körper, seelisch erblickt” 13). For instance,

Fritz Kahn³ described the human body as a machine and envisioned the doctors of the future as engineers who would be charged with maintaining its smooth functioning. The similarities between the work of Kahn and Agus show that certain cultural meanings of the body that experienced a heyday in the early twentieth century continue to persist in the twenty-first, for instance, the glorification and pursuit of health, ability, beauty, and productivity. What has changed in the meantime is that the responsibility for creating and maintaining such bodies increasingly lies in the hands of their “owners” instead of in the hands of medical professionals.

It is noteworthy that the notion of “having a body” - and thus being in control of it - instead of “being a body” - that is, being at its mercy - is central to the concept of the Cartesian subject. The limitations of this philosophical entity have recently been challenged in disability studies scholarship from phenomenological perspectives on the body, for instance in Miho Iwakuma’s 2002 article “The Body as Embodiment.” However, as Bill Hughes demonstrates in his 2007 article “Towards a Critical Social Ontology for Disability Studies,” the struggle to find an ontological foundation that is best suited to the political aims of disability studies remains unresolved.

The shortcomings of philosophical traditions that emphasize the agency and responsibility of the rational subject to triumph over the body’s limitations lie in the fact that they do not value certain experiences of the human body - including illness, disability, and death - as acceptable aspects of the human condition. Because of the persistence of such discourses today, the presence of disability continues to threaten our understanding of what it means to be “properly human” (Shildrick, “Critical

³ Doctor and author of popular science books who lived from 1888 - 1968 (Hau and Ash 13).

Disability Studies” 31). This threat is often countered by efforts to “consign disabled people to segregated spaces or try to make them identical to non-disabled people” (Hughes, *Fear, Pity and Disgust* 68).

The legacy of the medical model - and, more broadly, the persistence of the scientific-medical paradigm when it comes to reading and categorizing bodies - can also be described as a *transhumanist* legacy because its explicit and implicit goals include pursuing the enhancement of human capabilities, eliminating disease and suffering, and prolonging the human life span through the use of technology. Wolfe’s posthumanist critique has shown that transhumanism is in fact an extension of humanism because it “derives directly from ideals of human perfectibility, rationality, and agency inherited from Renaissance humanism and the Enlightenment” (xiii). Since scientific-medical discourses have persisted in western society for over a century and continue to inform the way we understand the human body and the value of life, it is imperative that we critically engage these discourses and weigh their implications for bodies in the world we inhabit.

Cultural disability studies: between reality and representation

Despite the positive societal changes that have resulted from decades of research and activism in disability studies (Barnes “Understanding the Social Model of Disability” 20), McRuer alerts us to the pitfalls of the “cultural progress narrative” (*Crip Theory* 177) that often emerges in discussions on the way disabled bodies are represented in works of art and literature. He approaches the analysis of such cultural artifacts by focusing on “the construction and representation of disability rather than supposedly self-evident bodily truths” (172). Since literary bodies are indisputably constituted in

language, they are ideal for demonstrating the inevitable incompleteness as well as both the reifying and subversive potential of linguistic representations of the body. In *Disability Aesthetics* (2010), Siebers looks at the ways in which disability aesthetics in works of art can serve to challenge “the representation of the healthy body - and its definition of harmony, integrity, and beauty - as the sole determination of the aesthetic” (3). While his work demonstrates how the visual arts can be subversive in the face of hegemonic aesthetic ideals, my project is concerned with how literary representations of disability negotiate multiple and competing discourses on the body that flow between various loci of knowledge and truth.

Literary human bodies, like the literary animal bodies Roland Borgards discusses in his 2012 article “Tiere in der Literatur: Eine methodische Standortbestimmung,” have both semiotic and diegetic⁴ dimensions and are thus rich with meaning on many levels. While some such bodies may appear in texts merely as carriers of meaning (e.g. blindness as referent for spiritual seeing), others are indeed comprehensible elements of the narrated world (e.g. a character with a sensory disability). Cultural and literary disability studies have thus far engaged the long tradition of *using* disabled bodies to narrate (i.e. as metaphors, allegories, tropes, or narrative prostheses in the semiotic sense). Scholars such as Dolmage (2013), Poore (2007), Quayson (2007), Mitchell and Snyder (2000) and Garland-Thomson (1997) have done important work in this area.

⁴ Gerald Prince’s *Dictionary of Narratology* (1987) defines the term *diegesis* as “The (fictional) world in which the situations and events narrated occur” and as “telling, recounting, as opposed to showing, enacting” (20). Roland Borgards’ use of the terms *semiotic* and *diegetic* differ from their use within narrative theory. He uses them to describe the nature of bodies that appear in literature, and distinguishes between *semiotic bodies*, which are textual bodies that function solely as carriers of meaning, and *diegetic bodies*, which are bodies that lead a textual life as tangible elements of the narrated world (89).

Much less work has been done on analyzing how literary texts narrate *about* bodies (i.e. in the diegetic sense) without collapsing the semiotic and the diegetic into one category. This tendency is related to a significant tension regarding the relationship between “real” and “represented” bodies. Disability studies scholars such as Bolt (2012) and Mitchell and Snyder (2000) are primarily concerned with how artistic and literary representations of disability negatively influence the way disabled people are perceived and treated in society. Scholars taking this approach rightly point out that literary representations of disability often serve to re-enforce societal values and participate in the maintenance of power relations in the physical world.

This is especially the case when it comes to disabled bodies in literature that are primarily semiotic. For instance, the notion of “disability drift” is made possible by the almost instantaneous association of a character’s physical disability with a defective, deviant, or morally flawed internal state. In contrast, the dramatic portrayal of diegetic bodies is better able to avert this kind of automatic association by making visible the kinds of structural violence and discursive techniques that give rise to disability myths such as disability drift. The diegetic bodies we encounter in dramatic texts allow us to identify and analyze discourses as they materialize and are constructed in the interactions in which such bodies participate. Indeed, diegetic bodies serve to demonstrate how discourse - in the sense of linguistic interaction - shapes and is shaped by Foucault’s conceptualization of discourse. In the analysis, I examine the interactions of dramatic characters and connect them to the historical notion of discourse established by Foucault (see footnote on page 5).

As cultural disability studies seek to uncover, examine, understand, and transform past and present meanings of disability, to retrieve the lost or silenced voices of persons with disabilities, and to promote their self-expression and self-representation today, it is clearer than ever that disability is a highly-contested identity category. While traditionally, only scientific and medical experts participated in the discourse on disability, in recent years, disability scholars and activists have asserted that only persons with disabilities have the right to create knowledge about disability - or at least, about the experience of disability (cf. Poore). Such efforts are part of a larger project to shift societal discourses based on notions of personal authority; however, the implications of this for the interpretation of literary representations of disability remain contested, since literary texts do not always operate on that premise. This issue will be relevant for the present study.

Just as disability studies is concerned with fighting the notion of disability “as an individual, medical problem or ‘personal tragedy’” (Barnes, “Understanding the Social Model of Disability” 12), it is necessary to critique the (re-)inscription of this notion when the validity of a literary text is evaluated in accordance with the identity of its author. Unlike biographical approaches to literary interpretation, a post-structural analysis of literary texts positions the act of reading a text as the site at which meaning emerges, thus valuing what the reader brings to the text as much as what the text brings to the reader as well as questioning the ontological stability of both reader and text. Furthermore, placing emphasis on the discursive work a text does within the context in which it was written allows for a wider range of possible meanings and acknowledges the dialogic nature of all texts, whose meaning is always

entwined with that of other texts. This issue, too, will be taken into consideration in the analysis.

Identity politics, (literary) storytelling, and strategies of resistance

The way in which literature constructs and conveys knowledge - by means of storytelling - may be reminiscent of other kinds of identity narratives, for example, those we find in autobiographical writing. Unlike the genre of life writing that attempts to fulfill the function of “relating the true events of one’s life to others,” literary storytelling may fulfill many other functions that range from pure entertainment to social commentary and that do not depend upon the biographical particularities of an author’s life. Furthermore, this latter kind of storytelling employs a variety of stylistic strategies to accomplish its goals that may overlap with or diverge from the forms typically used in life writing genres.

When analyzing subjectivities located in both kinds of texts, however, it is important to remember that these are always constructs in the sense that they are constituted in language. While sincere accounts of a person’s experience may seem to support the notion of a coherent and stable self, research on identity has shown such narratives to be emergent, positional, indexical, relational, and partial in nature (Bucholtz and Hall, “Locating Identity in Language” 19). In short, this means that the subject of the narrative does not exist before and outside of the text; rather, the subject emerges in and through the narrative itself. Similar arguments are made in *Literatur, Erinnerung, Identität: Theoriekonzeptionen und Fallstudien* (2003) as well as *Gedächtniskonzepte der Literaturwissenschaft* (2005). These findings, seen against the backdrop of the activist agenda in disability studies, produce a general tension

with regard to the connection between narration and identity in various genres. In particular, they raise questions regarding individual agency in the production of such narratives.

We have already seen that the cultural progress narrative - in tandem with identity politics that emphasize the essential difference and personal authority of persons with disabilities - is often connected to efforts to bring the voices of persons with disabilities into the discourse on their bodies (Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* 203). However, this can also have the effect of re-inscribing that difference into those bodies and thus re-producing the categories and hierarchies that set one group against others. The goal of moving persons with disabilities from “objects of study” to “subjects of discourse,” though a way of giving a voice to previously silenced or ignored subjectivities, serves to maintain the idea that persons with disabilities are essentially different, a distinction some disability studies scholars wish to uphold and others challenge. Indeed, disability studies is currently caught between paradoxical theories of the body and between the conflicting strategies of the radical liberationist tradition - which emphasize difference - and the liberal reformist tradition - which emphasizes sameness - both of which can be found in other minority activist movements as well (McRuer 163).

Thus, narrating the body is a very politically charged concept, especially when it pertains to disability. Following poststructuralist thinkers such as Judith Butler, my project will acknowledge that fact while insisting that the so-called “real body” is always a represented body. Butler argues that while something called “the real body” may exist, we are unable to access it in a pre-discursive way, as she

elucidates in *Gender Trouble* (146). This project focuses on representations of the disabled body in literature, because this medium reveals the inescapable ideological dimension of reading the body via language. As a locus of authority, the body is a key site at which issues like individual and collective identity as well as political and economic discourses become materialized. That is to say, the human body, whether it is a living body or a literary body, *embodies* discourse and can only be accessed through the ideological lens that is language. Butler's work demonstrates that language determines how we perceive, talk about, and experience the body. With regard to textual representations of the self, she writes:

I do not believe that poststructuralism entails the death of autobiographical writing, but it does draw attention to the difficulty of the "I" to express itself through the language that is available to it. For this "I" that you read is in part a consequence of the grammar that governs the availability of persons in language. I am not outside the language that structures me, but neither am I determined by the language that makes this "I" possible. This is the bind of self-expression . . . What it means is that you never receive me apart from the grammar that establishes my availability to you. (*Gender Trouble* xxiv)

While the study of sincere identity narratives that are intended to represent personal experience is certainly valid, my project is interested in the ways in which literary texts that represent disability can provide information about dominant discourses in a particular time and place that create the conditions for personal experience.

Literary representations of disability are of interest for disabled and non-disabled persons alike in that they engage the mechanisms - for example the very dichotomy of ability and disability - that are used to categorize and privilege some bodies over others. While Schildrick has already demonstrated the broad relevance of disability studies in our society (30), I will show that literary representations of disability are also useful towards that end because they provide insights into how discourses on disability and the body interact with important societal events and discourses in a given place and time. This project's analyses of literary representations of disability will pay particular attention to strategies of resistance to disabling discourse that complicate the boundaries between "disabled" and "non-disabled" bodies, that uplift the value of life in all its forms, and that do so by means of knowledge creation that subverts scientific-medical modes of reading and valuing the body. In the final section of this introduction, I will briefly discuss the primary works I will examine as well as some significant aspects of the historical-discursive context in which they were written.

Historical context, primary works, and questions for the analysis

The primary works discussed in this section were selected for the analysis not only because they represent disability in a variety of ways, but also because they sometimes reflect, sometimes negotiate, and at times even subvert or transcend discourses on the body that were in circulation in post-WWI Germany. These include, but are not limited to, discourses that can be said to fall under the medical model of disability, for instance the understanding of disability as lack or loss, the discourse that disabled bodies must be cured or rehabilitated so that they can be re-integrated

into the national economy or military, and the idea that beautiful, healthy, and integral bodies constitute the most desirable and useful kinds of bodies. Three dramas will be taken up in the analysis: Ernst Toller's plays *Die Wandlung: Das Ringen eines Menschen* (1918) and *Der deutsche Hinkemann* (1923) as well as Karl August Wittfogel's "Der Krüppel" (1920). Written, performed and published within the short time period between 1918-1924, these dramas are positioned at a very specific historical moment and reflect very specific experiences and meanings of disability. On the one hand, the primary texts serve to process collective experiences in Germany during and after the Great War. While Anton Kaes analyses how this processing took place implicitly in films he terms *Shell Shock Cinema* (2009), I will demonstrate that postwar Expressionist drama served as a direct form of negotiation with regard to the cultural meanings and lived experiences of disability in post-war German society. In this way, the primary texts I have selected for analysis serve to address the crises of self, alienation, poverty, and war that Rainia Elwardy discusses in *Das Wandlungskonzept in der expressionistischen Dramatik* (2009). In the following paragraphs, I will discuss some of the dominant discourses on the body in interwar Germany as well as the significance of the primary literature for this project.

Discourses on disability and the body in Germany (1918-1933)

Scientific-medical discourses on the "deviant body" were on the rise in early twentieth-century Germany. Between the turn of the century and the National Socialists' rise to power, the increasing significance of the body in public discourses became apparent as influential scientific, medical, and legal texts were produced by experts such as Konrad Biesalski, Magnus Hirschfeld, Alfred Hoche and Karl

Binding, and Hans Würtz. These texts, which discuss various kinds of disabilities and other “deviant” embodied states, participated in the construction and maintenance of the notion that bodies can be classified as either normal/healthy/beautiful or abnormal/pathological/ugly. As texts produced by experts in science, medicine, and law, they had a certain claim to truth and knowledge, and thus they had discursive power in shaping understandings of the body in that time and place. Furthermore, these texts proposed the use of prosthetics, education, rehabilitation, or elimination to overcome the “problem” of disability in society.

The increasing interest in the body was not merely coincidental, as various forms of disability were brought to the forefront of public interest by the sudden influx of large numbers of soldiers who had sustained visible, long-term injuries during the First World War (cf. Weindling 383). In addition, ideas about engineering a healthy body politic in this time were strongly connected to ideas about engineering healthy individual human bodies (Mitchell and Snyder *Narrative Prosthesis* 101), which provides an explanation for the popularity of the notion of the human body as a kind of machine that must be maintained with the help of scientific-medical professionals (Hau and Ash 13). As I will demonstrate below, the texts produced by the authors mentioned above constitute sites at which scientific-medical, political, economic, and social discourses on the body intersected and became manifest.

It is particularly noteworthy that the German-speaking world saw the emergence of new discourses on the body that challenged traditional notions about bodily difference in the interwar years. For example, the work of sexologist and gay rights activist Magnus Hirschfeld, as represented in his book *Sexualpathologie* (1920),

demonstrates this well. As a “sexual scientist,” he set out to diagnose and categorize deviant sexual practices and gendered identities while simultaneously arguing that such practices and identities are naturally-occurring, non-criminal phenomena. In this, Hirschfeld’s work followed in the tradition of researchers such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing (*Psychopathia Sexualis*, 1886), and he was deeply concerned with establishing rights for persons who deviated from sexual and gender norms by arguing from a theory of biological determinism. In other words, he sought to locate the source of such deviance in the bodies of individuals in order to prove that, because they are essentially different from everyone else, they cannot help being or behaving differently than the majority. This line of argumentation is also taken up in the film *Anders als die andern* (1919), which Hirschfeld co-authored together with the film’s director, Richard Oswald.

In a similar fashion, the work of Hans Würtz in *Das Seelenleben des Krüppels* (1921), sets out to explain what the inner life of a “cripple” is like, drawing conclusions about the minds and bodies of persons with disabilities and legitimizing them with the medical profession’s claim to truth and knowledge. Würtz’s goal was to establish the basis for a “Krüppelpädagogik”⁵ that would provide “cripples” with education appropriate to their needs. Like Hirschfeld, Würtz makes his case from the perspective of an expert in the field and uses arguments based in biological determinism. Furthermore, his concept of the *Häßlichkeitskrüppel* (a person who is disabled due to their ugliness) in his 1932 book *Zerbrecht die Krücken* reveals that the line used to distinguish “disabled” bodies from “able-bodied” ones had extended

⁵ While this term was not derogatory in Würtz’ day, in modern German it has been replaced by the term *Sonderpädagogik*, which is considered to be politically correct.

beyond medical diagnosis into the sphere of aesthetic judgments by the end of the Weimar period.

In the work of both Hirschfeld and Würtz, physical, mental, and emotional states that deviate from naturalized images of the normal human being are treated as naturally-occurring, yet anomalous embodied states that do not deserve society's scorn but rather compassion and / or professional care. The work of these researchers was revolutionary in post-WWI Germany; not only did Hirschfeld and Würtz raise public awareness regarding the lives of people who had previously been misunderstood, ignored, hidden away, or actively persecuted, but they also established institutes and developed resources to assist individuals in leading fulfilled lives. Thus, theirs were progressive voices within their discursive-historical context, and their work helped to improve the lives of individuals in their society.

From today's perspective, however, there are several shortcomings of their work. For example, despite Hirschfeld's and Würtz' efforts to normalize and routinize bodily difference in a certain sense, their scientific texts are nevertheless complicit in the production and maintenance of the notion of "the normal body" by creating the category of "the abnormal body." In so doing, they discursively support the notion that it is necessary for all kinds of bodies to be classifiable and manageable, and they participate in the maintenance of hierarchies among various forms of embodiment. It is important to note that these scientific-medical discourses are part of the "medical model of disability" that has been much criticized in disability studies for its objectifying techniques. Furthermore, the work of Hirschfeld and Würtz was thoroughly intertwined with larger social, sexual, and racial discourses in the interwar

years. Indeed, these discourses formed a complex framework was increasingly being used to classify and appraise the value of all human bodies, as seen in Michael Hau's *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany, 1890-1930* (2003).

While this “othering” by scientists of some forms of embodiment was at times concerned with treatment and rehabilitation, such perspectives often revealed a darker side. Other contributors to the discourses on the body during this time included social Darwinists whose most extreme views were expressed in eugenics movements that justified themselves using the work of authors such as Alfred Hoche and Karl Binding. Their book, *Die Freigabe der Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens: Ihr Maß und ihre Form* (1920) was concerned with establishing the validity of the human based on intellectual ability and mental health, arguing that the lives of persons who deviated too far from a specific definition of a normal state of embodiment are unworthy of life. This kind of argument harmonized well with the broader goals of the eugenics movement in North America and Europe, which was to ensure the re-population of society after World War I with healthy, able-bodied, and genetically desirable persons (Hau 126).

Indeed, the appearance of large numbers of men with physical, mental, and emotional impairments acquired during the war contributed significantly to the discourses on disability in early twentieth-century Germany. Disability, understood in the broadest sense, had become both a more visible aspect of social life and an object of knowledge under scrutiny by scientists and medical doctors, whose investigations conceived the disabled body in multiple, overlapping, and often contradictory ways. Sometimes disability was seen as a naturally occurring deviance from physical,

mental, and emotional norms, and at others it was understood in terms of a personal tragedy resulting from an injury during the war. While war veterans' disabilities either elevated them to hero-status or resulted in them being "reduced" to begging on the street, congenital disabilities were increasingly seen not only as an individual problem, but also as a collective burden. Thus, while eugenic discourse tended to interpret disability as a symptom of societal degeneration, within the political realm it often became a symbol of a "crippled" national identity that had to be remedied.⁶

Further examples of how these discourses became manifest can be found in the work of the orthopedic specialist Konrad Biesalski, who worked together with Hans Würtz and who published works such as *Kriegskrüppelfürsorge. Ein Aufklärungswort zum Troste und zur Mahnung* (1915) and "Beitrag zum Bau des Sauerbruch-Kunstarmes. Aus dem Oskar-Helene-Heim in Berlin-Zehlendorf" (1918). His efforts in the development of prosthetics and rehabilitative techniques during and after the war were revolutionary in that they made it possible for disabled veterans to experience increased mobility and become employable. However, they were also thoroughly connected to the notion that persons with disabilities must be reintegrated into the ranks of economically productive citizens in order to avoid becoming a burden on society.

From here it is not difficult to detect a loose discursive connection to Hoche and Binding's concept of "life unworthy of life," as both derive from the conviction that individual bodies must meet certain standards - including economic productivity and self-sufficiency - in order to be considered valuable to the social body. However,

⁶ Weindling (1989) and Hau (2003) provide in-depth analyses of how discourses on health and ability intersected with other dominant discourses in this period.

it must be noted that Biesalski's approach differed from the radical stance taken by Hoche and Binding in that he looked to rehabilitation, not elimination, as the best solution to the "problem" of disability. Furthermore, Biesalski was primarily concerned with rehabilitating physical disabilities, while Hoche and Binding were concerned with arguing for the legality of eliminating persons with intellectual and mental disabilities. Biesalski's work is thus most similar to that of Würtz, since they both made the argument that the proper education and rehabilitation of "cripples" would be sufficient to transform them into acceptable members of society.

Embracing metaphor and utilizing cultural meanings in socialist drama

The above discussion demonstrates that scientific-medical discourses on bodily difference in early twentieth-century Germany were deeply connected to concerns about what constitutes "normal" embodiment and how "abnormal" forms of embodiment should be dealt with in order to ensure a "healthy" society. Noteworthy is the fact that disabled bodies were also prevalent in the literature and art of this time period, which indicates that "the discourse on disability" was not limited to the scientific sphere, but that images and meanings of physical, mental, and emotional deviance were also being developed in the world of literature and the visual and performing arts (Poore 37). The public imagination of early twentieth-century Germany was thus not only reflected in and created by scientific-medical discourses on the disabled body, but the arts also participated in the negotiation of its meaning.

The images and meanings of intellectual, mental, and physical disability that were being developed in the world of literature were often employed as a metaphor in the service of political aims or social critique in the interwar period in Germany.

Some scholars in disability studies have asserted that such metaphors serve only to perpetuate negative stereotypes and weaken attempts to secure the rights of persons with disabilities and their acceptance as full persons in society (cf. Poore; Dederich). However, I will argue that this is not the case with regard to the work of Ernst Toller and Karl August Wittfogel. I will demonstrate that the portrayals of disability in these Expressionist dramas force a confrontation with the line between “able” and “disabled” bodies and resist disabling discourses by drawing attention to the rift between embodied experience and the production of knowledge about disability from outside the body.

This is a particular strength of the dramatic genre: because it lacks a mediating narrator (as in prose texts, for example), readers are directly confronted with scenes in which broader discourses are materialized and negotiated in interactions between characters. The subversive potential of such texts lies in the fact that the linguistic capacities of the dramatic characters powerfully convey the challenges of navigating discourses on the body and disability through the subjective lens of the characters themselves. As diegetic bodies, their words and actions serve to make visible the discursive currents within which they emerge as meaningful subjects. In this sense, my use of the term “diegetic” differs from its traditional use in narratology. As discussed above, Borgards reappropriated the term “diegetic” in order to describe the textual life of literary bodies in contrast to their semiotic dimensions. In a similar fashion, I reappropriate Borgards’ use of this term in order to analyze the actions and direct speech of dramatic characters and thus “take them seriously” as bodies that not only carry meaning, but also lead textual lives. I will

discuss Borgards' terminology at greater length in a following subsection on the conceptual tools used in the analysis.

In the first analysis chapter, I examine the ways in which discourses on disability are taken up and negotiated in Toller's play *Die Wandlung: Das Ringen eines Menschen* (1918). In the second analysis chapter, I consider the techniques by which the disabled protagonist of Karl August Wittfogel's "Der Krüppel" (1920) resists disabling discourses in his society. In the third analysis chapter, I discuss the portrayal of the disabled protagonist in *Der deutsche Hinkemann* (1923) against the backdrop of the political themes of the play. I interpret the many meanings and functions of disability in the primary texts - as metaphor or allegory, as personal lack or loss, as semiotic bodies that function within a social critique, as diegetic bodies that portray embodied experience, etc. - with the understanding that these are historical and cultural constructs that are constituted in language and in dialogue with other contemporaneous discourses on the body. In other words, representations that appear politically incorrect or uninteresting today may indeed be quite progressive and revolutionary within their native discursive-historical context.

This approach will help me to demonstrate the ways power relations - and the bodily classifications and hierarchies produced within them - are supported by certain kinds of knowledge and ways of "reading" the body. The analysis will trace how the semiotic and diegetic bodies found in the primary works negotiate the discourse on disability and demonstrate that these kinds of literary bodies play an essential and potentially subversive role in the production of knowledge about disability. Thus, my analysis will present a second reading of the primary texts that in some ways diverges

from the dominant, semiotic reading within German literary studies and disability studies. Before moving on to the analysis in Part Two, I will first establish the theories that inform my approach, define some important terms, and outline my methodology in the remainder of Part One.

Theories, Terms, and Tools:

Interpreting Textual Representations of Disability

While the introduction touched upon a variety of issues regarding the phenomenon of disability and literary representations of disability in post-WWI Germany, this section deals with some of these topics in greater depth in order to elucidate the theoretical approach, analytical tools, and methodology of this dissertation. I begin the chapter with a brief overview of some of the most significant theoretical underpinnings and paradigms in the field of disability studies. I then investigate the ways in which scholars in literary and cultural studies have begun to notice and take seriously the way disability is portrayed and utilized in cultural artifacts such as literature. Following that, I outline the scope of the current project and position it with regard to the various paradigms within disability studies and literary studies. After describing the analytic tools and definitions of key terminology I employ in the analysis, I conclude the chapter by solidifying my conceptual framework and stating my methodology.

Major paradigms within disability studies

Within disability studies, the *medical model* is a term that refers to a variety of modern discourses on the disabled body that are grounded in the belief that disability is an individual and primarily biological problem that must be rehabilitated, overcome, or eliminated. The medical model can also refer to a range of practices directed at the management of disabled bodies, for example, the institutionalization of persons with disabilities and rehabilitation science research and practice. As discussed in the introduction, the work of scientific-medical professionals like

Konrad Biesalski and Hans Würtz falls under this model because it produces knowledge about the disabled body from the perspective of the non-disabled medical gaze. This gaze not only pathologizes and individualizes disability but also often aims to (re-) align the disabled body with physical and intellectual norms. I discussed the work of Biesalski and Würtz because these two men were influential in the field of rehabilitation in post-WWI Germany; however, the medical gaze is neither unique to them nor the time and place in which they worked. For instance, David Serlin's monograph *Replaceable You: Engineering the Body in Postwar America* (2004) demonstrates how efforts to rehabilitate disabled veterans' bodies have functioned in tandem with - and served as an allegory for - national rehabilitation efforts in the United States in the twentieth century.

On the one hand, the medical model of disability is arguably useful to the extent that it allows for the diagnosis and treatment of physical, and sensory impairments as well as intellectual and mental disabilities. However, scholars in disability studies have consistently pointed out its dangerous potential, both referencing past abuses and warning about the future trajectory of current trends. A recent example is Bill Hughes' 2007 article "Being Disabled," in which he emphasizes that current-day medical ethics debates "cannot be disentangled from sentiments that question disabled people's rights to life" (673). The medical model, as well as the various techniques and aims associated with it, could be said to constitute the discursive nemesis of disability studies scholarship, since it is generally against the medical model that research in disability studies is conducted.

The *social model*, in contrast to the medical model, is a paradigm that distinguishes between impairments of the body, which are biological, and the disabilities that are created by society's reception of those impairments, which are social. Instead of defining disability in primarily medical or scientific terms, the social model locates disability in prejudices and systems of oppression that turn impairments into disabilities. Within the social model, the goal is to "rehabilitate" societal discourses and adjust the built environment instead of the bodies of persons with disabilities. Researchers such as Michael Oliver, Mark Priestly, and Colin Barnes have established themselves as leaders in this branch of disability studies, which has had a direct impact on social policies with regard to disability in the latter half of the twentieth-century (Barnes, "Understanding the Social Model of Disability" 20). While the social model has experienced numerous critiques, Barnes argues that it is indeed still a viable "tool with which to provide insights into the disabling tendencies of modern society in order to generate policies and practices to facilitate their eradication" (18).

Work done in *cultural disability studies* often builds on the theoretical underpinnings of the social model, but it is primarily concerned with examining a different kind of data, namely representations of disability in cultural artifacts. Researchers such as Lennard Davis, Rosmarie Garland-Thomson, David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, and David Bolt have been influential in establishing this branch in disability studies. While Carol Poore contributes excellent research on the breadth of cultural representations of disability in twentieth-century Germany, the edited collections *Gesichter der Weimarer Republik: Eine physiognomische*

Kulturgeschichte by Schmölders and Gilman (2000) and *Edinburgh German Yearbook 4: Disability in German Literature, Film, and Theater* by Joshua and Schillmeier (2010) focus on the discourses on disability within various historical contexts and genres. These provide numerous insights into the role of literature - as well as the visual and performing arts - in negotiating the meaning of the human body in twentieth-century Germany.

The latter collection of essays mentioned above takes a decisive step towards the view that “the cultural *is* essentially political” (Joshua and Schillmeier 5) and pushes inquiry in this branch in new directions by demonstrating how the work of authors, artists, and critics “creates discourses that transgress boundaries, is open and unfixated, is indifferent to hierarchies, and is inclusionary and political” (7). This perspective constitutes a promising new direction with regard to studies of literary and artistic representations of disability, since such cultural artifacts have the potential to engage discourses on the body in ways that push the horizons of our thinking beyond the constraints of the generally accepted models outlined above.

Thus, projects in cultural disability studies can be understood to work together with social model projects that seek to identify disabling discourses and work toward creating a more just, inclusive, and accessible society that values all kinds of bodies. While the social model examines real-world manifestations of discrimination and disempowerment, cultural disability studies investigate the ways in which certain mindsets and mechanisms are created, perpetuated, critiqued, parodied, or directly challenged in the realm of cultural representation. Because this branch of disability studies investigates the ways in which knowledge is produced,

Dederich points out that cultural disability studies are highly relevant for analyses of contemporary society (32).

The *postmodern model* of disability attempts to resolve some of the problems created by the social model's impairment/disability dichotomy (and the resulting neglect of the body) in its pursuit of social change. Part of this endeavour has involved engaging ideas from phenomenological and poststructuralist thought in disability theory (Iwakuma; Hughes). Shelley Tremain has pointed out that the approach taken by social modelists fails to interrogate "how the sort of biomedical practices in whose analysis Foucault specialized have been complicit in the historical emergence of the category of impairment and contribute to its persistence" ("On the Subject of Impairment" 33-34). Thus, research in this branch often integrates the language and approaches of postmodern theories in order to "trace the conditions of possibility for several ontologies and the historically contingent practices that have given form to them" (Tremain "On the Subject of Impairment" 33). A further term, *critical disability studies*, has been used to describe research "that challenge[s] not simply existing *doxa* about the nature of disability, but questions about embodiment, identity and agency as they affect all living beings" (Schildrick, "Critical Disability Studies" 30).

While the so-called "cultural turn" in disability studies has opened up new opportunities for scholars in the humanities to investigate the meaning(s) of disability in cultural artifacts of the past and present, it also stands to benefit from analyses that investigate broader themes. While Garland-Thomson's *Extraordinary Bodies* (1997), Mitchell & Snyder's *Narrative Prosthesis* (2000) and "Representations and Its

Discontents” (2001), and Bolt’s “Social Encounters, Cultural Representation and Critical Avoidance” (2012) are concerned with the ways in which disability tropes are reproduced in textual representations and “may have a profoundly disturbing and disabling influence on those of us who have impairments” (Bolt 293), it is essential that scholars working in the cultural branch of disability studies keep in mind the complex relationship between lived experience and representation. Although literary representations of disability are often understood on the semiotic level as narrative prostheses or negative metaphor or allegory, these representations often have diegetic dimensions that reflect and negotiate ideas, events, and experiences that were significant for individuals living in the time and place in which they were created.

As I examine the representations of disability in the primary literary texts, it will not only be important to identify the narratives and tropes of disability therein, but also to analyze the ways in which disability is represented as well as how it intersects with other themes taken up in the texts. Finally, I will also keep in mind what the twentieth-century philosopher of language Ludwig Wittgenstein pointed out, namely that it is not only *what* is said and *how* it is said, but also the *role an utterance plays in a particular context* that reveals its meaning (*Philosophische Untersuchungen* 248). Thus, I will also consider aspects such as narrative and genre as well as the discursive-historical context of literary representations of disability in order to fully appreciate their significance. Analyses that take such factors seriously can be more successful in demonstrating how literary texts produce knowledge about the disabled body on the level of the text, sentence, and lexicon within various discursive contexts. Furthermore, they can demonstrate that “the discourse” on the

disabled body is in fact always multiple, overlapping, and often contradictory, a perspective that is underrepresented in the cultural progress narrative that frequently surfaces in discussions on representations of disability.

Such an analysis may also reveal literature as a site of possible resistance to dominant paradigms for understanding disability and the body in general, such as the biological determinism inherent in the medical model and the social model's failure to account for the body. Since literary representations of the body and disability are always constructed in language - indeed, it is impossible to speak of the body without language - such representations illustrate that the *meaning* of disability, unlike the *experience* of disability, is not located in some bodies and not in others, but rather that it is located within discourse, which is constantly and collectively shaped by many voices that can be said to sometimes damage and sometimes promote the "movement for the emancipation of disabled people" (Hughes, "Being Disabled" 79).

Scope and positioning of the analysis

The aim of the current project is to interrogate discourses on the disabled body as they are taken up in German literary texts from the early twentieth century in order to demonstrate the role of literature in the cultural processing and (re-) production of disability against the backdrop of dominant scientific-medical discourses. The analysis will locate the positions taken up in literary representations of disability in three dramas written in post-WWI Germany within their historical context, making use of concurrently published scientific-medical and legal texts and acknowledging the significance of literary genre in the analysis.

I situate this project firmly within a poststructuralist approach to literary studies and a postmodern / critical approach to disability studies. One major goal will be to demonstrate that the use of representation to subvert bodily norms and to resist the medical model of disability did not begin only after the emergence of the disability rights movement and the birth of disability studies in the twentieth century. It will show that subversive discourses were indeed already present in early twentieth-century Germany, and thus in the proverbial “dark ages” of the progress narrative that has characterized much of North American disability studies research.

My analysis of literary texts from the period just following WWI in Germany will show that resistance to discourses that were hostile to persons with disabilities is not only present in the primary texts, but also that the value of lived experience was being negotiated through the bodies of disabled and non-disabled characters alike. The project will be undertaken with the hope of gaining insights into strategies of resistance within a discursive climate of “compulsory able-bodiedness” (McRuer 9) and aesthetic regimes that define “harmony, bodily integrity, and health as standards of beauty” (Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics* 19). With the help of appropriate conceptual tools, the representations of disability in the primary texts can be read differently and more productively than ever before. A new interpretation of these literary characters with disabilities can be used to further the goals of disability studies by de-naturalizing notions of able-bodiedness and disability, by complicating the boundaries between those and other binary subject positions, and by drawing connections between discourses on disability and economic, political, and social discourses.

In examining literary discourses on disability in Germany between the world wars, I am primarily interested in the ways in which the notion of disability was negotiated in literature against the backdrop of broader discourses on the body. The analysis aims to show not only that the discourse on disability in this time and place was multiple, but also to locate and describe the (literary) strategies in the primary texts that resist paradigms that glorify able-bodied, aesthetically pleasing, economically productive, and “normal” bodies. The analysis of the primary literature will show that the representations of disability they contain indeed challenge the medical model of understanding the body, critically engage the social stigma and exclusion that often accompany the presence of disability, and at times even offer alternative ways of reading and valuing the body. These are indeed among the central goals of the various branches of disability studies scholarship discussed above, and though this project I will demonstrate that the study of literature - seen as discursive formations - can provide unique insights with regard to these issues.

A further goal of the project will be to engage the issue of how the identity of the author has traditionally been invoked in both literary studies and disability studies in order to establish a text’s *authority* in the production of knowledge. Through a close textual analysis of the primary texts, I will break with such conventions by demonstrating that literary representations of disability are informed at least as much by discourse as by the biographies of their authors and that understanding the cultural lens through which one reads bodies in texts is just as important to the significance of a word, sentence, or entire text as knowing something about the body of the author.

The analysis will reveal that re-inscriptions of bodily difference as well as a blurring of the able/disabled boundary are present in all of the texts, regardless of the identity narrative that has credited or discredited those authors in both literary and disability studies. Furthermore, by looking at the role of bodily metaphors (semiotic bodies) and literary characters (diegetic bodies) in connection with instances of re-inscription or subversion, the project will locate the contributions these texts make to broader discourses on disability in interwar Germany and consider their relevance for current discourses on the body.

Important terminology and conceptual tools

In order to achieve the project's objectives, I will draw upon a varied body of theoretical work to undertake the analysis. Rooted in postmodern and poststructuralist thought within literary studies and disability studies, the analysis will also be enriched by the tools scholars have developed in fields ranging from sociolinguistics, to queer theory and crip theory, to cultural and literary animal studies. The following paragraphs outline the most important terminology and conceptual tools that assist my analysis.

I will approach the primary texts from both semiotic and discursive perspectives on representation in order to account for the complexity of meaning with regard to the textual bodies they contain. Stuart Hall (1997) succinctly describes the difference between these two kinds of analyses:

. . . the *semiotic* approach is concerned with the *how* of representation, with how language produces meaning - what has been called its "poetics;" whereas the *discursive* approach is more concerned with the

effects and consequences of representation - its “politics.” It examines not only how language and representation produce meaning, but how the knowledge which a particular discourse produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented, thought about, practised and studied. (“The Work of Representation” 6)

A consideration of how cultural meanings, as well as identities and subjectivities, are emergent and thoroughly constituted in language will certainly be of central importance in the current project. It will borrow from semiotic approaches to analyzing representation - such as that taken by Roland Barthes in “Myth Today” (1957) - to assist in unraveling the two-stage process of signification that Stuart Hall also summarizes:

in the first [stage], the signifiers (the elements of the image) and the signifieds (the concepts . . .) unite to form a sign with a simple denoted message . . . At the second stage, this completed message or sign is linked to a second set of signifieds - a broad, ideological theme . . . The first, completed meaning functions as the signifier in the second stage of the representation process, and when linked with a wider theme by a reader, yields a second, more elaborate and ideologically framed message or meaning . . . Barthes calls this second level of signification the level of *myth*. (39)

While Barthes was primarily concerned with visual representations, Hall argues that

the process of literary representation could be said to function along similar lines. The first stage involves the interplay between linguistic elements (e.g. nouns, verbs, and adjectives) and concepts of the body (e.g. able-bodied, disabled, integral, impaired). The second stage involves the interplay between the signifiers that emerge in the first stage with broader themes that involve the body, which can range from cultural notions of physical beauty and sex appeal to discourses on the political utility and economic productivity of bodies.

The project will, however, also draw heavily on discursive approaches to analyzing representation that go beyond an analysis of *what* is said and *how* it is said to take into consideration the discursive work utterances do in particular contexts. The current project will thus analyze particular discursive formations on disability in literary works as well as discursive formations *about* those literary works. Furthermore, it will identify and attempt to shift the current positioning of these texts within the matrices of power, knowledge, and truth that simultaneously envelop and emanate from German literary studies and disability studies.

With regard to dismantling the medical model, the work of Michel Foucault - in particular *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France* (1975), *The Birth of the Clinic* (1975), *Discipline and Punish* (1977), *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I* (1978) - has provided disability studies scholars with useful theoretical tools. Foucault's vocabulary and approach have been used in a variety of contexts to unravel the techniques through which institutions and discursive forces seek to create docile, productive bodies out of bodies that resist integration and regulation. For instance, Mitchell and Snyder have used Foucault's work to identify and critique "the ongoing

undercurrents that once fed the formal movement” (*Cultural Locations of Disability* 136) of eugenics as well as “carceral regimes” that still persist today (134).

Shelley Tremain’s *Foucault and the Government of Disability* (2005), Bill Hughes’ “What Can a Foucauldian Analysis Contribute to Disability Theory?” (2005), and Anne Waldschmidt (2008) have explored how various aspects of Foucault’s work can be used to “expand and enrich understanding of the phenomena surrounding the state of affairs called ‘disability’” (Tremain 1) as well as the theoretical and practical limitations of poststructural thought for activism. In the realm of humanities research - and thus, in the context of this project -, Foucault’s work will be useful for interpreting literary representations of disability because it serves as a tool for identifying and unraveling the inner workings of the ideology of ability in and through cultural artifacts.⁷

Furthermore, Foucault’s notion of the *archive* will be useful for the analysis because it allows for and values the consideration of obscure or typically disregarded texts (Mills 112). For instance, some scholars in literary studies or disability studies may wonder at my selection of primary works and ask what their value is in furthering our understanding of their historical context, the development of a genre or a new kind of aesthetics. While these questions will be investigated in the course of the analysis and summarized in the conclusion, at this point suffice it to say that the value of my tiny archive of three Expressionist dramas is that they assist in the identification of various “possible forms of expression which circulate within a given period” (Mills 112) with regard to disability.

Finally, Foucault’s critical stance toward the role the identity of the author

⁷ For examples of and justifications for this approach, see McRuer (*Crip Theory*, 2006, 20; 92).

plays in the production of knowledge about literary texts will be helpful for identifying why the work of some literary authors has been privileged in literary and/or disability studies discourse. In his 1969 essay “What is an Author?” Foucault describes one characteristic of the *author-function* as

. . . the result of a complex operation that constructs a certain being of reason that we call “author”. Critics doubtless try to give this being of reason a realistic status, by discerning, in the individual, a “deep” motive, a “creative” power, or a “design,” the milieu in which the writing originates. Nevertheless, these aspects of an individual which we designate as making him an author are only a projection . . . of the operations we force texts to undergo, the connections we make, the traits we establish as pertinent, the continuities we recognize, or the exclusions we practice. All these operations vary according to periods and types of discourse. (7)

As discussed in the introduction, both Foucault’s and Barthes’ theories prioritize the power of discourse rather than autonomous agents in the production of meaning. This critique makes it possible to examine a text separately from the biography and intentions of its author and to value the creation of meaning in which each reader/viewer of a text participates. However, this does not necessarily mean that one should always dismiss the fact that texts are indeed created by persons with particular experiences, knowledges, subjectivities, and communicative or artistic intentions. A critical stance toward the author merely assists in directing the focus of the analysis toward ideas about and meanings of disability and the body contained in literary

representations and in broadening the scope of possible interpretations regardless of the author's identity.

Jacques Derrida's technique of "complicating the boundaries" - a concept already defined and discussed in the introduction - will also be a useful tool for the current project, since the lines between various subject positions in the primary works appear at times rather fixed and at others somewhat unstable or even quite fluid. The project will make use of Derrida's strategy of forging partial and/or temporary alliances as a way of getting around having to decide between political strategies that emphasize sameness and those that emphasize difference. I will show that literature in general provides a unique context that can serve as a testing ground for such strategies, and the analysis will show how the primary works under consideration fulfill this function in particular.

Also discussed in the introduction was Judith Butler's claim that the biological is always already cultural; that is, that it is impossible to separate the two categories in order to gain knowledge about bodies that is completely free of ideology. This will also be an important tool for understanding the inadequacies of the nature vs. nurture dichotomy in general and the shortcomings of the medical and social models in particular - and sometimes also of cultural disability studies - when it comes to interpreting literary bodies. Butler's conclusion that discourse gives rise to such distinctions such as sex vs. gender (i.e. that "sex" is not thinkable without "gender") is useful for locating disabling processes in discourse instead of in certain kinds of bodies. While the medical model locates blame for the "problem" of disability in the bodies of persons with disabilities and the social model insists it

resides within “ableist” attitudes, Butler investigates how subjectivities (and the hierarchies among them) emerge through discourse and the performance of certain kinds of identity. In this way, Butler’s work allows the current project to account for subjectivity and embodied experience as it is expressed through language while acknowledging the fact that it is impossible to talk or write about bodies - one’s own or others’ - in an objective way.

With regard to the discursive work texts do within a particular socio-historical context, Mikhail Bakhtin’s work provides useful insights and tools for this project. In *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1981), Bakhtin argues that all linguistic expression is dialogic; that is, all texts (in the broadest sense) are in constant dialogue with other texts from the past and present as well as with the cultural imagination of an intended audience. He writes that:

at any given moment, languages of various epochs and periods of socio-ideological life cohabit with one another . . . Thus at any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth. (291)

In *Speech Genres* (1986), he elaborates further on the nature of dialogism:

There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and boundless future). Even *past* meanings, that is those born in the dialogue of past

centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all) - they will always change . . . in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue. At any moment in the development of the dialogue there are immense, boundless masses of forgotten contextual meanings, but at certain moments of the dialogue's subsequent development . . . they are recalled and invigorated in renewed form. (170)

The concept of dialogism, that is, the acknowledgement of the constant change and renewal of past discourses and the anticipation of future discursive developments, will inform the way I read the primary texts as particular formations within a broader discursive context. In particular, this will be helpful for positioning the literary representations of disability with regard to scientific-medical discourses, literary conventions, and the denotative and connotative meanings of certain kinds of disability at the time in which the literary texts were written. Seeing these texts as “in dialogue” with other texts will shed light on the contribution they make to the discourse on disability and the body in post-WWI Germany. Just as Anton Kaes describes the texts he selected for inclusion in *Weimarer Republik: Manifeste und Dokumente zur deutschen Literatur 1918-1933* (1983) as “Knotenpunkte” (VI) at which societal controversies and debates became materialized, so I also view the primary texts as discursive formations that express particular standpoints on pressing contemporary issues or serve to ignite further discussion on them.

Bakhtin's dialogism shares considerable overlap with Roland Borgards' acknowledgement of the surplus of meaning that is encompassed by literary

representations of living beings. While the *Texttiere* and *Tiertexte* he theorizes have unique characteristics, Borgards is quick to point out that, just as literary representations of animals are in some sense “alive” and “inhabit” the literary world, real animals that inhabit the real world carry with them various cultural meanings that have emerged over time (“Tiere in der Literatur” 105). With regard to literary representations of animals, Borgards distinguishes between two types, identifying what he calls *semiotic* animals and *diegetic* animals. In short, he asserts that „semiotische Tiere sind solche Tiere, die in Texten *ausschließlich als Zeichen*, als Träger von Bedeutung erscheinen . . . Diegetische Tiere hingegen sind solche Tiere, die *auch als Lebewesen*, als fassbare Elemente der erzählten Welt auftauchen . . . Semiotische Tiere bedeuten, diegetische Tiere leben” (89).

The difference between these two types is that semiotic representations use animals to tell a story about *something else*, while diegetic representations are used to tell a story *about animals*. Although they differ with regard to their function in a text, Borgards points out that they share some similarities when it comes to their relationship to real animals. For even the semiotic animals he discusses cannot exist entirely apart from their real, living, breathing counterparts: “Eine Tiermetapher wirkt nicht ohne die Beihilfe des jeweils metaphorisierten Tiers . . . das genannte Tier [ist] tätig mit im Spiel” (93). On the other hand, Borgards is well aware that in the end, diegetic animals are no more “real” than their semiotic counterparts:

auch die diegetischen Tiere [führen] lediglich ein Textleben; auch sie sind nichts weiter als Zeichen; auch sie sind nur Träger von Bedeutungen; auch sie kann man nur interpretieren, und nicht

streicheln oder schlagen. In Texten befinden sich niemals tierliche Lebewesen, sondern immer nur menschliche Bilder, kulturelle Projektionen, sprachliche Konstruktionen von diesen Lebewesen. (93)

When it comes to techniques for interpreting representations of animal bodies in literature, Borgards emphasizes the importance of contextualizing them by looking at other kinds of texts that deal with animals published around the same time (99), of investigating the history of meaning indexed by literary representations of animals (95), and of paying special attention to the rhetorical strategies, logical arguments, and conventions of representation they employ (100).

These strategies will also become essential for positioning the representations of disabled bodies in the primary works within their historical, discursive, and stylistic contexts. Borgards' article demonstrates that a study of animal bodies in literature can shed light on the discourses that underlie human society: "Sage mir, an welche Orte du welche Tiere stellst, und ich sage dir, wie die Kultur funktioniert, in der du lebst" (96). A similar case could be made with regard to the textual representation of (disabled) human bodies. In other words: Show me how the body is represented in various kinds of texts, and I will tell you how the culture works in which you live. The analysis will highlight some specific discourses that exemplify this while at the same time recognizing that they constitute only some aspects of the discursive fabric of post-WWI German society.

Borgards' work on animal texts and textual animals bears a striking resemblance to the literary *Textkörper* and *Körpertexte* Markus Dederich (107) discusses in the section of his book that deals with literary constructions of disability.

Thus, those terms - which I will use in conjunction with Borgards' distinction between *semiotic* and *diegetic* bodies - will be useful for identifying and describing the forms and functions of representations of disabled bodies in the primary literature. It is important to note, however, that in the context of disability studies, it is not enough for others to tell about persons with disabilities: they must tell about themselves (cf. Poore 289). It is thus important for persons with disabilities to speak for themselves, to research their experiences in the context of disability studies, and to represent themselves in art and literature. As a non-disabled individual working in cultural and literary studies, I am interested in representations of disability in literary works that were written before the advent of the disability rights movement. My goal is to gain deeper insights into how subversive strategies were developed and employed in a time and place in which this formal movement was not yet present.

As mentioned above, my use of the term "diegetic bodies" to describe the characters in the primary texts allows me to "take the body seriously" in these texts while acknowledging that they are literary bodies that, just like bodies in the physical world, are also "semiotic bodies" that carry with them a surplus of cultural meaning. The textual lives these diegetic bodies lead (as literary constructs) serve to make visible some of the very same discourses that shape the lived experiences of physical bodies. Because the subjectivities of dramatic characters emerge within the same discursive nexus that make the emergence of subjectivity possible in the world beyond the play, the diegetic bodies that inhabit the primary texts can provide insights into experiences and perceptions of disability in the physical world.

With regard to the study of identity and identity narratives, the work of the sociolinguists Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall provides useful insights for the current project. In their chapter “Locating Identity in Language” (2010), Bucholtz and Hall define identity as “the social positioning of self and other” (18), and they propose five principles for the analysis of identity, namely the principles of emergence, positionality, indexicality, relationality, and partialness. Taken together, these principles lend support to a view of identity that “challenge[s] narrowly psychological and static views of identity” and acknowledges “the limits and constraints on individual intentionality in the process of identity construction” (19). While Bucholtz and Hall’s framework for the study of identity is intended for use by practitioners in the field of linguistics who analyze recordings of linguistic interactions, their principles can be useful for the analysis of any text in which subjectivities appear, since any textual construction of identity - whether it is found in a transcript of a conversation between two people or in a dialogue between two dramatic characters in a play - is by definition constituted in language.

Central to Bucholtz and Hall’s theory is the notion that identity emerges in discourse, where the meaning of discourse is established as *linguistic interaction*. While this kind of discourse is distinct from the Foucauldian notion of discourse, these concepts are not unrelated in my study on the emergence of the subjectivity of diegetic literary bodies. Indeed, it is only within the kind of discursive nexus Foucault describes that discourse in the sociolinguistic sense becomes possible. Conversely, it is through discourse as linguistic interaction that this broader discursive nexus comes into being over time. In this way, the emergence of

characters' subjectivities can be observed on the diegetic level, where their linguistic interactions are constitutive of the broader discursive nexus, which both emerges from and gives rise to such interactions.

The notion of positioning⁸ will also be a useful tool in the analysis of the subjectivities that emerge through literary narratives, as it appreciates storytelling as constitutive of identity. There are several valuable insights that the theoretical work on positioning theory can offer to the study of identity narratives. For example, while writers of autobiographies speak in the first person (thus engaging in self-positioning), biographers speak in the third, thus positioning the identity of someone else.

Dramatic works add a third positional dimension: playwrights create fictional worlds in which characters position themselves and others in dialogues or in which the reader learns about characters' thoughts, feelings, and motivations via monologues. In this way, character dialogues and monologues constitute yet another level at which subjectivities emerge through interaction and various kinds of positioning. Since textual bodies interact with one another in literary worlds in ways that are reminiscent of the way bodies interact in the physical world, it is feasible to analyze the properties of their identity narratives using tools developed by scholars in linguistics. I will analyze the various kinds of positioning at play in the primary literature while acknowledging the text as the site at which textual bodies come into being and language as the medium in which their "identities" are constituted.

With regard to the political strategy of the project, my analysis will be guided by McRuer's notion of "compulsory able-bodiedness" (2), a notion that accounts for the fact that, while able-bodiedness is something that is considered desirable, normal,

⁸ See Davies and Harré (1990) for a thorough discussion on the nature of positioning.

and something one must strive for, it nevertheless constitutes an unattainable ideal. Furthermore, I will also consider McRuer's notion of "coming out crip" as a strategy that can be of use in a variety of contexts to subvert the former normative discourse. Coming out crip involves dissenting from the compulsory categorization of bodies as either able-bodied or disabled and working to dismantle the hierarchies and privileges that are intertwined with that binary (McRuer 35-37). It also involves opening up new possibilities in the realm of subjectivity (McRuer 52) as well as "at times embracing and at times disidentifying with the most familiar kinds of identity politics" (McRuer 57). Similar to the way Joshua and Schillmeier demonstrate the connections between the cultural and the political, crip theory allows us to attend more closely to the ways in which "bodies and spaces are being materialized in the cultures of upward redistribution we currently inhabit" (McRuer 76) and to explore the ways in which minorities can "talk back" to normative discourses. This project will therefore take up the critical stance of crip theory by drawing out the ways in which the primary literature produces as well as resists the interconnectedness of discourses on the body with economic discourses.

Similarly, Siebers' critique of the "ideology of ability" (*Disability Theory* 10), as well as his investigation of the ways "disability aesthetics" can be used to dismantle this ideology, will be helpful for identifying strategies of resistance to disabling discourses in cultural artifacts. Disability aesthetics, Siebers argues, can accomplish this in art when "artists and works force us to reconsider fundamental aesthetic assumptions" (3). While Siebers' recent work argues for the power of the image as a vehicle for initiating this reconsideration (133), an examination of how

this can be achieved in the medium of dramatic texts will be equally fruitful in the context of the current project.

The terminology and conceptual tools discussed in this section are part of the overarching model I will use for the analysis, which can best be described as a poststructuralist approach to analyzing literature that is indebted to a critical approach to disability studies. I have combined aspects of the various theoretical approaches outlined there in order to create a model that is appropriate for the type of data with which I work and that is best suited to address some central themes and issues in cultural disability studies. The areas I investigate in the primary works include the emergence of subjectivity in literary texts, the dialogism of literary and scientific-medical texts, and the use of semiotic and diegetic bodies in connection with political, economic, and aesthetic critiques.

Methodology

In the analysis, I make use of the terminology and conceptual tools outlined in the paragraphs above while adhering to the following methodology: First, I identify representations of disability in the primary texts and describe them in terms of what is represented and how it is represented both linguistically and stylistically in the context of the dramatic genre. I then explore the ways in which these literary representations of disability negotiate and contribute to discourses on disability and the body by investigating the dialogic connections between these texts and scientific-medical texts from the same cultural-historical context.

I accomplish this through a comparative analysis that establishes the meaning(s) of particular references to disability against the backdrop of influential

scientific-medical and legal texts published in the same period, including those by Konrad Biesalski, Alfred Hoche and Karl Binding, and Hans Würtz. I then argue for the significance of the primary texts for key issues within literary and disability studies discourse today, paying particular attention to how textual bodies are positioned in the primary literature and how they locate the origins of disabling discourses and explore strategies of resistance to them. The analysis uncovers that these representations both posit unexpected identifications and alliances as well as linguistic appropriation and embodied experience as useful strategies as well as show their limitations. The analysis also highlights some ways in which these representations constitute instances of re-inscription that adopt or adapt disability tropes and the language of concurrent scientific-medical discourses. In this way, the analysis engages in a new reading of the primary texts that in some ways builds upon and in other ways departs from the dominant readings of these texts within German literary studies and disability studies.

In the analysis, I will show how the primary texts portray the difficulties the disabled characters experience when it comes to breaking out of binary categorizations and creating positive alternatives for themselves within their literary worlds. Within the second reading I propose, I will show that the lack of “solutions” to the “problem” of disability are indeed a strength of the primary texts. Instead of overcoming or trying to assuage or deny the physical and emotional pain inherent to the experiences of the disabled characters, these dramas dwell in the moment of suffering and the experience of being ignored, laughed at, and pathologized.

I will demonstrate that the primary texts position disabled characters both as melodramatic portrayals of a range of possible subjective experiences and as abstract negotiations of the essence of human experience. In this way, the use of disability as metaphors and narrative prostheses will be shown to align with the Expressionist preference for the exceptional and for extreme situations (Ritchie 17). Indeed, the semiotic dimensions of these disabled characters are typical of the tendency in this genre to exploit the grotesque and banal in order to say something about human experience in general and seek to identify transcendental values (Ritchie 19). Thus, the disabled characters in the Expressionist dramas I consider in this project “tend toward universal themes and cosmic dimensions, which may mean that the characters are diminished, in one sense, as beings of flesh and blood and expanded, in another, to become representative figures for some aspect of the human dilemma” (Ritchie 21).

As diegetic bodies, however, I will demonstrate that the disabled characters accomplish even more. By probing deeply into the discursive fabric of their literary worlds and grappling with painful issues, these characters both identify disabling discourse and bemoan their consequences for individual experience and subjectivity. In so doing, they also urge the reader to confront questions such as: What does nationalistic discourse have to do with disability? How do religious charities, the medical profession, the military, and the logic of capitalism position individual bodies? How do societal discourses give rise to certain kinds of experience, and why should I care about the suffering of others? While the three dramas I analyze raise and answer these questions in different ways, what they share in common is their deployment of representations of disability to initiate reflection and engagement.

Since the dramatic worlds portrayed in the primary texts closely resemble post-WWI Germany, these plays will be shown to both reflect and challenge dominant discourses on disability and the body in that time and place.

Part Two

Disability and the Body in Post-World War I Drama

In the three analysis chapters that form the core of this dissertation, I introduce and analyze three primary works of drama written and performed in Germany immediately following WWI: Ernst Toller's *Die Wandlung: Das Ringen eines Menschen* (1918) and *Der deutsche Hinkemann* (1923) and Karl August Wittfogel's "Der Krüppel" (1920). These works were selected not only because they contain what Carol Poore has described as "fascinating, contradictory cultural representation[s] of disability" (*Disability in German Culture* 42), but also because of the discursive work they do in the midst of the post-war situation in Germany by means of Expressionist techniques.

After providing a brief overview of the secondary literature on the primary works and their authors, I analyze the primary works in chronological order of their publication. I focus on how the portrayals of disability they contain are constituted in the structure, language, and major themes of these works, and I discuss how they are positioned within the historical-discursive context in which they were written. I identify some ways in which the primary texts take up common disability myths and familiar literary tropes to enter into dialogue with discourses on the body. I consider how these literary representations of disability fit into and stretch the boundaries of the German dramatic tradition and how they are usually interpreted within German literary studies and disability studies. Finally, I discuss some implications of these portrayals for contemporary discourses on disability and the body.

Ernst Toller

The political revolutionary and writer Ernst Toller is considered to be one of the most successful dramatists during the Weimar Republic (Schweikle, *Metzler Literatur-Lexikon* 589). The secondary literature on Toller's work shares similarities with that on Brecht in that scholars tend to interpret his dramas as politically engaged pieces that embody the political views and personal experiences of their author (Cafferty 1981; Lixl 1983; Kane 1987; Grunow-Erdmann 1994; Malkin 2008). The essays appearing in the first volume of the *Schriften der Ernst-Toller-Gesellschaft*, entitled *Ernst Toller und die Weimarer Republik. Ein Autor im Spannungsfeld von Literatur und Politik* (1999) also contribute to the scholarship on Ernst Toller's literary work as an expression of his ideology and as a means of political engagement.

Within the last decade, however, the research on Toller has broadened to include a consideration of his literary aesthetics (Ladenthin 2005), style (Neuhaus 2006), and his portrayals of the body with regard to gender (Rinke 2010).⁹ However, even these more recent analyses of Toller's work continue to emphasize the symbolic nature as well as the stylistic and narrative functions of the bodies that appear in his dramas. Thus, even recent scholarly discussions have not considered the ways in which these bodies portray embodied experiences and trace the emergence of subjectivity within the discursive nexus of their dramatic worlds.

Because of the strong political overtones of his work, scholars working in traditional *Germanistik* have generally overlooked the ways in which disabled bodies

⁹ While Rinke's study considers the ways in which Toller's dramas constitute exaggerated portrayals of the social exclusion of disabled veterans after the war, it continually returns to the symbolic nature of disabled characters (as metaphors or allegories) and ties them back into a discussion on their indebtedness to a cultural "Zeichenvorrat der Geschlechtersymbolik" (104).

are portrayed in his dramas apart from their function as metaphors or allegories. While disability studies scholars working in German Studies have acknowledged the significance of disabled bodies in Toller's work, they have generally aligned with this dominant reading that emphasizes their semiotic properties. Scholars such as Poore (*Disability in German Culture*) have discussed the representation of disabled bodies in Toller's work, but have neglected the diegetic significance of these representations. This has served to perpetuate the notion that Toller's dramas lent support to negative discourses on the disabled body in the interwar period. Thus, in the analysis it is my task to draw out the diegetic nuances in the portrayals of disability in two of Toller's most popular and controversial plays in order to argue for a second reading of those texts as discursive formations and literary negotiations of meanings of disability.

In particular, I am interested in their subversive aspects, that is, in the ways they present literary strategies of resistance to disabling discourses and point to alternative paradigms for understanding disability. In the analysis chapters, I challenge the reading of disabled characters as semiotic bodies that carry negative cultural meaning. I accomplish this by demonstrating that these representations resist the techniques of discourses that seek to subjugate and manage individual bodies for the benefit of the collective body. Furthermore, I show how they draw attention to the value of individual experience and struggle while at the same time making a political statement and addressing collective experiences.

Ernst Toller finished work on *Die Wandlung* while serving a prison sentence for his participation in the short-lived Bavarian Soviet Republic, and for this reason, scholars have drawn attention to the negotiation of his political views and personal

experiences in this piece. For instance, Andreas Lixl discusses Toller's biography at length in *Ernst Toller und die Weimarer Republik* (1986) and reads *Die Wandlung* primarily as a reflection of Toller's political and aesthetic program:

Toller [porträtiert] die Willensäußerung des Einzelnen nicht länger als Ausdruck einer wie auch immer gearteten Kausalität, sondern vielmehr als Erlebnis eines bewusst und aktiv eingreifenden Subjekts. In Tollers *Die Wandlung* begegnet der Zuschauer genau einer solchen *dramatis personae*, die mit sich ringt nach einem "neuen Weg" und das aktivistisch revolutionäre Bewusstsein quasi thesenhaft zum Ausdruck bringen soll. (44)

Lixl's analysis foregrounds the way in which Toller's work provides key insights into post-WWI German society by negotiating key political and social questions of his day in ways that exceed the contributions of other playwrights, including Bertolt Brecht and Georg Kaiser (70).

The premiere of *Die Wandlung* took place on September 30th, 1919 at the Tribüne Theatre in Berlin under the direction of Karl-Heinz Martin, and a published version of the drama appeared that same year (Frühwald and Spalek, *Der Fall Toller* 15). This *Stationendrama* was perhaps the most important Expressionist drama ever to be staged. As Martin Kane comments in *Weimar Germany and the Limits of Political Art* (1987), "reviews written at the time confirm Ludwig Marcuse's retrospective comment that not until Toller's *Die Wandlung* . . . was the Expressionist movement truly born" (92). Kane reads this play primarily as an expression of Toller's belief in the achievability of revolutionary goals, after which his work reflects a growing disillusionment both politically and personally (94).

While scholars like Lixl and Kane have emphasized the autobiographical and political dimensions of *Die Wandlung*, I am interested in exploring the ways in which this play portrays disability and the body. Although the disabled characters that appear do not re-surface in the plot, they are some of the most memorable and influential figures Friedrich encounters in the play. Furthermore, because Friedrich himself experiences physical and emotional trauma, the experience of disability is positioned as an integral part of his transformation. Not only does Friedrich develop compassion for others who suffer, but he also comes to realize that certain mechanisms within institutions such as the church and the state in fact lead to and worsen human suffering. Thus, in my analysis of *Die Wandlung*, I will argue that the appearance of disability not only plays a central role in the protagonist's transformation, but that the disabled bodies in the piece participate in a critique of a variety of disabling discourses. The results of the analysis will demonstrate how this dramatic text presents a critical negotiation of discourses on the body that circulated in the time and place it was written.

The second play by Toller I examine in the analysis is *Der deutsche Hinkemann*, which premiered on September 19th, 1923 in the Altes Theater in Leipzig, and which was published within the same year (Frühwald and Spalek 17). On January 17th, 1924, a scandal occurred when right-wing audience members caused a major disruption at a production of *Hinkemann* in the Dresdner Staatstheater and attempted to halt the performance. In order to protect the performers and audience members, the February 10th performance of the piece in Vienna was placed under police guard (17). In the spring of 1926, Vera Mendel's English translation of

this play appeared in London with the title *Brokenbrow: A Tragedy by Ernst Toller* and featuring the illustrations of George Grosz (18). On September 25th, 1927, regular performances of *Hinkemann* began at the Berliner Volksbühne, where Ernst Toller himself, along with Ernst Lönner, served as director (19).

Due in part to the scandal created by performances of *Hinkemann* in Germany, scholars in both German literary studies and disability studies have primarily focused on the symbolic significance of Hinkemann's disability as part of the political statement this play makes. As a German studies scholar and disability activist, Carol Poore describes the scandal surrounding *Hinkemann* as "an early instance of a culture war about who would set the terms for interpreting the meaning of disability for the German nation" (44). Poore draws attention to the way in which the metaphorical use of disability in this piece serves to perpetuate negative cultural meanings of disability by relegating it to the realm of the grotesque and using it for political allegory (42). In this context it is interesting to note that Martin Kane highlights the fact that Toller disavowed its allegorical possibilities because of a "retrospective awareness that Hinkemann's injury was too specific and too individual a misfortune for it to be the stuff of symbol" (133). Thus, in both German literary studies and disability studies there is a recognition that a reading of *Hinkemann* as a purely semiotic body has both aesthetic and political limitations.

In *Pessimism, Perspectivism, and Tragedy: Hinkemann Reconsidered* (1981), Helen L. Cafferty breaks with the long tradition of interpreting this play (and Hinkemann's emasculation in particular) as an expression of Toller's disillusionment after his experience of political impotence (48). She argues that Hinkemann, as a

progressive tragedy, is Toller's attempt to "provide an antidote to banal optimism by giving a realistic assessment of the proletarian struggle and by simultaneously lending a sensitizing insight into tragic experience" (45). Like Poore, Cafferty points out that conservative nationalists objected to the symbolic meaning of Hinkemann's body as representative of the humiliated, impotent national body. However, Cafferty further asserts that Toller "wanted to reject the metaphor that our everyday language suggests: male sexual potency equals national strength" (48). She argues for an acknowledgement of the "bitter irony in the display of Hinkemann as a degraded animal-object" that reveals how the capitalist state robs individuals of their human potential (49). Her line of argument supports the claim that "Hinkemann's emasculation does not simply imply revolutionary or political impotence . . . Rather it functions ironically as part of the contradiction between what the worship of power promises and the devastation it delivers", thus showing Toller's "sensitivity to sociological factors that determine character" (51). Cafferty's analysis represents one of the only instances in the scholarship on *Hinkemann* that goes beyond a reading of the protagonist's body as a political allegory.

In my analysis of *Hinkemann*, I will build upon Cafferty's interpretation while integrating Poore's concerns regarding the significance of disability metaphor in this text. I will focus on how Hinkemann's subjectivity emerges and shifts throughout the play and how he positions himself as well as how other characters and the text of the play position him. I am interested in how Hinkemann's non-visible physical disability, namely, an impairment involving the sexual organs that initiates a crisis for his subjectivity, is portrayed via the Expressionist style of this drama. My

analysis will expand the dominant reading of this text by reading Hinkemann as a diegetic body that, because of its hyperbolic portrayal, draws attention to the production of disability and disabled subjectivity within value-laden dichotomies.

Karl August Wittfogel

Neither the name Karl August Wittfogel nor his penname Julius Haidvogel can be found in the *Metzler Autorenlexikon* or in *Kindlers neues Literaturlexikon*, which gives rise to the suspicion that he is not considered to be a canonical author within traditional German literary studies. The entry on him in Killy's *Literaturlexikon: Autoren und Werke deutscher Sprache* describes his achievements as a playwright as a minor, yet important part of his work in the early 1920's. He considered the plays he wrote - and which Erwin Piscator staged - to be examples of "revolutionary idealism and expressionism" (368). The meager secondary literature on Wittfogel focuses primarily on his work as a sinologist and on his political shift away from Marxism after moving to the United States (see, for example, Linton's 2011 thesis, entitled "The Transformation of Cain: Karl August Wittfogel's American Acculturation and the Cold War, 1934 – 1963"). In short, there has been little reception of Wittfogel's plays within German studies and no reception within disability studies.

I will argue, however, that "Der Krüppel," the second act of his play *Wiedergeburt in Kain: Drei Revolutionsakte*, deserves attention for the way in which it portrays the negotiation of the protagonist's subjectivity as a disabled veteran against the discursive backdrop of post-WWI Germany. This short piece was performed as a one-acter and as the first play that was staged on Piscator's

Proletarian Theatre in Berlin on October 14th, 1920. *Das Jahrhundertbuch* (1999) briefly discusses the nature and intended function of this play:

Zur Premiere wird der Einakter “Der Krüppel” von Karl August Wittfogel aufgeführt . . . Die Stücke sollen keinen “Kunstgenuss” vermitteln, sondern wollen “Aufrufe” in unmittelbarem tagespolitischen Zusammenhang sein und den Zuschauer agitieren. (268)¹⁰

In my analysis of this piece, I will argue that “Der Krüppel” constitutes a clever literary contribution to discourses on the body directly following WWI. My analysis will highlight the significance of the protagonist’s experience of disability as well as on the way he appropriates language to draw attention to disabling discourses and emphasize the importance of lived experience as a mode of producing knowledge about the body. These aspects of the play not only reveal insights into discourses on the bodies of disabled veterans in post-WWI Germany, but they also make this piece worthy of consideration today within debates on literary representations of disability.

Individual and collective crises in Expressionist drama

In her 2009 dissertation, entitled *Das Wandlungskonzept in der expressionistischen Dramatik. Ein Denkmodell zur Bewältigung der Krise zur Zeit der Moderne*, Rainia Elwardy investigates the concept of transformation in several Expressionist plays in order to demonstrate how it was used to negotiate the crisis of modernity in the Weimar Republic. The study considers dramas by authors such as Iwan Goll, Walter

¹⁰ “At the premiere, Karl August Wittfogel’s one-acter, ‘Der Krüppel’, is performed. The pieces [performed here] are not intended to provide an ‘enjoyment of art’ but rather to serve as ‘appeals’ to engage audiences in contemporary political issues.” (my translation.)

Hasenclever, Georg Kaiser, and Reinhard Sorge, but pays particular attention to the dramas of Ernst Toller, including *Die Wandlung* and *Der deutsche Hinkemann*.

Within the crisis of modernity, Elwardy distinguishes between internal crises and external crises; she divides the former category into three aspects (the crises of alienation, perception, and self) and the latter into two (the crises of poverty and war) (21). She argues that, in dealing with these crises in literary form, the expressionists seek to reveal the dark side of the process of industrialization and modernization and their destructive effects on individuals (21). I will discuss Elwardy's study here at length because she identifies ways in which Expressionist dramas deal with various aspects of the crisis of modernity and offer up models for overcoming them (9). Although she does not explicitly deal with the portrayal of disability in the primary works I analyze, I will argue that disability is an essential element of the crises negotiated in those texts.

Within the realm of the inner crisis, Elwardy highlights the way expressionist dramas represent the alienating effects of the modern workplace, in particular the factory, on the individual. This industrialized, mechanized kind of work not only alienates the individual from his labour, but also from himself other people (22). Although she does not analyse Ernst Toller's *Hinkemann* in depth, the play certainly touches on this issue, as the dialogue between Eugen Hinkemann and Paul Großhahn in the first scene of the first act indicates (Toller, *Der deutsche Hinkemann* 199-200). Regarding the crisis of perception, Elwardy examines the ways Expressionists such as Franz Werfel gave voice to the sense of loss, confusion, and despair that the First World War produced on both the individual and collective level. If the world before

the war was perceived as having a certain sense of order and rationality, the world after the war seemed a disjointed, arbitrary, and lonely place in comparison (27). This kind of crisis becomes apparent in each of the three plays I am analyzing, most notably in the monologues of the protagonists in “Der Krüppel” and *Hinkemann*.

Elwardy uses the term “Ich-Krise” (“crisis of self”) to refer to the sum of a number of experiences that are interwoven with the crises of alienation and perception as they are felt on the level of the individual. The feeling of being alienated from oneself and others, the loss of a stable identity, the feeling of dissociation between one’s body, soul (*Seele*), and spirit (*Geist*), as well as the reification/objectification (*Verdinglichung*) of one’s self and the feeling that one is not living as one’s true self, all contribute to the emergence of the crisis of self (30). Elwardy sees the conflict in Toller’s *Die Wandlung* as a particularly good example of a negotiation of the crisis of self in which the protagonist enters into dialogue with himself and eventually discovers his true identity (30). I will argue that *Der Krüppel* and *Hinkemann* also portray a kind of *Ich-Krise*, albeit one that is directly tied to embodiment. The protagonists in these plays have been both traumatized and impaired in the war, both of which certainly contribute to their *Ich-Krise*, but it is the return to civilian life and to the violence of routine discourse that intensifies this crisis for both of them and that increases their loneliness and suffering.

Within the realm of the external crisis, Elwardy discusses poverty and war as two tangible aspects for consideration in her study. Notably, she differentiates between the material poverty of the proletariat and the spiritual poverty that also plagues them, and argues that both types of poverty make it difficult for the

proletariat to overcome the crisis in which they find themselves (33). She also argues that, while the bourgeois have all they need when it comes to material wealth, they lack the ability or will to think on a metaphysical level, which has produced a similar spiritual crisis in which people of this social class are unable or unwilling to change society for the better because they are completely focused on material gain (34). Central to the three plays I am examining is both a critique of war and poverty as well as a rejection of the status quo that is maintained by the unreflected discursive practices of the bourgeois.

Elwardy points to examples from Ernst Toller's *Die Wandlung* and *Masse Mensch* to demonstrate how Expressionist writing represents war as a crisis that causes suffering and hunger, and that threatens both individual and collective wellbeing (35). In particular, she discusses how Toller's representation of "the cripples" in *Die Wandlung* drives home the point that war causes both physical and psychological suffering for individuals (37). While Elwardy makes an important observation about the representation of suffering in this passage, I will go further and reflect upon the disability myths that are invoked, negotiated, and expanded upon in that scene. Similarly, I will consider the particularities of the physical and psychological suffering of the protagonist in *Der Krüppel* and in *Hinkemann* while connecting my analysis to societal discourses on disabled bodies in the literary worlds the protagonists inhabit as well as those in the historical-discursive context in which these plays were written.

Citing Richard Hamann and Jost Hermand, Elwardy defines the term *Wandlung* (transformation/transfiguration) as a revolution characterized by a total

rejection of the existing order of things. In this case, the “order of things” refers to the attitudes, principles, and ways of doing things within bourgeois society. Within that discursive sphere, various loci of power, knowledge, and truth emerge in the form of institutions such as the church and the state, and in the form of discourses that constitute and flow from the military, science-medicine, and the wealthy elite within capitalist society. These institutions and discourses perpetuate an optimistic belief in progress, utilitarian thinking, a drive for results, a sense of safety in wealth, and a practical materialism that is accompanied by conventional moral norms (50).

From the perspective of thinkers such as Otto Best, Ludwig Rubiner, and Franz Werfel, *Wandlung* is not limited to a mere rejection of the status quo, but rather takes on a decidedly spiritual significance and indicates positive movement away from “Gesellschaft” (society), that is, an anonymous and indifferent society, towards an ideal of “Gemeinschaft” (community), which signifies a community bound together by love and common work, beliefs, and goals (50-51).¹¹ Elwardy discusses the concept of *Wandlung* in Expressionist drama as a process of transition from a state of confusion to a state in which an individual sheds his/her lack of orientation and becomes filled with a sense of purpose that enables him/her to play a role in the transformation of society (59).

Thus, it is clear that the concept of *Wandlung* within Expressionism not only refers to the transformation of individuals, but also to the transformation of politics and society, and that Expressionist art forms aim to initiate this transformation on both the individual and collective level (51). Both the disabled and non-disabled

¹¹ These terms were coined in 1887 by the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies in his book, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, which was printed in a second edition in 1912.

characters in *Die Wandlung*, “Der Krüppel”, and *Hinkemann* are certainly part of this political project because they point the way toward transformation by either serving as shining examples, people-in-transformation, or warnings of the dangers of that face individuals in the transformative process.

In order to achieve their desired effect on readers/viewers, Expressionist authors often employ a truncated form of language (52) as well as a dynamic employment of that language characterized by an enhanced tempo and a strengthening of both its rhythm and the phrases and expressions it contains (53). The truncated form of language used in Expressionist writing is typified by shorter sentences, a lack of articles and epithets, and an inversion of standard syntax, the goal of which, according to Elwardy, is to bring to bear the essential message of the dramatic work: that individuals should reflect, enter into dialogue with themselves, and begin their transformation (52).

With regard to the nature of transformation itself, Elwardy identifies two meanings that often overlap in Expressionist works: transformation as an experience of cleansing and transformation as a process of struggle to realize humanist ideals in society (88). Since the individual who undergoes this experience is considered to be the “New Man” who is subsequently expected to bring about the transformation of society, the success of the first experience is a necessary condition for the enactment of the second. This is helpful for understanding the development of the protagonists of the primary works.

In *Die Wandlung*, Friedrich successfully moves through the first phase of personal transformation, and the piece ends with him rallying the people to a peaceful

revolution and leading them on to bring about a new society. In “Der Krüppel,” the protagonist could be said to be engaged in both processes simultaneously; he is clearly still wrapped up in dealing with his own trauma while at the same time making an effort to point out the destructive nature of militaristic, rehabilitationist, and charitable discourses. The ending of the piece leaves the reader/viewer with the feeling that he has failed in both endeavours, but one could also see his attempts as ends in themselves; even prior to embodying the Expressionists’ idealized “transformed” state, individuals can still identify and attack the societal discourses that keep them down, even if these attempts do not bring about immediate results.

Der deutsche Hinkemann presents the reader with a less ambiguous representation of a “failure to transform.” In this piece, the protagonist becomes mired in and ultimately suffocates under the discourses on gender and disability that surround him and make it impossible for him and others to view his body as anything other than emasculated, disabled, and disempowered. In the end, it is not Hinkemann’s body that causes his downfall, but rather his inability to resist the dominant, disabling discourses on his body. On the one hand, one could interpret this literary statement as a form of “blaming the victim;” however, the piece clearly depicts Hinkemann as inhabiting a society that functions according to performances of gender and ability and that thus offers no discursive alternatives to the binary categories of male or female, able-bodied or disabled. Being discursively caught between each of these binaries, Hinkemann is cast into the realm of the abject.¹²

¹² In *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990), Iris Young uses Julia Kristeva’s notion of the abject to explain how bodily differences are ranked in the Western world. She argues that this ranking produces subjects in hierarchical relationship to one another in order to explain why those who do not

Every attempt to carve out a positive discursive position for himself by seeking recourse to a masculine, able-bodied subjectivity is rejected by others on the grounds that his form of embodiment is invalid for membership in those very categories.

Instead of rejecting that rejection, Hinkemann accepts it and falls into ever-greater despair, a reaction that makes sense within the world of the play. Just as his downfall is not due to a personal failing but rather to a disabling discursive environment, one could also argue that Hinkemann's failure is not a complete failure. Because of his experiences, Hinkemann's perspective shifts on matters such as cruelty, suffering, exploitation, and the false and hurtful nature of discourses that privilege certain bodies over others. While this could be seen as just another disability myth being dredged up by Toller in service of the political goals of his art, it could also be viewed as a representation that draws attention to aspects of disabled experience that, while amplified in this dramatic world, overlap to some degree with the much more nuanced experiences of individuals in the physical world. By showing what can happen to a person in Hinkemann's situation, this play draws attention to the kind of experiences wounded men returning from WWI may have faced. Such experiences would have included not only trauma, depression, and an adjustment to life with a disability, but possibly also difficulty finding work, trouble in relationships, and ridicule for no longer being "whole" men.

The exaggerated language that characterizes the three primary texts can be seen as serving a two-fold function: on the one hand, it underscores the linguistic liberty taken by Expressionist authors, and on the other, it is intended to shock

live up to ideals of embodiment, including persons with disabilities, produce feelings of disgust in others (124).

bourgeois audiences by offending their sensibilities regarding linguistic correctness and drawing attention to the discrepancy between appearance and reality in society (53). Furthermore, the dynamic and hyperbolic nature of the language in Expressionist dramas can also be seen as another manifestation of the movement's political activism; by employing the abovementioned stylistic strategies, Expressionist dramatists aimed to "shake" people awake and urge them toward transformation (53). Thus, when analyzing *Die Wandlung*, "Der Krüppel," and *Hinkemann*, I will consider not only the ways in which the language used reflects disabled experience or imbues disability with negative cultural meaning but also the ways in which language use that might be considered to be too simplistic, negative, or over-trope in fact serve to locate and critique disabling discourses. I will demonstrate that these plays indeed shake the foundations of the status quo and strike at the root of societal dysfunctions by representing some of the most extreme forms of embodiment that were visible in the society in which they were written.

In the following three analysis chapters, I contend that the representations of disability in the dramatic works I examine 1) take part in the cultural processing of the trauma and physical impairments of German men after WWI; 2) negotiate the difficulties of positioning oneself as male and as disabled in post-WWI Germany in light of the discourses on gender and ability within economic, national, and aesthetic discourses; and 3) challenge a variety of disabling discourses by demonstrating the harm done to the individual when the interests of the collective body are privileged over those of individuals. The analysis of the primary texts will produce a nuanced reading of how the portrayals of disability therein negotiate discourses on the body.

Chapter One

Disability, Revolution, and the Production of Knowledge on Disability

Ernst Toller's *Die Wandlung: Das Ringen eines Menschen* (1919) portrays the transformation of the protagonist Friedrich from a patriotic, bourgeois youth who volunteers for military service to a peaceful revolutionary who challenges people to break free from oppression by thinking for themselves. The piece begins with the motto "Ihr seid der Weg" ("you are the way") and a poem entitled "Aufrüttelung" ("Alarm") which set the tone of the play by calling on the reader to "wake up" to their situation and work to create a better society. The prologue, which the primary text indicates could also be regarded as an epilogue, consists of a dialogue between two characters (death-in-wartime and death-in-peacetime) in a military cemetery.

The central message of this interaction, namely, the rejection of discourses that seek to discipline human bodies to march toward death in an orderly, efficient, and obedient fashion, runs throughout each of the subsequent scenes. The scenes are listed as "Bilder" ("images"), which serves to emphasize their visual quality in the script. Excluding the prologue, the play consists of thirteen such images that are grouped within a total of six stations. The representations of disability found in scenes one, two, three, four, five, six, and seven will be considered in depth in this analysis. While these representations take up several familiar disability myths and tropes that disability scholars have identified and classified in literature (Dolmage, *Disability Rhetoric* 51), they require special consideration for the way they function as both semiotic and diegetic bodies in this Expressionist drama. In my analysis of this text, I will demonstrate that the discursive positioning and critical function of

these figures make an important contribution to various discourses on disabled bodies within the historical-discursive context in which *Die Wandlung* was written.

In scene one, it is Christmastime and Friedrich is talking with his mother about his sorrow at feeling like an outsider in society. He feels excluded and compares himself to Ahasuerus, a figure that has been used to represent the Jewish people as homeless, nationless, and ever wandering.¹³ His mother replies that these foolish thoughts must be the result of idleness, or perhaps a fever. She urges him to seek a stable career instead of dreaming that his sculpting will ever earn enough to pay the bills. She also urges him to attend church, be grateful for the good opportunities present in his life, and make good use of them. Friedrich, however, replies that while his parents did all they could to ensure him a good start into an economically stable future, they neglected the needs of his soul by teaching him to hate people who are different.

After hearing this accusation, his mother leaves the scene and is soon replaced by a friend of Friedrich's, who enters the scene to announce that "der Kampf gegen die Wilden hat begonnen, drüben in den Kolonien" (Toller, W¹⁴ 20)¹⁵ and that volunteers are needed to join in the fight. Friedrich receives this news with joy, seeing this development as his opportunity to prove that he is a valid member of his society, that he has a homeland and a people: "Drüben brauchen sie Freiwillige. Warum zagte ich? Ich fühle mich ja so stark! Nun kann ich meine Pflicht tun. Nun

¹³ The OED Online mentions that Ahasuerus was originally called Cartaphilus, but that the former was used in the best-known modern version of the legend of the Wandering Jew, who, "(according to a popular belief first mentioned in the 13th c., and widely current until at least the 16th century), for having insulted Jesus on his way to the Cross, was condemned to wander over the earth without rest until the Day of Judgement."

¹⁴ In the following references, Ernst Toller's *Die Wandlung* will be abbreviated with "W".

¹⁵ "Fighting has broken out in the colonies" (Crankshaw 66).

kann ich beweisen, daß ich zu ihnen gehöre” (Toller, W 21).¹⁶ Friedrich’s eagerness to join his countrymen in the fight against “die Wilden” (“the savages”) may appear surprising, since he, only a few lines back, criticized his parents for their xenophobia and passionately argued that “Milde und Güte und Liebe wächst bei ihnen” (Toller, W 19).¹⁷ Thus, at the opening of the play, Friedrich’s ideals about the brotherhood of all mankind are overshadowed by his own need for acceptance and his desire to belong to a community.

The second, third, fourth, and fifth scenes are set in the context of war. In the short second scene, seven soldiers and an eighth soldier - described as having Friedrich’s countenance - are riding on a transport train to war, bemoaning their dismal personal fate and the tragic fate of humanity at war (Toller, W 21-22). In the third scene, which takes place at a water hole in the desert, Friedrich converses with other soldiers, among whom an injured man and a man who has gone insane are present, and tries to convince them that their suffering is for the good of their common fatherland. Not only are his encouragements scorned, but two of the soldiers also scorn Friedrich himself and discursively position him as an outsider: “Und wenn du tausendmal in unseren Reihen kämpfst, darum bleibst du doch der Fremde” (Toller, W 24).¹⁸

Although Friedrich retorts that he will fight on anyway because no one can take away the patriotism in his heart, this interaction throws him into confusion: “Wankt nicht zerwühlter Boden unter mir? Bäume verdorren - Wüste wächst - wohin

¹⁶ “Volunteers wanted! Was I half-hearted? I feel myself strong! Strong to embrace my duty. Now I can prove that I belong to you! Now I can prove I’m no outsider!” (Crankshaw 67).

¹⁷ “They are full of kindness, gentleness, and love” (Crankshaw 65).

¹⁸ “If you fought with us a thousand times, you’d still be a foreigner” (Crankshaw 69).

soll ich wandern? Ich trat in ein Haus, da brannten sie's über mir ab" (Toller, W 24).¹⁹ This scene has been interpreted as a portrayal of Ernst Toller's own experience in WWI; having volunteered as a soldier to prove his membership in the national body of Germany, he is devastated to learn that his efforts are considered by some to be invalid because of his heritage (cf. Lixl; Kane). On the micro-discursive level, however - that is, on the level of linguistic interaction - this exchange demonstrates how exclusionary, disabling discourses are tied up with notions of otherness. Friedrich's fellow soldiers use his "otherness," symbolized by the figure of Ahasuerus, to disallow him entrance into the sphere of national belonging.

The fourth scene is set at a site where skeletons are hanging among wire entanglements. The scene opens with an unnamed skeleton talking to himself and realizing that, although he is dead, he no longer feels cold, and, now that his flesh has rotted away, he is able to make a lovely rattling sound with his hands (Toller, W 25). He is joined by a second skeleton who also realizes that he is dead, but no longer hungry. He and the first skeleton decide to do a dance together, since "nun sind wir nicht mehr Freund und Feind. Nun sind wir nicht mehr weiß und schwarz. Nun sind wir alle gleich" (Toller, W 26).²⁰ Thus, they come to the conclusion that death is a universal equalizer: While they may have been "other" to each other and at odds with one another in life, they have been united in death, which has erased all markers of difference. However, the reader/viewer soon learns that the skeletons are in fact not quite equal when it comes to their "embodiment-after-death". For example, some are

¹⁹ "The outraged earth trembles under me; the trees are withered; the wilderness crawls nearer - where shall I go? I entered a house and it burned to ashes over me" (Crankshaw 69).

²⁰ "To-day we're no more friends and enemies, to-day we're no more black and white, now we are all alike" (Crankshaw 71).

missing legs, which the second skeleton points out while simultaneously integrating them into the activity of the dance: “Da drüben ihr, die ohne Beine, ergreift sie! Klappert! Klappert auf zum Tanz!” (Toller, W 26).²¹

The rattling and the dancing commence, but one skeleton does not join in because it is ashamed. The first skeleton dismisses its shame and pokes fun at it, assuring the other skeleton that this concept no longer has any meaning; although they are indeed naked bones, skeletons have no nakedness to be ashamed of. When the new skeleton reveals that it was/is in fact a thirteen-year-old girl, however, the others change their behaviour. Though no physical difference is visible, the skeleton-girl’s disclosure activates certain discourses on gender. For example, the first skeleton commands the others to conceal their nakedness from her, and the second declares that she is now under his protection.

The skeleton-girl then tells how she died at the hands of soldiers not unlike the soldiers these skeletons once were, but the other skeletons continue to insist that there is no longer a need to feel shame, since she can no longer tell the difference between herself and others. The first skeleton goes as far as to say “Sie sind geschändet . . . Gott, wir sind es auch” (Toller, W 27),²² thus effectively equating the suffering of these erstwhile soldiers with the suffering of this skeleton who was once a girl who died after being raped. The translation of “geschändet” as “outraged” does not quite capture its meaning in this context; a translation as “violated,” “defiled,” or “disgraced” better expresses the essence of this statement in the original. While the suffering and shame of soldiers and rape victims are unique and while common sense

²¹ “You over there! You without legs! Pick up your shins and rattle them! Clap time for us while we dance!” (Crankshaw 71).

²² “You have been outraged? Good; so have we all!” (Crankshaw 72).

would disadvise equating one with the other, the first skeleton does just this. In the context of this scene, this utterance is presented as acceptable because all parties concerned inhabit the sphere of death, in which bodies can no longer be distinguished from one another and in which both suffering and shame have passed away along with physical markers of bodily difference.

While it could be argued that the skeletons can indeed no longer be distinguished from one another along gendered or racial lines, it is striking that some of the skeletons can still be perceived as disabled (i.e. as lacking legs) even in death. In this sense, then, the sweeping claims of the first skeleton are brought into question by the presence of his disabled comrades. The scene concludes with the commencement of a dance, this time with the skeleton-that-was-once-a-girl in the middle, leaving the reader without a sense of closure regarding the scene's statement on suffering, shame, and physical difference.

Although characters that can be described as disabled or impaired in some way appear throughout the play - such as the wounded and mad soldiers in scene three and the disabled skeletons in scene four - the fifth and sixth scenes (station three) as well as the seventh scene (station four) contain more complex representations of disability. Central to these scenes are confrontations between lived experiences of disability and various other discursive loci of truth, knowledge, and power with regard to disability, including religion, medicine/rehabilitation, and patriotism/militarism. In each scene, there is a clear critique of the production of knowledge about disability outside of the experience of disability, as well as a clear rejection of top-down power that seeks to turn bodies into docile objects.

In the fifth scene, Friedrich finds himself the object of both the medical gaze and military discourse. Having been found tied to a tree, the only survivor of a battle, he is in a military hospital receiving treatment. While no physical injuries are described, it becomes clear that Friedrich is suffering from a case of nervous shock, which, in twenty-first-century terms, would be called post-traumatic stress disorder,²³ as he is haunted by dreams and memories of his service in the war.

The nurse reports to the doctor that he has been sleeping restlessly and calling out for water as if he were lost in a desert, a situation the reader knows Friedrich has experienced in scene three. In Friedrich's dreams, he is not only re-living the trauma of his wartime experiences, but he is also continuing to struggle with the figure of Ahasuerus, the wandering Jew, whom above all he fears becoming: "Wo seid ihr andern . . . o der Wüstenflugsand . . . gekörnter Nebel . . . nicht ruhen . . . weiter . . . kenne dich nicht . . . wer bist du . . . Ahasver . . . Armseliger . . . schleich dich zurück . . . in alpeuchende Städte, hier findest du nicht Höhlen . . . ich wandre nicht mit dir . . . nein (*schreit.*) nein (*wacht auf.*) Durst!" (Toller, W 28).²⁴

A nurse then enters and offers Friedrich water for his thirst and comforting words for his troubled mind and heart, which leads him to believe that she is the mother of God. However, when he asks why she is not helping the others outside, she replies that it is because they are fighting against the Fatherland. Thus, despite the fact that the nurse is a friendly, helping, non-condescending presence in this scene, it

²³ The OED Online defines post-traumatic stress disorder as "a condition that can develop following exposure to an extremely stressful situation or series of events outside the usual range of human experience, which may manifest itself in recurrent nightmares or intrusive vivid memories and flashbacks of the traumatic event . . .".

²⁴ "Where are you all? . . . Oh, the desert sandstorm . . . like a stinging, gritty fog . . . no rest . . . on . . . on . . . I don't know you – who are you? . . . Ahasuerus . . . cursed one! . . . Back, back! No holes for you here . . . I won't go with you . . . no, (*shouting.*) no! (*Waking up.*) Water!" (Crankshaw 74).

is possible to detect in this interaction a critique of her complicity as a medical professional within nationalistic-militaristic discourse that separates bodies into “those we shall heal” and “those we shall not heal.”

Far less ambiguous is the portrayal of the doctor in this scene. Indeed, this figure shares a striking resemblance to the figure of the doctor in Georg Büchner’s drama *Woyzeck*,²⁵ which has been seen as a forerunner of Expressionist drama (Edward Franklin Hauch, *The Reviviscence of Georg Büchner* 899). The doctor’s hovering above Friedrich and discussing his condition is truncated and overwrought, serving to caricaturize him as well as critique the scientific-medical discourses he embodies. Indeed, the doctor’s words draw attention to the detached discourse of the scientific-medical sphere. In the midst of analyzing symptoms and diagnosing conditions, this kind of discourse ends up prioritizing principles and procedures instead of nurturing the wellbeing of individuals:

Chinin, doppeltes Quantum Chinin. Nervenschock müßte man meinen. Meinen! Meinen! Die neue Grippelin-Schule würde es diagnostizieren. . . . uninteressantes Fällchen, ganz uninteressant. Wo liegt der Neue? Hat er bei seiner Einlieferung Rhizinus geschluckt? Nein, nicht? Schwester ich bin entzündet. Pflichtvergessenheit dulde ich nicht. Prinzip! Prinzip! (Toller, W 28)²⁶

²⁵ While Büchner most likely wrote *Woyzeck* during the 1830’s, Karl Emil Franzos published the first critical edition of this play posthumously in 1879 (Hans Mayer, *Georg Büchner: Woyzeck* 69).

²⁶ “Quinine, double doses of quinine. A case of nervous shock, those others would think. Think! Think! We don’t think, we diagnose . . . uninteresting little case, quite uninteresting. Where is the new one? Was he given castor oil when they brought him in? No? Really, sister, that’s most annoying. Inexcusable too. I can’t put up with any neglect of duty here. Matter of principle! Principle!” (Crankshaw 74).

This brief interaction captures how the doctor produces expert knowledge about Friedrich's body and the bodies of other patients. His description of Friedrich's condition as an "uninteressantes Fällchen" is reminiscent of the cold, objective language Woyzeck's doctor uses, for instance when he refers to him as an "interessanter Fall" (Mayer 15). In this way, Albert Meier's evaluation of the doctor in *Woyzeck* also rings true for the doctor who examines Friedrich: "Als Vertreter einer borniert empiristischer Wissenschaft, die nur Krankheitsbilder beschreiben, aber keine gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhänge begreifen kann, bleibt der Doctor gegenüber Woyzeck in einer überlegenen und distanzierten Position" (*Georg Büchner Woyzeck* 50). The similarities between the critiques of this "scientific-medical superiority complex" in *Woyzeck* and in Friedrich's interaction with the doctor lend further support to the claim that Büchner's dramas can be seen as forerunners of Expressionist drama (cf. Hauch).

By drawing upon the scientific-medical claim to truth, the doctor's knowledge is portrayed as objectifying and as being deployed in order to produce "docile bodies." That is to say, in the doctor's interaction with Friedrich, it is clear that in order to be "a good patient," Friedrich should willingly subject himself to the medical gaze's intense observation that simultaneously suppresses the particularities of his experiences (Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic* 8). The medical gaze is not only criticized in this scene, but it is revealed to function in service of the military. Foucault discusses how institutions such as the military seek to produce docile bodies (and corresponding docile subjectivities) by means of "empirical and calculated methods . . . for controlling or correcting the operations of the body" (*Discipline and*

Punish 136). While the medical gaze produces docile bodies via techniques such as diagnosis and treatment, the military achieves this goal via a range of other techniques. For instance, while physical training serves to shape individuals' physical bodies "part by part for particular operations", the awarding of honours serves to encourage individuals to behave in certain ways within the "multi-segmentary machine" that is the military (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 164).

This latter technique is revealed and comes under scrutiny when "the Colonel" visits Friedrich to praise his gallantry in battle and honour him with a medal, saying "Ich beglückwünsche Sie, junger Freund. Tapfer setzten Sie sich ein, achteten nicht hartester Marter. Das Vaterland weiß Ihre Dienste zu schätzen. Es sendet Ihnen durch mich das Kreuz. Fremder waren Sie unserm Volk, nun haben Sie sich Bürgerrechte erworben . . . Sie gehören zu den Siegern" (Toller, W 29).²⁷ At this moment, it would seem that Friedrich has achieved the sense of belonging he has always longed for. However, even as the Colonel positions him via language as a full and valued member of his society, Friedrich becomes horrified as he realizes the price that he - as well as others - had to pay in order for him to achieve this status: "Wie Jubel auf ihren Gesichtern tanzt. Zehntausend Tote! Durch zehntausend Tote gehöre ich zu ihnen . . . Nun gehöre ich zu ihnen" (Toller, W 29).²⁸

This realization constitutes a key moment in Friedrich's transformation; he is beginning to see the flaws in the society to which he so desperately wants to belong.

²⁷ "Congratulations, young fellow! Your gallantry under the most horrible tortures was simply superb, and your country recognizes your devotion. I have been elected to present you with the cross for valour. You were a stranger among us, but now you are become one of us. . . . you are one of the victors" (Crankshaw 75).

²⁸ "The jubilation in their faces! Ten thousand dead! Ten thousand have died that I may find a country . . . Now I am one of you" (Crankshaw 75).

At the opening of the play, he viewed the war not only as an opportunity to gain acceptance, but also as a kind of cleansing that would usher in a new era: “Oh, der Kampf wird uns alle einen . . . Die große Zeit wird uns alle zu Großen gebären” (Toller, W 21).²⁹ Now, having seen combat, experiencing the symptoms of post-traumatic stress, and realizing just how great the death and destruction of these “great” times has turned out to be, Friedrich is devastated. His devastation is heightened by his growing awareness that the techniques of the doctor and the Colonel are connected in that they are aimed at increasing the docility, and thus the utility, of his body.

While scene five revolves around Friedrich’s personal suffering, in scene six, he encounters the suffering of others face to face and witnesses the ways in which both medical and military discourse produce bodies that are objectified - that is, constitute them as docile subjects - as well as the ways in which individuals caught up in them resist being made into docile bodies. In this scene, Friedrich has two minor roles, first as a silent student and second as a priest. The major roles belong to a doctor - who is also a professor - and to the group of patients he is treating and simultaneously showing off to his students, which comprises five men with a variety of physical impairments. The scene is set in a military hospital, where the beds, in the words of a medical orderly, are “Ausgerichtet . . . Wie eine Schnur/ Kein einziges stört die gerade Linie” (Toller, W 30).³⁰

As the doctor/professor enters, the stage directions and the authority with which he speaks indicate that he is to personify a locus of knowledge, truth, and

²⁹ “Oh, but the struggle will unite us all! The greatness of the times will make us all great . . .” (Crankshaw 66).

³⁰ “Everything in order. Beds in a nice neat row, all alike and tidy” (Crankshaw 75).

power when it comes to disabled bodies. On the one hand, he differentiates himself and his profession from the goals of those whose work supports the military project, but implicitly, he admits that these “industries” are just two sides of the same coin. While the one is busy thinking up ways to destroy bodies, the other is developing ways to put them back together again:

. . . Wir könnten uns die positive Branche nennen, / die negative ist die Rüstungsindustrie. / Mit anderen Worten: Wir vertreter der Synthese, / Die Rüstungsindustrie geht analytisch vor - / Die Herren Chemiker und Ingenieure / Sie mögen ruhig Waffen schmieden / Und unerhörte Gase fabrizieren, / Wir halten mit. / Das Kriegsverdienst wird ihnen angerechnet / Wir aber, meine Herren, begnügen uns / Und sind bescheiden: /Dem Werk der Rettung gilt die Arztesarbeit (Toller, W 30).³¹

However, both industries are portrayed as part of the same system that seeks to control and shape individual bodies for collective purposes. The way the doctor/professor looks at, addresses, and talks about his patients’ bodies are positioned as techniques of the medical gaze. Indeed, the medical profession, like the military, is portrayed as complicit in the process of disablement because it diminishes the wellbeing of individuals and actively suppresses their self-determination. The interactions in this scene reveal the text’s indebtedness to humanist ideals of

³¹ “We might indeed call our work positive, the negative being the munition works. In other words we deal with synthesis; the armament men are merely analysts . . . Chemists and engineers can quietly make new weapons and manufacture unconceived-of gases; their services to war are greatly valued. But we, my friends, are not [sic!] content to do the rescue work that’s proper to the doctor” (Crankshaw 76).

individual agency, rationality, and autonomy, and serve to critique the dehumanizing effects of the alliance between medical science and the military.

This becomes clear when the doctor calls for the “sieben Musterexemplare” to be brought out and put on display in front of a white screen. These seven specimens enter the scene “wie aufgezogene Maschinen,”³² and the stage directions describe them as “nackte Krüppel”³³ whose bodies “bestehen aus Rümpfen. Arme und Beine fehlen. Statt ihrer bemerkt man künstliche schwarze Arme und Beine, die sich automatisch schlenkernd bewegen. In Reih und Glied marschieren sie vor die Leinwand” (Toller, W 30).³⁴ The language used here reflects the blurring of the boundaries between man and machine within rehabilitationist discourse and portrays this melding as detrimental to these men’s capacity to think and act independently. Their physical appearance, mechanical movements, and their obedient marching in accordance with the orderly’s commands, “Halt! . . . Links... um!” (Toller, W 30-31),³⁵ imply that their military training and rehabilitative treatment have resulted in a loss of their individuality and agency.

This representation of impaired soldiers as passive objects oppressed by both medical and military discourse is exaggerated, as the uniform look on the faces of the seven as they turn and stare into the glaring lights underscores. Lacking all individual nuances that would characterize disabled soldiers in the physical world, these are described as “all alike and stereotyped” (Crankshaw 76) in the stage directions. While serving to further characterize these figures as machine-men, their uniformity

³² “like clockwork figures” (Crankshaw 76).

³³ “naked cripples” (Crankshaw 76).

³⁴ “They are truncated. None of them has arms or legs. Instead they jerk along with black, artificial legs, parading before the screen in single file” (Crankshaw 76).

³⁵ “Halt! . . . Left turn!” (Crankshaw 76).

and exaggerated portrayal makes it problematic to equate these characters with physical bodies that exist outside the world of the play. However, these over-the-top representations serve to underline the central critique in this scene, namely the way in which injured soldiers are treated as objects to be re-assembled by rehabilitation science and re-utilized in some way for the good of the nation. Nevertheless, one can recognize in this hyperbole certain discursive mechanisms that are also at work in the physical world beyond the confines of this dramatic world.

While the bodies characterized by the dialogue and stage directions in scene six can be said to have impairments, it is clear that these impairments are disabilities in the context of the discursive practices of medical and military discourse that constitute the world they inhabit. Within that world, bodies are either *able* or *unable* to fight. When bodies are unable to fight, it is the highest priority of the medical profession to make them once again able to fight. Failing that, the hope is that they will at least be able to become economically self-supporting and regain their reproductive potency. The professor declares his success regarding his rehabilitation of these “lumps of meat” back to their status as men: that is, as beings to which subjecthood is discursively granted, saying:

Die Leute sind durch unsre Wissenschaft zu neuem Leben auferweckt
- Fleischrumpfe waren sie, nun sind sie wieder Männer . . . Ja, meine
Herren, nun sind sie wieder unsrem Staate zugeführt und auch der
Menschheit! Wertvolle Glieder einer nützlichen Gemeinschaft! . . .
Besondrer Mechanismus wurde konstruiert, Die Leute können wieder

ihrer höchsten Pflicht genügen . . . Fortpflanzungsmöglichkeit ist nun erreicht. Auch Ehefreuden warten dieser Männer. (Toller, W 31)³⁶

In this scene, Toller reveals the dehumanizing effects of the rehabilitation of “war cripples” that stand in contrast to the supposedly humanizing goals of medical treatment and the merging of human and machine via prostheses. The appearance and movements of the seven prototypes serve to critique the way that rehabilitation discourse, which can be seen as part of the medical model of disability, seek to reaffirm the humanist notion of the rational, autonomous, and able-bodied subject. The portrayal of these figures as further disabled by the medical gaze reveals the doctor’s promises that these men will soon lead happy lives as productive citizens as a fallacy; while he claims to pursue humanist goals, the text argues that the techniques of his profession are in fact to blame for these men’s loss of humanity.

In the course of the doctor’s monologue, it becomes clear that there is no place for bodies that fail to be productive, obedient, and integral. Furthermore, the fate of the seven prototypes illustrates how efforts to bring deviant bodies into alignment with bodily norms often function in the service of institutional interests instead of the interests of individuals. This critique of rehabilitation can also be seen as an early criticism of transhumanism because it reveals the dark side of the project to transcend the limitations of the fragile human body. Despite the doctor’s claims that rehabilitation will allow “cripples” to lead a “normal life,” we see that this

³⁶ “These are the men, for whom our glorious work has brought regeneration and rebirth. Three months ago they were mere passive stumps. To-day they stand before you - men! . . . So: here they are . . . restored in life and limb; men, citizens, useful members of society, waiting each to fill his place. . . . These men, these stumps that were, can now enjoy the great prerogative of man. By delicate and subtle mechanism I have restored their procreative powers. No longer impotent, once more they can enjoy the pleasures of the marriage bed!” (Crankshaw 76-77).

rehabilitation is actually aimed at bolstering the work force and re-inscribing bodily norms onto bodies that do not conform to them.

When one of the students (with the features of Friedrich) faints after the professor's speech, the professor reprimands him, saying "Ohnmächtig, junger Mann, beim Werk der Liebe, Wie wär's denn draußen, auf dem Feld der Schlacht" (Toller, W 31)³⁷. While this is another moment in the play that has been interpreted as a biographical reference to Toller's own nervous breakdown during the first World War (cf. Lixl; Kane), it can also be seen as a moment in which Friedrich himself experiences the effects of the disabling discourses he encounters. As he is revived and exits the scene, the stage directions indicate that he "bedeckt sein Gesicht mit beiden Händen . . . Unwillkürlich bewegen sich seine Füße genau so automatisch wie die künstlichen der Krüppel" (Toller, W 31).³⁸ Thus, Friedrich not only sympathizes with the objectified "specimens" he has just encountered, but he also identifies with them. The stage directions support this reading; since the movements of his own body begin to mirror those of the seven prototypes, Friedrich is portrayed as experiencing the negative effects of the same discourses that have produced their apparent docile subjectivities. In this way, the critique of disabling discourses in this scene extends beyond the way in which they discipline "disabled bodies" and toward a statement about the way in which they produce docile bodies in general.

Scene six also contains a portrayal of a second set of "cripples" that direct the attention of the reader to the contrast between medical and religious discourses on

³⁷ "Poor young man, to faint in work like this! How would he fare upon the field of battle?" (Crankshaw 77).

³⁸ ". . . covers his face with his hands and goes out, his walk involuntarily reproducing the mechanical walk of the cripples" (Crankshaw 77).

disability and the embodied experience of acquiring a disability. Unlike the first set of bodies, which were not only silent but also uniform in appearance and movements, this second set is highly individuated, with stage directions and bits of dialogue fleshing out the depiction of various acquired impairments. The group comprises a blind man, a man without arms, a man with a spinal cord injury, a man with a mental illness, and a man who has been poisoned by gas, with each figure speaking at length with his own voice about his own embodied experience (Toller, W 31-31). Despite the unique nature of their impairments, what these men have in common is their suffering. After each has told his own story, all of them say together: “So weiß ein jeder eigenes Leid. Wir sollten einen Mischchor singen” (Toller, W 32).³⁹

While the doctor aims to cure and repair the bodies of the seven prototypes like machines, the figure of the priest - who wears the countenance of Friedrich - trivializes the bodily suffering of these five men by foregrounding Christ’s compassion and redeeming love. Upon entering the scene, he declares “Den Heiland bring ich euch, Ihr armen Kranken. Er weiß um euer Müh und Leiden - O kommt zu ihm, ihr tief Bedrückten, er gibt euch Heilung, gibt euch Liebe” (Toller, W 33).⁴⁰ The group of men, once again speaking together, respond by throwing the priest’s words back at him: “Ist Er so mächtig, warum ließ Er’s zu?! . . . Du sagst, er weiß um unser Leiden, Dann ist er schlecht, wenn er uns nicht erlöst” (Toller, W 33).⁴¹

Initially rejecting their logic, the priest calls them blasphemers, to which the men respond: “Er lästert an uns,/ Wenn er uns glauben machen will,/ Daß er um

³⁹ “Each has his song; We ought to form a male-voice choir” (Crankshaw 79).

⁴⁰ “I bring the Saviour, Oh sad-faced sufferers. He knows your misery and pain, All ye who are oppressed, oh come to Him. He offers healing, love” (Crankshaw79).

⁴¹ “Why does all-powerful God permit our suffering? You say He knows our pain and suffering; Then He is evil to let it be” (Crankshaw79).

unser Leiden weiß! Wags nur, uns Lästerer zu nennen,/ Doch schau uns an zuvor . . . Schau uns an” (Toller, W 33).⁴² The stage directions tell us that, upon hearing the men’s response and being confronted with their gaze as they all sit up in bed, that the priest lifts his head as well. His eyes widen and then “freeze” (“erstarren”), as if he comprehends for the first time what the men are telling him. Sinking to his knees, he breaks the cross he holds in his hand, declares that his words are indeed empty, and experiences a moment of despair himself: “Da ist kein Heil.../ Ich sehe keinen lichten Weg aus dieser Nacht, Ich sehe nirgends eine lichte Hand. Bereit euch zu erlösen.../ Wie könnt ich, selber trostbedürftig, den Trost euch spenden, . . . Ich kann es nicht./ Ich gehe euch voran...” (Toller, W 33).⁴³ Having encountered real suffering, the priest realizes that his words of promise do not bring comfort to these men, that indeed there may be no words that can comfort them in the midst of their suffering. Therefore, he resolves himself to the path of suffering on which he may be able to serve them better as a spiritual leader.

As the priest fades out of sight, the final interaction in this scene begins between a group of nurses and the wounded men. The nurses declare that they bring “. . . Arznei.../ Ihr armen Kranken.../ Getränke, stillend euren Durst.../ Wir bringen kühle Tücher / Euren Schmerz zu lindern... / Wir bringen gütige Tabletten, / Die geben sanften Schlaf” (Toller, W 34).⁴⁴ However, the men respond in a way that makes it clear that they do not want to be comforted or soothed: “Was nützt uns

⁴² “He it is who utters blasphemy, And we who are blasphemed. He, who asks us to believe that He is with us in our suffering! You dare call us blasphemers? Then look, look, look at us!” (Crankshaw 79).

⁴³ “There is no healing, I see no light to light this endless night; nowhere a guiding hand. Prepare for your salvation... How could I, myself in need of consolation, In bitterer need than you, Dole comfort out to you? I can no more; Now I walk with you, at your head...” (Crankshaw 79-80.)

⁴⁴ “We bring you medicines, poor suffering ones; Drinks to assuage your thirst, cooling cloths to ease your burning pain, soothing tablets to lull you into sleep” (Crankshaw 80).

Schlaf, ihr Schwestern .../ Morgen ächzt ein neuer Tag .../ O brächtet Arzneien ihr / Für eine lange, lange Nacht. Wir wollen nicht erwachen./ Wir wollen nicht erwachen! . . . Zu spät, ihr Schwestern -/ Arme Flickerkunst vollführt ihr da. / Warum nicht wehrtet ihr im Frieden! . . . O schaut uns an” (Toller, W 34).⁴⁵

In the midst of their despair, the wounded men demand to know why no one prevented this terrible suffering from happening in the first place. The stage directions indicate that the nurses, unable to answer this question, “*erheben ihre Köpfe. Ihren Lippen entringt sich erschütternder Schrei. Sie brechen in sich zusammen. Verblassen*” (Toller, W 34)⁴⁶. Like the priest, they realize that their attempts to soothe and comfort are insufficient - and unwanted - in their encounter with the suffering bodies of these figures.

While representations of persons with disabilities as suffering individuals or as victims of the social ills of a particular era is one of the many familiar disability myths that has been thoroughly discussed in cultural disability studies (Mitchell and Snyder, *Representation and its Discontents*), such bodies are often read on a purely semiotic level in the secondary literature on *Die Wandlung*, that is, they are generally read as elements of the plot that exist solely to assist Friedrich in his transformation.⁴⁷ Both of these readings can be enriched by a consideration of these suffering, disabled bodies as diegetic bodies, for to understand them within the discursive context of the

⁴⁵ “What use is sleep to us? To-morrow only brings another day ... Oh, bring us drugs to lull us deep, deep into an endless night, that we may wake no more! . . . Too late, too late. Your mending and your patching does us no good. Why did you not prevent this horror? . . . Look closely at us, look” (Crankshaw 80).

⁴⁶ “*The nurses raise their heads, shape their lips to a shattering cry, collapse*” (Crankshaw 80).

⁴⁷ This is the case in Rania Elwardy’s 2009 dissertation, entitled *Das Wandlungskonzept in der expressionistischen Dramatik. Ein Denkmodell zur Bewältigung der Krise zur Zeit der Moderne*.

dramatic world they inhabit is to take them seriously and understand their relation to bodies outside of the dramatic world.

For instance, it is noteworthy that there is little or no place for the experience of suffering within the dramatic world of scene six. Against this discursive backdrop, this second set of cripples asserts itself and insists upon pain, suffering, and even the wish for death as legitimate ways of experiencing an acquired disability. While the doctor, the nurses, and the priest would prefer the patients to think positively, rejoice in all the wonders of modern medicine and rehabilitation science and believe in the eternal promises of organized religion, the patients counter and defeat each of these discourses by returning to their embodied experiences, as negative as they are.

In this scene it is possible to detect discursive connections between the dramatic world and the historical-discursive context in which Toller created it. As discussed in the introduction, the writings and work of Hans Würtz and Konrad Biesalski, with their emphasis on rehabilitation, recovery, the return to economic self-sufficiency, and the reintegration of “crippled” bodies into normative discourses on the body, were part of well-intentioned efforts to improve the lives of men who had been injured in the war. However, they also implicitly write out the voices of individuals and thus the discursive legitimacy of the difficult experiences of pain, suffering, feelings of loss, hopelessness, and a crisis of identity that wounded men returning from the front may have felt after sustaining severe impairments.

Seen in this light, the first set of “cripples” in scene six reveal the dark side of rehabilitationist discourse, as I highlighted above. On the one hand, the figure of the doctor/professor (who represents medical professionals in the service of militaristic

aims) is portrayed as the unrelenting perpetrator of their dehumanization. The scene ends much like it began, with the doctor/professor repeating part of his speech about the higher mission of medical science: “Ich wiederhol, was ich am Anfang sagte! / Wir sind gewappnet gegen alle Schrecken. / Wir könnten uns die positive Branche nennen, / Die negative ist die Rüstungsindustrie” (Toller, W 34).⁴⁸ On the other hand, the student - who has the countenance of Friedrich - recognizes the horrible consequences of discursive techniques that treat individual bodies as pawns in the service of collective interests.

The second set of “cripples” discussed above addresses other discourses on disability that were circulating during and following the First World War. Their words resist not only the image of the disabled as poor victims who deserve pity and charity from the nurses, but they also resist the religious discourse that God will save them from their suffering. The alternative truth upon which they insist is the truth of their embodied experience. Raising their own voices - individual as well as collective - they demand a discursive space in which to express their suffering. In the course of their respective interactions, both the priest and the nurses catch at least a glimpse into the diegetic experiences and disabled subjectivities of these five figures.

The representations of disability this scene contains engage with some conventional disability myths typically found in literature; however, these myths do not play out in conventional ways. Besides the myth of “disability as object of pity and / or charity” (Dolmage, *Disability Rhetoric* 58), the “kill or cure” myth (57) is also brought to the surface. While doctor and the nurses want to cure the impaired

⁴⁸ “. . . let me repeat my words of introduction. We can face all horrors here. We might indeed call our work positive, the negative being the munition works” (Crankshaw 81).

bodies in the scene by means of medicine and rehabilitation, the priest wants to cure (or at least ease) the suffering of these injured characters by means of religion.

The figures in question, however, respond at each turn with the assertion that their experience of suffering and despair is valid. At the end of the scene, the reader is not presented with a clear resolution to the tension between “kill” and “cure.” The fact that this question remains unanswered is an indication that this scene takes this myth to another level by simply pointing to the moment of suffering without providing conventional closure. While the impaired bodies we encounter are neither cured nor killed, they do insist on suffering, despair, and the desire for death as valid (initial) reactions to acquired disabilities. This scene also points to the difficulties these men face in the midst of discourses that would prefer them to forgo such emotions and be (re-) integrated as quickly as possible into the ranks of the able-bodied via rehabilitation.

The representations of disability in scene seven are of special interest for this analysis not only because they are thoroughly wrapped up in the broader themes of the play, but because they explicitly negotiate discourses on bodily ideals. The scene opens with Friedrich working in his studio “an einer überlebensgroßen Statue, ein nackter Mensch, ganz Muskeln, der geballte Fäuste reckt. In einer Stellung, die brutal wirkt” (Toller, W 35).⁴⁹ The description of this statue’s appearance is strikingly reminiscent of the statues of nude men created by sculptors such as Arno Breker (1900-1991) that would come to embody fascist aesthetics in the 1930’s, for instance *Readiness* (1937). In his article, “Fascist Aesthetics and Society: Some

⁴⁹ “. . . a more than life-size statue of a naked man, heavily muscular, with clenched, uplifted fists. There is brutality in the pose” (Crankshaw 82).

Considerations” (1996), George L. Mosse discusses the way the work of artists such as Breker built upon stereotypes and neoclassical aesthetics to foster notions of the “ideal type, of the ‘new fascist man’ or the German Aryan” (248). In a symbolic sense, sculptures of muscular, virile, and determined men came to represent the perfect union of dynamic and discipline in society. Furthermore, they also served as physical ideals to which men were expected to aspire: “. . . as he built and sculptured his body, . . . his mind would come to encompass all the manly virtues which the fascists prized so highly” (248). Thus, such representations of the body both reflected and produced political and physical ideals.

In *Disability Aesthetics* (2010), Tobin Siebers discusses the ways in which Expressionist art, much of which Adolf Hitler later described as “degenerate art”, participated in a critique of able-bodied aesthetics via an acceptance of disability as an essential aesthetic principle (29). Similarly, the studio scene in *Die Wandlung*, which is central both to the plot and to the development of the protagonist, brings into question the aesthetic of ultra-ability that is embodied in Friedrich’s statue. Even as he chisels away at the marble, Friedrich ponders its cold, lifeless quality as well as the validity of the ideals this statue is supposed to embody:

Der Meißel bricht Marmor... toten Marmor. Bin ich zu schwach, um
Stein mit Blut zu füllen . . . Glutende Wellen sollen davon
ausströmen... Menschen aufrüttelnd... Daß sie nie vergessen, ihr
Vaterland zu verteidigen . . . Ist da eine geistige Kraft, die zum Kampf
zwingt? ... Oder bestimmt Willkür den Feind? ... Da klafft ein
Widerspruch - - Warum nur will es mir nicht gelingen... die Aufgabe

bleibt sich gleich groß... Bin ich zu klein, sie zu gestalten? . . . Um
Symbol zu schaffen des siegriechen Vaterlandes. (Toller, W 35)⁵⁰

Friedrich is interrupted from his work by a visit from his unnamed friend and then from Gabrielle, his beloved, to whom he bids farewell; he then firmly resolves to continue his work on the statue. Engrossed in his work, he addresses the statue as if it were admonishing him: “Mahnst du mich? / Der Sieg des Vaterlandes, / Ich glaube an ihn, / Ich will ihn glauben, / Ich will ihn gestalten, / Mit meinem Herzblut will ich ihn gestalten” (Toller, W 37).⁵¹

In this moment, Friedrich is interrupted yet again when a woman rings at the door. She is described in the stage directions as “elend, verschlissen” (Toller, W 37)⁵² and she is accompanied by her husband, who seems to suffer from post-traumatic stress and whose “Gesicht ist von Geschwüren zerrissen” (Toller, W 37).⁵³ Their interaction seems to be driven by a number of disability myths. For example, Friedrich’s inquiry into the nature of the woman’s disability as well as his sympathetic response that she is a “poor soul” (Crankshaw 84) invokes the myth of “disability as object of pity and/or charity” (Dolmage, *Disability Rhetoric* 58). This is underscored further by indications in the stage directions that both the woman and her husband break down sobbing (Toller, W 38-39). A second myth - “disability as a

⁵⁰ “The chisel chips marble, dead marble; am I powerless to breathe life into it? Life intense must stream from my creation ... to wake men from their sleep ... to fire them to fight for their country until death ... Is it some spiritual force inside us that forces us to fight? ... Or is the enemy selected arbitrarily? ... There’s a contradiction there. ... Why can I not succeed? ... The problem is so great. Am I too small to symbolize it? ... the completion of a worthy symbol of our triumphant Fatherland” (Crankshaw 82).

⁵¹ “So you would remind me? The triumph of the Fatherland. I believe in that, I will believe in that; I will believe in it and symbolize it forever. If it costs me my life I will do it” (Crankshaw 84).

⁵² “miserable and emaciated” (Crankshaw 84).

⁵³ “face is a mass of sores” (Crankshaw 85).

sign of social ill” (Dolmage, *Disability Rhetoric* 61) - is also present in the explanation the woman gives for the cause of their disability:

Sie haben mich umschlichen wie Schakale, die anderen und die unseren . . . Was konnten sie dafür? Man hat sie in Käfigen hinaus geführt wie Vieh. Was weiß Vieh von Euren guten Sitten? . . . Da traf mich – einer – krank, zerfressen, steckte mich an. Ob er schlecht war, was weiß ich. Nennt sie ja Helden. Nennt sie ja alle Helden, Euer armes Schlachtvieh. . . . Für Euer Vaterland! Für die paar Reichen die prassen und prassen und uns aussaugen, die mit dem Ertrag unserer Arbeit galantes Spiel treiben. O wie ich sie hasse, diese Henkersknechte. . . . Was ist das für ein Gott, der uns im Elend verkommen läßt? Der uns verhöhnt, indem er sagt: Selig sind die Armen, den ihrer wartet das Himmelreich. Der Gott der Liebe und des Mitleids und der Wohltätigkeitsfeste . . . Wir sind nur Vieh... nur Vieh... Wir sind immer Vieh. (Toller, W 37-38)⁵⁴

In the woman’s response, we see not only a taking up of the myth of “disability as object of pity / charity,” but also a clear rejection of it. She places the blame for her and her husband’s sickness firmly in the hands of the state and the wealthy elite, who sent the poor out to fight a war in the name of God and country that in fact lined their own pockets. She also criticizes both religious and charitable discourses for their part

⁵⁴ “They surrounded me, they sidled up to me like jackals. . . . What should they know? Driven out to fight like cattle. What do cattle know of morals? . . . And one among them was diseased and corrupted, and infected me. How can I tell you whether he was bad or not? They called him a hero. They were all heroes. Wretched cattle in a slaughter-house . . . For our country’s sake? . . . For the sake of a small handful of rich men who feast and debauch and gamble with the products of our labour. Ah, how I hate them! Brutes, devils! . . . what sort of a God is it that lets us rot away in misery? That mocks us with his “blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven”. The God of love and pity and charity bazaars! . . . We are brutes... just brutes... for ever brutes” (Crankshaw 84).

in legitimizing the poverty and helplessness of the poor, for in this way they continue to maintain the power structures that led to the emergence of impoverished and powerless “war invalids” in the first place. As W. A. Willibrand pointed out already in his 1947 article “The Timely Dramas of Ernst Toller,” such moments in this play reflect Toller’s belief that, in order for society to be renewed, all social institutions must be “cleansed of the oppressive, anti-social aspects which they have acquired and the materialistic opportunism manifested in some of their representatives . . . that tend to debase the human personality” (161).

In this context it is worth looking more closely at the animal metaphors the woman uses to express the low position of those sent to war and especially of those who have been disabled as a result, in particular her reference to them as “cattle” and “brutes.” By invoking the human-animal binary and the hierarchy inherent to it, she underscores the manipulation and maltreatment of people considered by the rich and powerful to be mere pawns. Her metaphoric use of animals is aimed at dispelling the myth that religion and charity have the best interests of believers and beneficiaries in mind. Rather, she demonstrates how these presumed loci of truth and knowledge are thoroughly intertwined with other systems of power by legitimizing unequal social relations within which some human bodies are “reduced” to the status of the animal.

After the woman and her husband depart, Friedrich cannot shake their words from his mind. Indeed, his interaction with these two characters throws him into a chaos that leads him to abandon his project. His subsequent raving is rich with metaphoric body-language that simultaneously draws attention to the fate of bodies caught up in nationalistic and militaristic discourse:

Wahnsinn befällt mich. Wohin? Wo bist du, Ahasver, daß ich dir folgen kann? Freudig will ich dir folgen. Nur fort von hier. Millionen von Armstümpfen recken sich um mich. Schmerzgebrüll von Millionen Müttern tost durch den Raum. Wohin, wohin? Dort Wimmern ungeborener Kinder, dort Weinen Irrer. O heiliges Weinen! Geschändete Sprache, geschändete Menschen! ... Um des Vaterlandes willen . . . Ward der Staat Zuhälter und das Vaterland eine getretene Hure, die jeder brutalen Lust sich verkauft? Ausgestattet mit dem Segen der Kupplerin Kirche? Kann ein Vaterland, das das verlangt, göttlich sein? Wert, seine Seele dafür zu opfern? Nein, tausendmal nein. Lieber will ich wandern, ruhelos wandern, mit dir, Ahasver! (*Stürzt auf die Statue.*) *Ich zertrümmere dich, Sieg des Vaterlandes!* (Toller, W 39, emphasis in original)⁵⁵

Taking a hammer, Friedrich proceeds to destroy the statue - it is also possible to say that he *disables* it - in a fit of rage before sinking to the floor in exhaustion. After awhile he stands and makes a peculiar declaration: “Ich verrate mein Vaterland, an das ich glaubte, für das ich mich einsetzte, für das ich mein Lebenswerk schaffen wollte... um eines Vagabundenpaares willen. Nein, gewiß nicht um eines

⁵⁵ “Madness, madness. Where? Where to go? Ahasuerus, where are you? I follow you, Ahasuerus; joyfully I follow you. Anything, anything to escape! A million shattered arms are stretched towards me. The agonizing cries of a million mothers echo in my ears. Where? Where? The unborn children whimper. The madmen cry. O, holy weeping! Speech defiled! Mankind defiled! ... For our country’s sake! . . . Perhaps the State is a pimp, and our country a whore to be sold for any brutal lust – blessed by that procuress, the Church! Can a Fatherland that asks so much really be divine? Can it be worth the sacrifice of a single soul? No, no, no! A thousand times no! Rather wander without rest, without hope, wander with you, Ahasuerus. (*He throws himself upon the statue.*) I shatter you to fragments, victory of the Fatherland!” (Crankshaw 85).

Vagabundenpaares willen” (Toller, W 39).⁵⁶ After first declaring that the interaction with the woman and her husband is the reason why he must abandon his project and his unquestioning devotion to his country, he then retracts his statement, saying that they were not the cause for his sudden change of heart.

Despite the uncertainty Friedrich expresses, his encounter with the two “war invalids,” whose appearance and embodied experiences form a stark contrast to the appearance and lifelessness of his statue, constitutes the moment in the narrative of the play that initiates his transformation (Toller, W 39-40). Positioned as an important turning point halfway through *Die Wandlung*, the encounter with disability in this scene can be categorized under the familiar literary trope of “disability as ethical test”, in which disability appears merely to help an able-bodied character along on his or her journey toward becoming a better person. Both Quayson (*Aesthetic Nervousness* 36) and Dolmage (*Disability Rhetoric* 60) discuss and critique the narrative and rhetorical functions of this mode of representing disability. Such critiques are certainly called for in an evaluation of the representation of disability in scene seven of *Die Wandlung*, since it is clearly tied to the protagonist’s moment of revelation.

Considering all of the encounters and interactions in *Die Wandlung*, we see that Friedrich’s encounters with disability, as well as his experience of disabling discourses, play a role in his transformation. The disabled characters he encounters (and occasionally embodies) function within the narrative as eye-openers. Interacting

⁵⁶ “I betray my Fatherland, the Fatherland in which I believed, to which I pledged myself, to which I dedicated my life-work - I betray my Fatherland for the sake of two poor, miserable beggars” (Crankshaw 86). Note: The last line is not present in the English translation, but if translated it would read something like “No, certainly not for the sake of two poor, miserable beggars.”

with people who are suffering as a result of the war - and having experienced the horror of war firsthand - makes him change his mind about politics and religion. He comes to reject the state for its protection of the rich elite and its willingness to send out the poor masses to fight its wars, but he also comes to realize the role of organized religion in legitimizing the unequal distribution of power in his society.

Friedrich's "evolution" to a more "enlightened" state means that he forgoes a sense of national or religious belonging and sets out - as the leader of a peaceful revolution - to establish "humanity" as the defining category of belonging that should inspire people to live their lives with more respect for themselves and for others. Both interesting and problematic is the fact that animals are explicitly excluded from this project on the level of language. While his interaction with the "war invalids" reveals that the human-animal binary is inherently violent, Friedrich's insistence on "humanity" as the basic element that lends value to life is not only an implicit devaluation of non-human life, but it also leaves open the possibility of categorizing humans as unworthy of life if they do not live up to humanist ideals.

The final scene (*Dreizehntes Bild*) of the play portrays Friedrich rallying the people to a concept of revolution that is not violent, but rather is based on the concept of brotherhood and the idea that in order to create a more just society, individuals must first undergo a transformation that allows them to discover their true selves: "Ihr seid alle keine Menschen mehr, seid Zerrbilder euer selbst. Und ihr könntet doch Menschen sein, wenn ihr den Glauben an euch und den Menschen hättet, wenn ihr

Erfüllte wäret im Geist” (Toller, W 60).⁵⁷ Thus, Friedrich has transformed from a devoted nationalist into a fervent humanist, and like a spiritual leader he calls on the inhabitants of his dramatic world to do the same.

Because Friedrich is the protagonist of an Expressionist drama written by the politically active Ernst Toller, we can imagine that this call extends beyond the boundaries of the dramatic world and into the physical world in which it was written and performed. Indeed, the discourses on disability and the body that are directly or indirectly addressed in *Die Wandlung* are also recognizable in the physical world in the realm of science and medicine, and also within political, economic, religious, and aesthetic discourses. The disabled characters we encounter serve as a critique of those discourses by demonstrating how they lead to or worsen the suffering of individuals. These characters are not foregrounded in the text, but neither are any of the other able-bodied characters; the focus of the play is generally directed at Friedrich.

The reader never learns about the fate of the seven prototypes, whether the wounded men who spoke up at the hospital live or die, or how the disabled husband and wife go on to lead their lives after their brief encounter with Friedrich; thus, it is tempting to read them as narrative prostheses who function only to assist Friedrich on his path to transformation. However, since Friedrich’s encounters with suffering are what lead him to turn his devotion to regenerating society, one can imagine that these characters, as diegetic bodies whose suffering he shares, are included in his call to “wake up” and participate in building a more just society: “Brüder, reckt zermarterte

⁵⁷ “You are all of you, all of you, no longer men and women; you are distorted images of your real selves. And yet you could still be men and women, still be human, if only you had faith in yourselves and in humanity, if only you would grant the spirit its fulfillment” (Crankshaw 105).

Hand / Flammender freudiger Ton! / Schreite durch unser freies Land / Revolution!
Revolution!” (Toller, W 61).⁵⁸

This is certainly the case when it comes to the “Kranker” (sick man) with whom he speaks toward the end of this last scene (Toller, W 101-102). This disillusioned man declares that it would be better for the world if everyone would commit suicide at institutions established for that purpose, a statement that eerily foreshadows the *Aktion T4* euthanasia program that was established in Berlin in 1939. Although the goals of that program were not as sweeping as those proposed by this figure, it is worth noting that these lines are spoken by a “sick man”, who, in advocating for mass assisted suicide, picks up on a discourse that would transform into the idea that those who are mentally “sick” or disabled should be put to death twenty years after the publication of this text.

It is also significant that Friedrich rejects this idea outright and seeks to find another, non-violent solution to the sick man’s suffering. Following their interaction, he declares: “Ich werde ihn suchen müssen, noch heute - meine Mutter will ich bitten, ihn zu pflegen... nein... die Studentin” (Toller, W 36).⁵⁹ Thus, Friedrich believes that there is still hope even for this sick man, who no longer believes in the power of love to transform individuals and society for the better. This hope is also gendered, for, although he himself rejects the advances of the student and the doting of his mother, he believes that a woman’s love will be able to “heal” this man’s pain.

⁵⁸ “Brothers, stretch out your tortured hands with cries of radiant, ringing joy! Stride freely through our liberated land with cries of Revolution, Revolution!” (Crankshaw 105).

⁵⁹ “I must seek him out - to-day ... I’ll ask my mother to look after him... no... that girl who came to me” (Crankshaw 102).

This analysis has examined the role of the representations of disability in *Die Wandlung* on the thematic and linguistic levels and demonstrated their significance on a diegetic level (i.e. within the world of the drama) as well as their semiotic dimensions, which connect them to the discursive-historical context in which they were written (i.e. to the world beyond the drama). I have shown that the representations of disability in *Die Wandlung*, as representations of bodies that were impaired/disabled as a direct result of war, take up a variety of disability myths in literature while simultaneously emphasizing the importance of embodied experience in the production of knowledge about disability. Furthermore, these representations participate in a critique of the production of knowledge about disabled and suffering bodies within the discursive spheres of religion/charity, patriotism/militarism, and rehabilitation science via a distinct disability aesthetic.

As representations of disability positioned within an Expressionist drama, the disabled characters in *Die Wandlung* cannot be described as “realistic”; however, they certainly refer to and reach into the historical-discursive context of Germany immediately following WWI. Seen in dialogue with that context, the function of the representations of disability of *Die Wandlung* is twofold: First, they are connected to a belief in the brotherhood of man and the universality of the experience of suffering. Second, they call the reader to action by serving as a reminder that violence leads to suffering and that peaceful action is called for in the struggle to establish a more just society in which everyone is valued.

Chapter Two

Embodied Experience and Re-appropriation as Resistance to Disabling

Discourses

Although it can stand alone as a one-acter and has been performed as such,⁶⁰ “Der Krüppel: Ein Zwischenspiel aus der Asphaltperspektive” forms a structural bridge between the scenes “Die Lebendigen” (the living) and “Die Toten” (the dead) in the play *Die Wiedergeburt in Kain: Drei Revolutionsakte* (1920) by Karl August Wittfogel (published under his pen name, Carl Julius Haidvogel). This relatively short, mid-way act portrays a day in the life of a “Krüppel aus dem Jahre 1916”⁶¹ (Wittfogel, K⁶² 26) as he begs on the street, focusing on his encounters with various other members of his society. This act is framed by the quotation that precedes it on its title page, “Ecce homo...!” (John 19:5). Taken as a biblical reference, this quotation alludes to the protagonist’s social position, which is portrayed, like his position on the sidewalk, as the very lowest in society.

In this way, the inclusion of this quotation by Pontius Pilate - “behold the man”- can be understood as setting the tone for this *Zwischenspiel* by alluding to the suffering of Jesus Christ with regard to human suffering and degradation. This motif can also be found in the realm of the visual arts; for example, a 1925 painting of the same name by Lovis Corinth represents another Expressionist deployment of this Christian imagery. Wittfogel’s citation of the “ecce homo” motif at the beginning of this act integrates the image of the suffering Christ into the expressionist project of

⁶⁰ *Das Jahrhundertbuch* (268).

⁶¹ “cripple from the year 1916” (my translation).

⁶² I will be using the abbreviation “K” for Wittfogel’s drama “Der Krüppel” for all references to follow.

representing inner states and universal experiences. This motif, as well as the act's position between "Die Lebendigen" and "Die Toten," frames "Der Krüppel" as a midway station between life and death in *Die Wiedergeburt in Kain*. While the first act depicts the rebellious, youthful energy of revolution and the third presents a critique of war and the death and destruction it causes, the second portrays the suffering, degradation, and exclusion experienced by someone who has become a casualty of war.

At the same time, "ecce homo" also alludes to Nietzsche's infamous autobiographical writing that carries the same title (*Ecce homo. Wie man wird, was man ist*), which was published 1908, as well as to a poem Nietzsche published in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1882/1887). Both texts are written in the light of Nietzsche's criticism of Christianity as well as his task to reevaluate all values. His concept of the *ecce homo* poses a thorough criticism of the moral values and ideals people hold onto and attempts to demonstrate how these ruin humanity: "Die Lüge des Ideals war bisher der Fluch über die Realität, die Menschheit selbst ist durch sie bis in ihre untersten Instinkte hinein verlogen und falsch geworden" (Nietzsche 258).⁶³

Given the centrality of Nietzsche's ideas within Expressionism,⁶⁴ it is likely that Wittfogel was at least aware of these texts and may have alluded to their message in this piece. As such, the quotation "Ecce homo!" could also be read as an allusion to Nietzsche's task to challenge ideals and question morals and values, which sheds an interesting light on the discourses on able-bodiedness and ability in this act. It also

⁶³ "The lie of the ideal has been the curse on reality; on its account humanity itself has become fake and false right down to its deepest instincts" (Friedrich Nietzsche. *Ecce Homo. How to Become What You Are*. Trans. Duncan Large).

⁶⁴ Nietzsche is usually understood to be a mentor and visual thinker for Expressionist artists.

brings to mind Nietzsche's criticism of the "d cadence" of society and his claim of a "Kranken-Optik" (Nietzsche 266) that enables "sick persons" a clarity and insight into values and terminologies that "healthy people" do not have access to. His continued focus on "Leiblichkeit" ("embodiment") and his attempt to rehabilitate it as a valid concept opposes a long-standing tradition, which connects thought and consciousness to a disavowal or defiance of the body. While Nietzsche's overall evaluation of health and sickness are problematic when directly transferred to the experience of individuals, his attention to the clarity and knowledge that comes with the position outside of decadent society (between life and death, just as this act is) strikingly reverberates with Wittfogel's representation of the disabled protagonist.

In light of the preference in Expressionist drama for the symbolic and hyperbolic and its rejection of the Naturalistic mode of portraying "reality" as accurately as possible, the characters as well as the interactions between the *Kr ppel* and those who stop to interact with him cannot be read as "accurate" portrayals of "real persons" whose behaviour can be explained psychologically. Rather, within the Expressionist mode of representation, a reading of these characters on a highly symbolic level is essential for understanding their significance, even as they relate to embodiment and subjectivity. As dramatic caricatures, figures like *der junge Republikaner* (the young republican) and *der brave B rger* (the good citizen) constitute supra-individual "types" with exaggerated features that point to particular groups of people or specific loci of truth, knowledge, and power.

Indeed, all the characters and the interactions that drive the plot in this act can be read as discursive formations that embody ideas and negotiate various points of

view. For example, the fact that the *drei Offiziere* (three officers) do not have names but rather numeric designations - *der Erste, der Zweite, der Dritte* (the first, the second, the third) - implies that they do not represent particular individuals, but rather embody specific subject positions available to them within patriotic and militaristic discourse. Similarly, the protagonist of this act (*der Krüppel*), cannot be said to represent the experience of any one man who acquired an impairment in the Great War; rather, he represents the collective voice of all those who fell through the cracks of German society during that time. Interestingly, the characterization of the protagonist also constitutes a point of connection between the diegetic bodies in the text and physical bodies outside the world of the drama. While his body and words are highly semiotic to the point of caricaturization, they nevertheless make reference to and comment upon the experiences of individuals living in Germany during and just after WWI.

This connection can be especially observed on the micro-linguistic level; it is here that the play oscillates between embodied experiences and abstract concepts. Characterized by the stage directions as a “zerlump[te], einbeinige[r] Kriegsinvalide[.]” (Wittfogel, K 27),⁶⁵ the diegetic dimensions of the protagonist’s embodiment are clearly foregrounded. Though a symbolic reading of his body is certainly possible and valid, the protagonist’s disability is also a visible, physical phenomenon in the fictional world in which the drama is set. On the level of language, however, the piece continually blurs the lines between semiotic and diegetic representation by drawing abstract concepts into the realm of the physical

⁶⁵ “tattered, one-legged war invalid” (my translation. All following translations from German into English will be my own in this chapter.)

through language. Indeed, it is the disabled protagonist himself who ironically twists the language of those who interact with him in order to re-assign meaning to their words and re-shape their discourse to account for his embodied experience.

This blurring is present even in the opening lines of the act. As a boy helps the protagonist find a seat on the sidewalk, the protagonist says to him: “Stütz’ das eine Bein - halt! - nicht hier. - Da haben sie mir ja auch durchgeschossen! Ah... das brennt noch. Wie die Vaterlandsliebe” (Wittfogel, K 27).⁶⁶ Here, the protagonist plays on the semantic overlap between the burning of his wounds (“das brennt noch”) and the burning love of country (“die Vaterlandsliebe”) that led to his impairment. When a young girl ignores him as she brushes past his foot in her haste, he engages in an imaginary dialogue with her in which he reflects on his disability and its relationship to patriotism and militarism, as well as on his experience of exclusion and invisibility in his social context. As he talks about how quickly one can run on two legs and the importance of polished boots and marching, his words blur the boundaries between the physical and the abstract:

DER KRÜPPEL (*ihr nachsehend*): Wie das fliegt mit zwei Beinen.
Eins-zwei, eins-zwei... ja, zwei Beine! (*Ihr nachnickend.*) Nein-nein!
Lassen Sie sich nicht aufhalten, Fräulein! - Ich meinte nur: Sie haben
mir den Stiefel geputzt, - mit ihren Röcken. - Danke, Fräulein! (*Sieht
auf den Schuh, schaukelt ihn hin und her.*) Und gerade den da.
Dessentwegen ich einmal fünf Stunden nachgessen bin. (*Lacht.*)
Weil er nicht geputzt war - für die Kaiserparade. - Zu dumm! Und

⁶⁶ “Prop the one leg - stop! - not here. - They also shot through this one! Ah... it still burns. Like the love for the fatherland.”

jetzt sitze ich hier als Eckstein der ehemaligen Herrlichkeit und man macht vor mir Defilierung und putzt mir noch obendrein die Stiefel.
(Wittfogel, K 27)⁶⁷

Although the young girl did nothing but ignore him and “fly” past him on two legs, he ironically thanks her for polishing his boot. He recalls the time he was punished for having not properly polished his boots for an imperial parade, which reminds him of his current situation on the street: people now march past him, a symbol of the lost glory of the empire, and unintentionally clean his boots for him. In this short monologue, the protagonist moves linguistically from the realm of the physical into the realm of the abstract before returning again to the physical, thus explicitly playing with and drawing attention to the boundaries typically drawn between these two realms of meaning. Because the protagonist moves freely between embodied discourse and the abstract discourses of the nation-state, it is clear that his is a body that lives, breathes, and feels while simultaneously carrying semiotic meaning that extends beyond the physical into various currents of discourse.

Similarly, the first interaction between the *Krippel* and the three officers circles around the experience of impairment through the use of lexical items such as “Fuß” (foot), “schneidig” (dashing), “wegschneiden” (to cut away), “Schuß” (shot), and “hineinbeißen” (to bite into). The interaction begins as the officers approach the protagonist in the midst of their conversation about a woman and the way her skirt

⁶⁷ “THE CRIPPLE (*looking after her*): How it flies on two legs. One-two, one-two... yes, two legs! (*Nodding after her.*) No no! Don’t let yourself be stopped, young lady! I was just saying: You cleaned my boot, - with your skirts. - Thank you, young lady! (*Looks at his boot, moves it around.*) And just this one. Because of this one, I was in detention for five hours. (*Laughing.*) Because it wasn’t shined - for the emperor’s parade. - Too stupid! And now I am sitting here, as a corner block of the former grandeur, and people parade for me and on top of that, I even get my boots shined.”

reveals her sexy feet and legs: “DER ERSTE: Die Riette, sag’ ich Dir, die muß Du Dir unbedingt anschau’n. - Fußi!! und Rockerl bis da - zum Hineinbeißen” (Wittfogel, K 27).⁶⁸ At this point the officers turn their attention to the protagonist, and *der Dritte* asks him in which regiment he served. At first, he receives a straightforward answer: “Sechszwanzig, Herr Leutnant!” (Wittfogel, K 28).⁶⁹ However, when the third officer responds by saying that the men of the 26th regiment are “schneidige Burschen” (Wittfogel, K 28),⁷⁰ the protagonist re-appropriates the approving term “schneidig” and the previous discussion of the woman’s foot/leg in order to shift the focus of the conversation from the daring spirit of his regiment to his experience of having his leg amputated after being injured in the war: “Ja, Herr Leutnant, sehr schneidig. Den einen Fuß haben sie mir ganz *weggeschnitten*” (Wittfogel, K 28, my emphasis).⁷¹ Wittfogel plays here with the double meaning of “schneidig,” which in German contains the verb “schneiden” (to cut). As “daring” becomes “cut,” the attention of the reader is directed toward the inevitable connection between military enterprises and impairment.

At first, the officers are willing to follow this shift in conversation toward embodied experience. The third officer inquires into how the protagonist received his wound: “Hm - Granatschuß?” (Wittfogel, K 28)⁷². Once again, the protagonist shifts the direction of the conversation by re-appropriating the second lexical item of the compound “Granatschuss” (grenade shot) and turning it into “Vorschuß” (advance

⁶⁸ “THE FIRST: You absolutely have to check out Riette, I tell you. – Feet!! And a skirt up to here – one could just bite into it!”

⁶⁹ “Twenty-sixth, lieutenant!”

⁷⁰ “dashing fellows”.

⁷¹ “Yes, lieutenant, very dashing / cutting. They cut my one foot off”.

⁷² “Hm – shell fire?”

payment): “Nein - Vorschuß auf die ewige Seligkeit hier im Staub” (Wittfogel, K 28).⁷³ His refusal to provide an unambiguous answer regarding the cause of his injury and his insistence on relating the nature of his suffering are more than just a clever language game. The protagonist’s responses seem like attempts to shake the officers out of their routine discourse of military camaraderie and force them to confront the dark side of military service. Having fought for his country, the protagonist has lost not only a leg, but his injury has also reduced him a position at the margins of society - that of a beggar - and thus he is unable to take up a subject position as a proud, able-bodied soldier as the three officers do.

For the officers, the protagonist’s words do not make sense. Because he experiences the world from a different embodied position, he speaks outside of their familiar discourse. Unable - or unwilling - to see things from his point of view and engage him on that level, the three officers dismiss him as mad and continue on their way, returning to their conversation about Riette’s skirt and legs: “DER DRITTE (*zu den anderen mit Handbewegung*): Bei dem muß es nicht richtig sein. - Also weiter. Die Rockerl zum Hineinbeißen...” (Wittfogel, K 28).⁷⁴ The protagonist calls after them: “Die Fußer!!! . . . Zum Hineinbeißen! . . . Ja, da hat’s hineingebissen! . . . Sechsmal...” (Wittfogel, K 28),⁷⁵ thus ignoring their dismissal and continuing to appropriate their language to describe what happened to him in the war.

The protagonist then interacts with *der junge Republikaner*, who stops to ask him if he is in pain (Wittfogel, K 28). When the protagonist avoids answering him

⁷³ “No - advance payment for the eternal bliss here in the dust.”

⁷⁴ “THE THIRD (to the others with a hand movement): He can’t be quite right. - Continue. The skirts to bite into...”

⁷⁵ “The feet!!! . . . To bite into! . . . Yes, this is where it bit into! . . . six times . . . “

directly, the young republican offers him what he considers to be good advice for an “invalid” in his position:

Sie sollten nicht hier sitzen. Sie sollten sich einen Rollstuhl anschaffen, den Sie selbst bewegen könnten. Dann könnten Sie Zeitungen kolportieren. Das ist ein gutes Geschäft. Und wäre gleichzeitig eine nützliche Beschäftigung. Ich kenne eine Menge Invalide, die arbeiten. Auch mit einem Fuß. Man hat jetzt wunderbare Prothesen. Man spürt sie gar nicht. Sie ist ihnen lieber als ihr Fuß. (Wittfogel, K 28)⁷⁶

This advice constitutes a discursive formation rich with rehabilitationist overtones that offer up solutions to the “problem of disability;” in short, the protagonist should make use of modern technology to become self-sufficient instead of wallowing in self-pity and remaining a drain on society. He should obtain a wheelchair or have himself fitted with a prosthesis that he “wouldn’t even feel” and that would be “better than a real leg.” Above all, such technologies would enable him to work and allow him to engage in “useful activity.”

However, the protagonist rejects this patronizing advice and shoots back at the *junge Republikaner*: “Danke. - Ich brauche kein Ersatzstück. Ich habe genug an dem einen Fuß, um Ihren guten Wünschen vor den Steiß zu treten” (Wittfogel, K 28).⁷⁷ What is being negotiated in this interaction is the idea that one should do everything in one’s power to be able-bodied in order to be an economically self-

⁷⁶ “You shouldn’t sit here. You should get a wheelchair that you can move yourself. You would be able to deliver newspapers. That’s a good business. And at the same time, it would be a useful activity. I know a lot of invalids who work. Even with one foot. There are wonderful prostheses available now. You won’t even feel them. You will like them better than your foot.”

⁷⁷ “Thanks. - I don’t need a substitute. I have enough of that one foot to give your good wishes the boot.”

sufficient, useful member of society. Behind the *junge Republikaner's* ostensibly well meaning words lurks the implicit belief that if one does not engage in economically productive activity, one is of no use to society. This productive activity is intrinsically connected to the able body, reinforcing the nexus between the body and subjectivity. Thus, by rejecting the young republican's unsolicited advice in the form of an embodied figure of speech, the protagonist also implicitly rejects the utilitarian value of life that underlies it.

After the *junge Republikaner* walks away in indignation, the protagonist is approached by *zwei junge Damen*, the first of whom asks him "Wo wurden Sie denn so hergerichtet?" (Wittfogel, K 29).⁷⁸ The verb "herrichten" used by the young ladies reduces the protagonist's situation to a mechanical state of being; since the German "herrichten" not only means to dress up, but also to arrange or to furbish, it is a verb that is most often used for objects. The protagonist replies specifically with regard to this verb and transforms it into a different lexical item that includes the stem "richten" (to judge), which is part of "herrichten" (to arrange), but that contains an important shift in meaning: "Bei einer *Hinrichtung*, Fräulein. - Ja. - Fünfzehntausend Mann wurden damals hingerichtet" (Wittfogel, K 29, my emphasis).⁷⁹

In answering in this fashion, the protagonist partially answers her question while shifting the focus of the conversation. By telling her that he acquired his impairment at an "execution," he is pointing to the horror and trauma of his experience instead of merely relating information about the place ("Wo?") he was injured. Furthermore, he shifts the emphasis from the "arrangement" of his body and

⁷⁸ "Where did you get arranged like this?"

⁷⁹ "At an execution, Miss. - Yes. - Fifteen thousand were executed back then."

the result (“hergerichtet”) to the lived outcome and the implied suffering as well as the annihilation of life (“hinrichten”) brought about by events in the war. However, instead of engaging him on the level of his experience, the first woman replies with the voice of charity:

DIE ERSTE: Es ist doch ein Skandal, wie langsam die Invalidenvorsorge funktioniert. Da tut doch rasche Hilfe not . . . Ich bin nämlich Ausschußmitglied des Vereines für die geistige Unterstützung der mit der Invalidenfürsorge betrauten Staatsämter. - Ihnen muß geholfen werden. Der Staat hat die Pflicht, hier sozial vorzugehen. - Ich will mir Ihren Namen notieren. (Wittfogel, K 29-30)⁸⁰

Because the two young women are positioned here as the “helpers of the less fortunate,” they embody the patronizing discourse of charity that is positioned above those it seeks to help. Similar to the young republican before them, the two young women use language to position themselves above the protagonist and subject him to the rules of their discourse.

The passage above also creates the feeling that these two women are not addressing the protagonist directly, but rather talking over his head. For example, when spoken, “Ihnen muß geholfen werden” could sound just as much like “they must be helped” as “you must be helped.” Furthermore, the first woman appears to be using this interaction to brag that she has the status of an “Ausschußmitglied des

⁸⁰ “THE FIRST: It’s a scandal how slowly the provision for invalids is responding. Quick help is necessary here... I am a board member of the society for the spiritual support of the public agencies who are in charge of the care of invalids. - One needs to help you/them. The state has the obligation to take social action here. - I’ll take down your name.”

Vereines für die geistige Unterstützung der mit der Invalidenfürsorge betrauten Staatsämter.“ In this sense, charitable discourse is revealed as being more concerned with the moral superiority of its supporters rather than with the wellbeing of those it ostensibly seeks to assist.

Thus, by accepting their assistance within their discourse, the protagonist would also be subjecting his body to classification as an object of pity and as a recipient of charity who is obliged to be deeply grateful. Unwilling to accept the discursive terms of their offer to help, he replies: “Mir gefällt es hier ganz gut. Behalten Sie den mir zugedachten Lorbeer für die Aufbesserung Ihrer Ausspeisungen” (Wittfogel, K 30).⁸¹ His response makes it clear that he does not want to be used to merely bolster their numbers and win laurels for their cause. At the same time, he points out to the reader that the “Ausspeisungen” (“outputs”) of their organization require “Aufbesserung” (“improvement”) within the charitable system that is supposed to counterbalance the disabling effects of capitalism.

The first woman confirms that something of the sort was indeed the case by replying that he is ungrateful and then saying defensively to the other woman “Komm! Wenn man uns die Güte so schwer macht, darf sich niemand über den mangelnden Sozialismus beklagen” (Wittfogel, K 30).⁸² Speaking partly to their backs and partly to himself, the protagonist then muses: “Schaut man die Menschen von oben her an, tun sie einem schön. - Schaut man sie von unten an her, wie ich -

⁸¹ “I like it here well enough. Keep the laurels you are thinking of giving to me to yourself to improve your output.”

⁸² “Come! If he makes it so hard to be benevolent, he can’t complain about a deficient socialism.”

wird man der Spucknapf ihres schlechten Gewissens” (Wittfogel, K 30).⁸³ While the protagonist’s rejection of the women’s offer to take down his name means that he forgoes social assistance, it also means that he does not allow himself to be turned into a figurative cuspidor for society’s guilty conscience.

At this point the protagonist is confronted by *der brave Bürger* (“the good citizen”) who stops to publicly scold him in front of others on the street, saying “Da beobachte ich den gut zehn Minuten schon. Die Leute sind freundlich mit ihm, möchten sich seiner annehmen. Glauben Sie, er sagt: danke. - Daß er ihnen nicht gerade nachspuckt. Ja, meine Herren. Eine Gemütsroheit sondergleichen” (Wittfogel, K 30).⁸⁴ Others return to the scene to confirm the good citizen’s indignation. For example, the young republican accuses him of being lazy, a reference to the familiar trope of “physical deformity as sign of internal flaw” (Dolmage, *Disability Rhetoric* 58): “...das kann ich bestätigen. Ich hab’ ihm einen Rollstuhl vorgeschlagen und vernünftige Arbeit angetragen. - Aber wie die Herrschaften schon sind - betteln ist halt leichter” (Wittfogel, K 30).⁸⁵ The good citizen echoes this by saying that the protagonist is one of those “nicht wirkliche Krüppel” (Wittfogel, K 31)⁸⁶ who are unwilling to work and who use disability as an excuse to shirk their responsibilities.

This final encounter brings together common themes from all the previous interactions. Again and again, the *Krüppel* refuses to participate in others’ narratives about his body, a refusal that is subsequently re-integrated into other narratives about

⁸³ “If you view humanity from a privileged position, everyone is kind. If you view humanity from below, like me, you’ll find that people treat you like the cuspidor of their bad conscience.”

⁸⁴ “I’ve been watching him for about ten minutes now. People are friendly to him and want to help him. But does he say ‘thank you’? It’s a wonder he doesn’t spit after them. Yes, my good sirs. A brutal disposition par excellence.”

⁸⁵ “...I can confirm that. I suggested that he get a wheelchair and a proper job. -But, you know the way these people are - begging is just easier.”

⁸⁶ “a person who is not really disabled, but just faking their disability.”

persons with disabilities, namely that they are lazy, ungrateful and bothersome. Literarily, the presence of the disability drop motif, “the idea that people with disabilities are ‘faking’ or embellishing their disabilities” (Dolmage, *Disability Rhetoric* 62) is referenced in this encounter when the *Krüppel* is accused of merely putting on the act of being disabled. He is finally compelled to disprove this accusation by revealing his impairments after being repeatedly pushed into the position of having to explain himself.

In this moment, which occurs at the high point of the dramatic tension, a *Schutzmann* commands him to “stand up and stop bothering people”, in response to which the *Krüppel* rises - with great difficulty - to his feet and reprimands those who have gathered around to criticize his behaviour. As he slowly makes his way to a standing position, he reveals and points out his numerous scars as well as his missing leg, thus displaying the authenticity of his disability and eliciting cries of horror from the crowd. He addresses the people in a passionate monologue that forms the high point of the action and which I include here in its entirety because of its significance for the protagonist’s positioning of himself as a disabled subject within the narrative:

Da-!! (*Den zweiten Arm zeigend, überall Narben.*) Da-!! Habt Ihr noch nicht genug...? Da!... Da...! (*Reißt das Hemd auf der Brust auseinander.*) Und da drinnen. (*Gegen das Herz schlagend.*) -Stemmt mir die Brust auf und schaut hinein. Da drinnen! Da drinnen...! (*Die Leute weichen von ihm zurück.*) Schaut her! (*Streckt die magern Hände aus.*) Kann das arbeiten? Kann das für Euch arbeiten? Hab’ ich nicht genug für Euch gearbeitet? -Brot in den Halmen hab’ ich zu

Dreck gestampft. Für Euch! Häuser hab' ich abgequadert und aus Knochen Türme gebaut. Für Euch! Straßen hab' ich mit Blut gewaschen. Für Euch! Sümpfe mit meinem Mantel ausgetrocknet. Für Euch - für Euch - für Euch! Habt ihr noch nicht genug? (*Sieht sich im Kreise um.*) Lieg ich Euch im Weg? Hebt mich doch auf! Hängt mich auf einen Nagel! Im Arsenal ist noch Platz für mich! Für's nächste Mal! Wenn Ihr wieder einmal Lust habt, mahlen zu lassen in Gottes Kochenmühlen! Ich hab' ja noch einen Fuß, den ich mir abschießen lassen kann für Euch. Und die Hand da - und die zweite. Und mein Rücken hat noch Platz für ein paar Granatsplitter und mein Hirn für ein Manifest "An Meine Völker"! Kauft mich doch! Ich bin billig zu haben. Eine Republik für Gott, Kaiser und Vaterland! -Hahaha...! (*Bricht entsetzlich lachend zusammen.*). (Wittfogel, K 31-32)⁸⁷

In this monologue, which constitutes the climax of the piece, the protagonist makes clever discursive use of his diegetic body to position himself with regard to his disability and position in society. This positioning happens largely on the level of language and is accentuated by the physical motions indicated in the stage directions.

⁸⁷ Here-!! (*Showing his second arm, which is full of scars.*) And here-!! Haven't you had enough yet? There!... There!... (Rips open his shirt to reveal his chest.) And inside of there. (*Beating his fist against his heart.*) -Open up my chest and look inside. Inside! Inside...! (*People back away from him.*) Take a look! (Stretches out his emaciated hands.) Can this work? Can this do work for you? Haven't I worked enough for you? -I stamped into the mud the stalks that would have been bread. For you! I tore down houses and built towers of bones. For you! I washed streets with blood. For you! Dried up swamps with my coat. For you - for you - for you! Haven't you had enough? (*Looks around him.*) Am I in your way? Then pick me up! Hang me on a nail! There's surely place for me in the arsenal! For next time! When you once again feel like turning the wheel of God's bone-mill. I've still got one leg that I could have shot off for you. And that hand there - and the second. My back's still got a little more room for some shrapnel, and my mind's still got room for a manifesto entitled "For My People"! Come on, buy me! I can easily be bought. A Republic for God, King, and Country! -Hahaha..! (*Breaks down in a crazy fit of laughter.*)

His use of body language mirrors his use of bodily terms that have both a diegetic as well as a semiotic dimension.

For instance, as he points to his many scars and then rips open his shirt to indicate the outer surface of his chest as well as the heart that dwells within it, he draws attention to both the physical and the psychological wounds he has sustained. The colourful imagery of “building towers out of bones”, “washing the streets with blood”, and “turning the wheel of God’s bone-mill” the protagonist paints with his words are just two instances of the hyperbole that peppers the play. Such rhetorical devices have the effect of linguistically re-constructing the sense of horror, trauma, and guilt the protagonist feels when it comes to his experiences in the war.

The protagonist’s goading of the onlookers by offering his remaining leg/foot and his two hands/arms to be shot off and a back to be filled with shrapnel serves, on the one hand, to emphasize what he has already lost in service to his country. On the other, it brings in a semiotic dimension that goes beyond the realm of the fictional world in which the protagonist lives and his diegetic body. This shift from the physical to the spiritual and back again, which has been a continuing rhetorical strategy since opening lines of the piece, reaches its climax in the moment when the protagonist talks about his brain being filled with the ideology of the sacrifice individuals are expected to make for “God, king, and country.”

This key statement blurs the boundary dividing the notion of “Hirn” (brain) from “Geist” (mind),⁸⁸ thus locating the source of his discourse in his embodiment. Instead of further imbuing this body part with disembodied semiotic meaning, this

⁸⁸ In *Grimms Wörterbuch*, the principal meaning of “Hirn” is “brain,” but it can also mean “Sitz der Lebenskraft”, whereas “Geist,” when used in reference to human beings, refers solely to the spirit, mind, or soul that inhabits the physical body.

phrase has the reverse effect by creating the image of a “Manifest” (“manifesto”) that is stuck in the protagonist’s brain just as the shrapnel is lodged in his back. Thus, this monologue serves to tie closer together the physical and the spiritual realms instead of pushing them apart or privileging one over the other. It is because the protagonist fought in a war for his country that he has a disability, and it is because of - and by means of - that disability that he critiques the unquestioning patriotism and readiness for individual sacrifice demanded within nationalistic discourse.

The disabled protagonist in “Der Krüppel,” in a fashion similar to the figure of *der alte Landstürmer* in “Die Toten,” the third and final act of *Die Wiedergeburt in Kain*, is the one who “speaks another truth” to the reader and takes control of the discourse on his own body. In the end, he is ignored, indicating that there are limitations to this strategy, but he succeeds in finding a way to identify and resist disabling discourses via language. By “talking back” to ways of talking about the body that take away his dignity and self-determination, he reveals their inherent violence. Furthermore, by using language to talk about his embodied experiences and by using his body to express linguistic meanings, he offers a refreshingly clever alternative to the routine discourse in which the other figures thoughtlessly participate. At the borders of language and embodiment, he succeeds in making a statement about societal discourses while relating something about his own lived experiences, even if others are unable or unwilling to understand it.

On the thematic level, the monologue contains strong anti-war overtones as well as a literary processing of what would be characterized today as post-traumatic

stress.⁸⁹ This play is a discursive formation in literature in which there is little apparent attempt to overcome the trauma of WWI; instead, there is a decided dwelling on that trauma that urges the reader to reflect upon the consequences this war had for individuals. “Der Krüppel” portrays a literary world in which discourses on the human body are captured in condensed form, and the words of the protagonist are directed toward particular discourses on the body.

It is especially interesting how the protagonist - through his use of language - references, directly confronts, and ultimately rejects societal discourses that existed beyond the world of the play. For example, he resists the attempts of the officers to integrate him into the national and military body (“Heldensöhne,” Wittfogel, K 28/29). He also resists being turned into an object of rehabilitation by utilitarian economic discourse (“ich kenne eine Menge Invaliden, die arbeiten,” Wittfogel, K 28). Finally, he refuses to be treated as an object of pity and a docile recipient of charity (“Ihnen muß geholfen werden,” Wittfogel, K 29).

This play brings disability themes to the forefront and forces audience members to witness these interactions and thus confront the “discourses in clothing” they represent. Indeed, the highly symbolic characters one encounters are oversimplified caricatures when compared to the complex and contradictory persons we encounter in our everyday lives. However, when viewed as embodiments of various discourses on “the problem of disability,” the characters make sense in that their statements constitute only a handful of all possible statements within each of the discourses they stand in for. The imagination, knowledge, and experience of the

⁸⁹ Anton Kaes analyses how this phenomenon was processed in German film in his 2009 book *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War*.

reader can fill in the gaps created by the text, which provides us with a mere snapshot of some of the discourses on disability and the body in Germany during and immediately after WWI.

Furthermore, it is clear from the protagonist's interactions with other characters as well as his final monologue and the conclusion that the piece is highly critical of the discourses on disability it thematizes. Each discourse is rejected in turn before the protagonist's dialogue attacks the idea that bodies need to be subservient to discourses such as patriotism, gratefulness, rehabilitation, and productivity. While the piece demonstrates that such discourses can be disabling, it also implicitly shows that these provide the fertile ground necessary for the emergence of very specific kinds of subjectivities that are considered desirable or at least acceptable. Subjectivities positioned outside of those discourses are simply not comprehensible within the discursive-historical context in which the piece is set.

The fact that *Der Krüppel's* monologue is not well received demonstrates that the subject position he takes up - that is, a subject who wishes to stand outside of the discourses on the (disabled) body that circulate in his world -, he excludes himself from the kinds of subjectivities that are readily understandable by others in his context. This is reminiscent of the myth of disability as isolating which Dolmage discusses in *Disability Rhetoric* (60-61).⁹⁰ However, it is also the case that the discursive context of the play's setting and the discursive and positioning practices of the play's characters exclude the protagonist from the outset. When their attempts to integrate him into their discourses are rejected, they in turn reject his attempts to

⁹⁰ Mitchell and Snyder also discuss this myth in their 2000 book *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (198).

assert his desired subject position. Instead of allowing him to carve out a new discursive space that is critical of the subjectivities currently available to bodies considered disabled, they decide he is ungrateful, rude, or simply mad.

While the closing line of this act - “Also - wie das immer so ist - mit die Fußel hat’s ang’fangt, dann hat sich’s aufs Herz g’schlagen”⁹¹ - certainly references the trope of disability drift, in which “physical disabilities are equated with mental disabilities and vice versa” (Dolmage, *Disability Rhetoric* 62), there is a second possible reading of the ending of this scene. A reading that focuses on the discursive practices of the characters would highlight the fact that, since the protagonist is not speaking and behaving “in the true” (Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* 224)⁹² in this piece, his words and actions are perceived as incomprehensible and thus quite incredible to the other characters. Thus, they simply shake their heads at him, dismiss him as crazy, and exit the scene without comprehending the significance of his utterances.

In this sense, the protagonist could be said to have failed in his attempts to make others perceive him the way he wishes to be perceived. On the other hand, one could see his efforts as an end in themselves, for he is indeed successful in forcing people out of the realm of routine discourse, in drawing their attention to its disabling effects, and in appropriating various lexical items to serve the expression of his embodied experience. Thus, we can also consider him successful in utilizing the kind of appropriation Mikhail Bakhtin describes in *The Dialogic Imagination*:

⁹¹ “Well, that’s the way it goes. It started with the leg and then it crept into his mind.”

⁹² In her book *Michel Foucault*, Sara Mills discusses this concept as the quality all utterances must possess in order to be accepted as true, referencing both *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) and *Madness and Civilization* (1967) (58).

The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes one's "own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intentions, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language . . . but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions; it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own. (294)

This one-act play can be read as a portrayal of the protagonist's negotiation of identity, disability and the body, as well as his clever use of existing discourses to express his experience. In so doing, he brings disabling discursive practices to light, reveals their constructedness in language, and subverts not only the routine discourse embodied by *der brave Bürger* but also the production of knowledge about his body by the military (*die drei Offiziere*), charitable organizations (*zwei junge Damen*), as well as rehabilitation science in the service of the economic imperative for self-sufficiency (*der junge Republikaner*). Though it can be said that his efforts "fail" to achieve immediate practical results, he does succeed in exposing these mechanisms, opening up the possibility of their critique, and offering up embodied experience as an alternative mode of knowledge production. As part of an Expressionist drama written during the Weimar Republic and set in a literary world that strongly resembles it, "Der Krüppel" places the responsibility for a concrete response to its message in the world beyond the play firmly in the hands of the reader.

Chapter Three

The Body that Lives, Moves, and Has Meaning in Text

In contrast to the station-based structure of *Die Wandlung* and the bridge-like position of “Der Krüppel” between scenes of life and death in *Wiedergeburt in Kain*, Ernst Toller’s 1923 *Der deutsche Hinkemann: Eine Tragödie in drei Akten* stands alone as a traditional three-act drama. The play begins after the protagonist, Eugen Hinkemann, a working-class man who served in World War I, returns home from the war after receiving a wound that leaves him castrated. Due to his physical impairment – and arguably also due to the trauma caused by that impairment – he considers himself to be “ein Krüppel” (Toller, DdH⁹³ 196-97), “eine heimliche Krankheit”, “ein Hampelmann” and “ein räudiger Hund” (Toller, DdH 198), terms that variously refer both to his physical impairment as well as to his traumatized condition. The plot unfolds “um 1921” in a “kleine Industriestadt in Deutschland” (Toller, DdH 193), thus firmly situating the play in the historical-discursive context of the early years of the Weimar Republic.

In contrast to Friedrich’s successful transformation and hopeful optimism in *Die Wandlung*, Toller portrays Hinkemann’s downfall as a result of his pessimism and inability to transform. This reading of the text is common within Toller scholarship, for instance in Rainia Elwardy’s *Das Wandlungskonzept in der expressionistischen Dramatik* (126). As outlined at the beginning of Part Two, Carol Poore discusses the literary significance and problematic nature of the representation of and references to disability found in *Hinkemann* (*Disability in Twentieth Century German Culture* 43). In my analysis of this text I propose a reading of *Hinkemann*

⁹³ For all following references I will shorten the title “Der deutsche Hinkemann” by Toller to “DdH”.

that highlights aspects that have thus far been underemphasized within the dominant readings in German literary studies and disability studies. I will focus on the play's portrayal of the constitutive force of discourses on gender and ability that constitute the protagonist's body as meaningful and which create the conditions for his embodied experience in the dramatic world. This second reading foregrounds the emergence of the protagonist's subjectivity at the intersection of various streams of discourse and interprets his downfall as a result of the workings of the discourses that govern subjectivity in the modern period. Thus, my analysis of the discursive currents that give rise to Hinkemann's body as an intelligible entity and that produce the "I" from which he experiences the world will lead to a more complex understanding of the significance of this piece.

This chapter will primarily consider the representation of Eugen Hinkemann, the disabled protagonist of the play, following the trajectory of his character development and paying particular attention to his interactions with other figures. The analysis will focus on the diegetic and semiotic dimensions of his disability, the discursive positioning of his identity by himself and other characters, as well as the many disability myths and animal metaphors that are taken up in the text. I will begin with a discussion of the characters and their development before continuing on to address these points first at the macro-discursive level (the thematic level), then at the micro-discursive level (the linguistic level). Finally, I will discuss the connections between these aspects with discourses on the body, disability, and identity that were circulating in Germany at the time it was written and point to their relevance today.

Plot, characters, themes

Much like in “Der Krüppel,” the characters one encounters in *Hinkemann* are portrayed in a highly symbolic way, making it difficult to read them as portrayals of the experiences of individuals in the physical world. Rather, they function in the text as hyperbolic caricatures, as literary representatives of a whole group of people or as embodiments of abstract discourses. This is an indication that this play retains some formal elements of the Expressionist mode although it was published and performed decidedly after the heyday of Expressionism (*Metzler Literatur-Lexikon* 145). In *German Expressionist Drama* (1976), Ritchie discusses the Expressionist dramatists’ preference for abstraction as a formal feature, according to which dramatic figures embody the essence of a principle (15). Ritchie argues that the Expressionists rejected the materialistic philosophy of the Naturalist playwrights, who were interested in “realistic” portrayals. Instead of creating impressions of “real people in real situations”, the Expressionists attempted to identify and portray transcendental values through the words and actions of exaggerated dramatic figures (Ritchie, *German Expressionist Drama* 16). This approach to characterization certainly applies to the figures the reader/viewer encounters in Toller’s *Hinkemann*.

Hinkemann (literally “limping man,” translated as “Brokenbrow” in the English version) is by no means the only figure whose emblematic name collapses his entire character into a single trait. For example, his best friend Paul *Großhahn* is aptly named for his cocky attitude as well as for his “masculine” virility and

aggressiveness (“Hahn” can be translated as “rooster”).⁹⁴ In a similar fashion, Max *Knatsch* is a whiner, Peter *Immergleich* is complacent, Sebaldus *Singegott* is religious, and Michel *Unbeschwert* is lighthearted. The fact that Hinkemann’s wife is named *Grete* may indicate a reference to the figure of Gretchen (Margarete) in Goethe’s *Faust*. These characters indeed share a similar fate: both figures are seduced by a man to whom they are not married, an event which leads to their decline and death by the end of the play. Cecil William Davies has pointed out this possible connection in *The Plays of Ernst Toller: A Revaluation* (1996), and Helen L. Cafferty argues that Grete’s suffering is similar to that of Marie in Georg Büchner’s *Woyzeck* (1879) who is based on the figure of Mary Magdalene (“Hinkemann Reconsidered” 52).

The structure of this play is typical in the sense that events unfold relatively predictably within a structure of exposition, rising action, and resolution. In the first act, which is comprised of one long scene, the reader is introduced to Hinkemann, his wife Grete, and his friend Paul Großhahn. During the first part of the scene - comprised mostly of a dialogue between Hinkemann and Grete - key bits of information come to light. Not only do we learn that Hinkemann has an acquired disability and that he suffers from depression as a result of the traumatic events he experienced in the war, but also that he has been unsuccessful in finding fulfilling, gainful employment after returning to civilian life.

When Großhahn stops by to say hello and Hinkemann exits the scene to resume his search for work, Grete reveals to Großhahn the secret she and Hinkemann have been keeping from everyone: namely, that her husband has been castrated as the

⁹⁴ The *Metzler Lexikon Literarischer Symbole* highlights the following associations with “Hahn” in the German literary tradition: smugness, aggression, a proud bearing, a strong reproductive instinct, and a lack of chastity (171).

result of a war wound. At that point in the scene Großhahn makes his first move to seduce her, an attempt at which he succeeds by the second scene of act two. Meanwhile, in the first scene of act two, the reader learns that Hinkemann has, without the knowledge of his wife or friends, taken up employment in a freak show. He plays a strongman who rips out the throats of living mice and rats with his bare teeth, which is the part of his job he hates the most.

Act two, comprised of the two short scenes summarized above and two additional scenes, depicts the escalation of the central conflict, namely, how the relationships unfold in light of all the secrets the characters keep from one another. In scene three, Grete and Großhahn go on a date together at the fairground where Hinkemann is employed and by chance, they see him perform. Hinkemann, however, remains unaware that Grete and Großhahn know about the nature of his employment. The second act culminates in scene four in the midst of a discussion of political ideals in a bar where Hinkemann is drinking after work. Großhahn enters the scene and, through suggestion and goading, eventually gets Hinkemann to publicly disclose his disability.

In essence, Großhahn effects a confession of the sort Foucault describes in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality* in the section on “Scientia Sexualis” (1978) by locating the locus of his identity in the revealing of sexual secret. Thus, Hinkemann’s secret identity, the invisible “truth” of his embodied “lack”, move into the sphere of public knowledge via the language of confession. It is at this moment that his worst fear comes true: his deviant embodiment becomes the defining

constituent of his identity. This public disclosure causes Hinkemann to lose face and pulls him deeper into despair as he flees the bar.

Act three is made up of two scenes that contain the climax and the descent to the catastrophe of Grete's death and the foreshadowing of Hinkemann's apparent suicide. In the short, dreamlike first scene, Hinkemann wanders the streets and encounters all kinds of people from every imaginable societal milieu, from his boss - who threatens to send the police after him if he fails to report to work - to three prostitutes who fight over who gets to take him home. Unique to this scene is the appearance of six newsboys who cry out the latest news, thus providing the reader with insights into the fictional world of the play - and the world of the Weimar Republic that it resembles - in the realms of advertising, world events, culture, politics, religion, and advancements in technology. Over-stimulated by the commotion and overwhelmed by his increasing despair, he falls unconscious.

In the final scene of act three, Hinkemann interacts with Max Knatsch, who visits him at home and attempts to reassure him. He then receives three more visits, this time from three women in his life about whom we have thus far heard very little. First, his mother stops by to inform him that his father, who abandoned them when Hinkemann was a child, has returned home. After she leaves, he receives a visit from Fränze, a young woman who is romantically interested in Hinkemann and who tries to get him to go dancing with her. After he declines and she departs, Grete enters the scene and begs Hinkemann to forgive her for being unfaithful. When he insists they go their separate ways - she to live in health and happiness while he gives up on life -

she exits the scene and throws herself from the roof of the building, which we learn indirectly through Max Knatsch's report.

At the close of this scene and thus at the end of the play, Hinkemann's despair reaches its lowest point, and the stage directions even indicate that he might hang himself after the final curtain falls: "Hinkemann geht an die Tischschublade. Entnimmt ihr einen Knäuel Bindfaden. Mit sachlicher Ruhe knüpft er die Bindfaden zu einem Strick" (Toller, DdH 247).⁹⁵ This moment was foreshadowed at the opening of the play, as Hinkemann mourns his own fate as he sympathizes with the fate of a blinded goldfinch. He holds the bird in his hand and speaks to it, pities it as he identifies with it, and eventually decides to kill it out of mercy:

Du mein armes Vögelchen du... Du mein kleiner Kumpel... Wie haben sie uns zugerichtet, dich und mich. Menschen haben das getan. Menschen. Wenn du sprechen könntest, Teufel würdest du sie heißen, was wir Menschen nennen! . . . ich will nicht grausam sein. Ich will Schicksal spielen. Ein Schicksal, das gütiger ist als meines. Denn ich... ich habe dich ja lieb... lieb . . . Klatsch! Ein rotes Fleckchen an der Steinmauer... Ein paar Federn fliegen... Aus! Ein Gedanke - und alles wankt! (Toller, DdH 196)⁹⁶

Because of this foreshadowing, it is perhaps surprising that what is highlighted as the catastrophe at the end of the play is not Hinkemann's death - indeed, this remains a

⁹⁵ These stage directions are not included in the English version; thus, I am providing my own translation here: "*Hinkemann goes to his desk drawer and removes a ball of twine. In a matter-of-fact way, he ties them into a rope*".

⁹⁶ "Poor little beast! Poor little blighter! They've fixed us up good and proper, you and me. Human beings did that. Human beings! If you could talk you'd say it was devils, what we call human beings . . . I won't be cruel to you. I'll be what they call Fate. Kinder than my fate is to me. Because you see, I'm fond of you . . . Nothing but a little splash of red on the wall and a few feathers. And there's an end. That's an idea. Makes you giddy to think of, though" (Mendel 160).

mere suggestion and is omitted in later versions of the play as well as in the English translation - but rather his despair upon realizing that the suffering he has experienced and observed in the world is not a passing phenomenon that can be overcome. As he looks to the future, he predicts what is to come based on what has been, and he concludes that more suffering will result from a process of persistent collective forgetting in which people have always participated and from which they will likely never break free:

Im Krieg haben sie gelitten und haben ihre Herrn gehaßt und haben gehorcht und haben gemordet! . . . Alles vergessen... Sie werden wieder leiden und werden wieder ihre Herrn hassen und werden wieder... gehorchen und werden wieder... morden. So sind die Menschen... Und könnten anders sein, wenn sie wollten. Aber sie wollen nicht. Sie steinigen den Geist, sie höhnen ihn, sie schänden das Leben, sie kreuzigen es. (Toller, DdH 246)⁹⁷

Thus, the play is a tragedy from beginning to end, and Hinkemann is the tragic hero who, through his experiences and observations, comes to this pessimistic conclusion.

Resistant reading: a re-valuation of diegetic bodies

The play's motto, "Wer keine Kraft zum Traum hat, hat keine Kraft zum Leben,"⁹⁸ appears before the first act opens and is also spoken by Hinkemann himself in the second scene of act three (Toller, DdH 244-45). This general statement encapsulates the sense of failure, disillusion, and despair that pervades the piece. Scholars have

⁹⁷ "The war came and took them and they hated their chiefs and obeyed orders and killed each other. And it's all forgotten. They'll be taken again and hate their bosses again and obey orders again and – kill each other. Again and again. That's what people are. They might be different if they wanted to. But they don't want to. They mock at life. They scourge and spit upon and crucify life" (Mendel 193).

⁹⁸ "A man who has no strength for dreams has lost the strength to live" (Mendel 192).

often interpreted this general theme as an expression of Ernst Toller's disillusionment after the fall of the short-lived Räterepublik (Bavarian Soviet Republic) and during his imprisonment in Niederschönenfeld between 1921 and 1922. This is the case in both Andreas Lixl's *Ernst Toller und die Weimarer Republik 1918-1933* (1986) and Martin Kane's *Weimar Germany and the Limits of Political Art: A Study of the Work of George Grosz and Ernst Toller* (1987). The dominant reading of *Hinkemann*, as typified by the work of Lixl and Kane, tends to focus on its symbolic and allegorical dimensions in connection with Toller's biography and political involvements.

However, it is possible to rewrite this reading by understanding this theme as a more general statement about suffering and compassion. The focal point of this second reading is the awareness Hinkemann develops - through his own suffering - for the suffering of living beings that do not occupy powerful positions in human society. Many examples of this can be found in the text, for example, Hinkemann's suffering leads him to reflect on the suffering of others, including the goldfinch that is blinded by Grete's mother (Toller, DdH 195), the family dog that develops mange (Toller, DdH 197); the mice and rats whose throats he is compelled to rip out in exchange for money (Toller, DdH 206 and 222-23); people with physical and mental disabilities (218-20); the poor boy on the street for whom he purchases waffles (Toller, DdH 227); and also for his mother, who was abandoned by his father when he was still a child (Toller, DdH 237).

Compassion is not the only insight he gains. The theme of "seeing," in the sense of revelation and understanding that which formerly went unnoticed, is also central to the piece and is a central aspect of Hinkemann's characterization. This

point is made explicit at the beginning of the second scene of act three: “Immer geht man durch die Straße wie ein Blinder. Und auf einmal *sieht* man” (Toller, DdH 234, emphasis in original)⁹⁹ and its connection to the themes of suffering and despair is driven home toward the end of the scene: “Der Schuß, der war wie eine Frucht vom Baume der Erkenntnis... Alles Sehen wird mir Wissen, alles Wissen Leid. Ich will nicht mehr” (Toller, DdH 245).¹⁰⁰ The use of the trope of “spiritual seeing,” as an example of the metaphorical “body-language” which surfaces frequently in this piece, is both typical for Expressionism and often criticized within cultural disability studies.

For instance, Carol Poore asserts that “the metaphor of ‘healthy’ people as ‘blind’ . . . points to a pervasive use of disability as negative metaphor . . . this technique undermines the sympathy created for Hinkemann since it serves to assign disability to a realm of grotesqueness that Toller employs for political allegory” (42). As Poore points out, disability in this play is associated with a variety of negative meanings. On the semiotic level, these disability metaphors are indeed wrapped up in the broader political critique of the play; however, on the diegetic level, it is noteworthy that Hinkemann comes to “see” the suffering and cruelty around him only as a result of his own experiences of impairment, shame, and the fear of ridicule.

Similarly, his ultimate despair is a result of his realization that certain disabling discourses - that is, the underlying ideas, norms, and expectations regarding bodies that inform people’s words and actions - are very difficult, if not impossible, to change. The play depicts him witnessing and experiencing firsthand how such

⁹⁹ “You go along the streets, day after day, like a blind man. And then, all of a sudden, you see” (Mendel 185).

¹⁰⁰ “That bullet was the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. All that I see, I understand; all that I understand, hurts me. Living is only being hurt and wanting to go on ... I won’t go on” (Mendel 192).

discourses do violence to individuals by limiting the possibilities for the emergence of a subjectivity that is valued and respected. While the text does not use such terminology to convey Hinkemann's experiences and observations, I contend that this underlying theme is nevertheless at the core of the tragedy.

As a dramatic figure, Hinkemann is both "read" and "viewed." Even for the reader who is only able to imagine what he may look like, the visual dimension of this invisibly disabled protagonist is significant and always present. The vivid stage directions and metaphor-rich dialogue provide the material for the imagination to conjure up an image of the protagonist. Furthermore, George Grosz' illustrations provides readers of the English translation with his own conceptualization of Hinkemann's appearance. In his article "Verismus als Expressionismuskritik" (2002), Ralf Georg Czapla discusses how Toller's play, as well as Grosz' illustrations of it, can be understood as Verist critiques of Expressionism that constitute a shift toward the portrayal of everyday subject matter. Thus, the reception of *Hinkemann* within literary scholarship even includes a consideration of the visual aspects of the text and their contribution to contemporary discussions on art.

When it comes to discourses on the body and disability, however, the visual aspect plays a further role in *Hinkemann*. The protagonist's "spiritual seeing" has nothing to do with a sensory disability as one might expect of this literary trope; rather, it is related to a "lack" that remains unseen by other characters and by the reading or viewing audience. Thus, the trope of seeing has a strong connection to what the other dramatic figures, as well as the audience, do or do not see: unable to see Hinkemann's disability, they are also unable to see the world through his eyes, so

to speak. That is, their experience of bodily integrity prevents them from accessing the perspective of someone who is seen - and who sees himself - as disabled. This positioning of the other characters and the audience into the category of the “spiritually blind” (i.e. those who are unable to fully grasp reality as Hinkemann does), serves to draw attention to the power of both physical and spiritual sight. Furthermore, it places a high value on situated knowledge, a concept that is central to disability studies scholarship when it comes to any representation of disability.

The analytical tools Rosmarie Garland-Thomson employs in *Extraordinary Bodies* (1997) are useful for drawing out the complexities of the representation of disability in *Hinkemann*. The portrayal of Hinkemann himself, for example, incorporates various modes of representation that are tied to certain meanings and images in the cultural imagination. Making use of Garland-Thomson’s terminology, we can see that this play both “deploys a rhetoric of sympathy” and “invokes a rhetoric of despair” which are both part of a “rhetorics of protest in the shared political missions of exposing oppression, arguing for social justice, and supporting groups to whom it has been denied” (*Extraordinary Bodies* 106).

Despite the overall disillusioned tone of *Hinkemann*, these modes of rhetoric are also present and serve to point out the discrepancy between the way the world is - “Und weil ich ein Krüppel bin, hat meine Frau den gesetzlichen Ehescheidungsgrund. Das hatte ich vergessen, daß die Welt so eingerichtet ist” (Toller, DdH 244)¹⁰¹ - and the way it should be: “So sind die Menschen... Und könnten anders sein, wenn sie wollten . . . Machen sich arm und könnten reich sein und brauchten keine himmlische

¹⁰¹ “That’s true. I forgot about that . . . when you’re properly smashed up your wife has grounds for a divorce” (Mendel 177). The German original uses the phrase “because I am a cripple.”

Erlösung... die Verblendeten!” (Toller, DdH 246).¹⁰² The oscillation in the play between sentimentality and sensationalism within this rhetoric is especially interesting, as evidenced by the examples above. On the one hand, the narrative seems to generally validate the figure of Hinkemann via the sentimental mode by portraying him as a despairing victim of the injustices he experiences. On the other hand, the piece also sensationalizes his body, not only in the context of his performance in the freak show, but also through his portrayal as a character that gains “special insights” because of his disability.

While the sentimental mode dominates most of the narrative and comes across in an earnest manner, the text draws explicit attention to this use of the sensational mode via hyperbolic characterization and heightened metaphors, as for example in scene three of act two. Here, the semiotic reading of Hinkemann’s body as an allegory for defeated Germany is at its strongest. In the second scene of act three, Hinkemann’s final monologue takes this theme to the extreme: “Ich bin lächerlich wie diese Zeit . . . Diese Zeit hat keine Seele, ich habe kein Geschlecht. Ist da ein Unterschied?” (Toller, DdH 244).¹⁰³ While this statement serves to conflate Hinkemann’s body with an entire era, the narrative then shifts back into the sentimental mode, and the play closes with the spotlight on the protagonist wondering at the randomness of his experiences: “Immer werden Menschen stehen in ihrer Zeit wie ich. Warum aber trifft es mich, gerade mich?” (Toller, DdH 247).¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² “That’s the way people are. They might be different if they wanted to . . . Making themselves poor when they might be rich and not need to pray for the kingdom of heaven. The blind and the blinded.” (Mendel 193).

¹⁰³ “I’m fit to laugh at, yes, and so is everything else in our times - as miserable and ridiculous as I am. The world has lost its soul and I have lost my sex. What’s the difference?” (Mendel 191).

¹⁰⁴ “In all ages there’ll be men like me. But why me? Why should it fall on me?” (Mendel 193).

Such tensions within Hinkemann's characterization make it difficult to subsume him completely under one allegorical reading. On the one hand, his body represents the defeated national body, which becomes especially apparent in the Showman's speech in scene three of the second act: "*Der deutsche Held! Die deutsche Kultur! . . . die... fleischgewordene deutsche Kraft!*" (Toller, DdH 208-9).¹⁰⁵ The conspicuousness of instances such as this lend support to the dominant reading of this play in literary studies, within which Hinkemann's body is interpreted as an allegory for defeated Germany. Czapla discusses the fact that, although Toller did not necessarily intend for *Hinkemann* to be interpreted this way, it indeed turned out to be the dominant reading when the play was first performed (*Verismus als Expressionismuskritik* 338).

However, I argue that, due to the complex diegetic aspects of Hinkemann's characterization, a second reading is necessary today that emphasizes this drama's depiction of the ways discourses on ability and gender shape individual experience and the emergence of subjectivity. There is support for this reading even within passages that are highly charged with allegory. For example, in the Showman's speech it is clear that a critique of discourses on ability and gender goes hand in hand with the more obvious political critique: "*Die deutsche Männerfaust! . . . Der Liebling der eleganten Damenwelt! Zermalmt Steine zu Brei! Schlägt mit bloßer Hand Nägel durch stärkste Schädelwände!*" (Toller, DdH 208).¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ "The hero of the civilized world. The pride and power and manhood of the empire . . . the incarnate might of Empire" (Mendel 168).

¹⁰⁶ "He can grind rocks to powder. He can hammer nails through the thickest skull with his bare fist" (Mendel 168). Note: The English version does not fully express the gendered tone of the first part of this statement, which can be roughly translated as "the manly fist of Germany . . . The favourite of all the elegant ladies".

Disability myths and other common literary tropes

Beyond the use of disability metaphors, the trajectory of Hinkemann's character development can be characterized under various disability myths that commonly appear in literature. Certain aspects of several myths and tropes can be identified, including "kill or cure," "disability as pathology," and "overcoming or compensation" (Dolmage, *Disability Rhetoric* 57), as well as "physical deformity as a sign of an internal flaw," "disability as object of pity," (58) and "disability as isolating and individuated" (60). A reading of the text through this lens takes Hinkemann's body to be an allegorical site as well as a rhetorical device for the expression of Toller's political disillusion.

This kind of reading, which considers the semiotic dimensions of Hinkemann's body from the perspective of disability studies, overlaps to a great extent with the dominant reading of *Hinkemann* in German studies and in the context of the play's initial reception as a mockery of the German national body (Poore, *Disability in German Culture* 43). However, as I indicated above, a second reading (i.e. a resistant reading) of this text is also possible via a foregrounding of the diegetic dimensions of the textual bodies in Hinkemann and analyzing the discursive matrix that constitute them in the dramatic world. Viewing the piece from this angle makes it possible to read themes such as "compassion born of suffering" and disability tropes such as "physical disability leads to spiritual seeing" in a different way.

A resistant reading at the intersection of German Studies and Disability Studies would highlight the significance of the fact that the central themes of the piece - including suffering, compassion, insight, and despair - are embodied and

experienced by a disabled protagonist who appears to be able-bodied in the context of an Expressionist drama. For the majority of the play, Hinkemann's experience of disablement is portrayed as a result of his encounters with and internalization of disabling discourses. The insights he gains are won through his experience of embodiment, and his despair is tied to his realization that the dominant discourses on gender and ability in his world mean that others will position him as a less-than worthy kind of person. Unable to find or create a way out of the discursive matrix that disables him, he despairs. This reading indicates a critical stance toward some traditional narratives about disability and a shift in focus toward an examination of how discourses disable. As Poore has highlighted, Toller's reflections on what life would be like for a man who had been castrated in the war formed the basis of his idea for *Hinkemann* (*Disability in German Culture* 42).

It is also interesting that the figure of Hinkemann is made to seem ordinary in some ways while simultaneously being "othered" within the text. The text positions him as an object of pity while also drawing attention to the fact that what happened to him could happen to anyone: "Immer werden Menschen stehen in ihrer Zeit wie ich. Warum aber trifft es mich, gerade mich?... Wahllos trifft es. Den trifft es und den trifft es. Den trifft es nicht und den trifft es nicht" (Toller, *DdH* 247).¹⁰⁷ Thus, while Hinkemann is positioned as a victim, he is a victim among many others who, by chance, just happened to become victims. On this point there is even transfer beyond national boundaries. Toward the end of his final monologue, Hinkemann ponders the

¹⁰⁷ "In all ages there'll be men like me. But why me? Why should it fall on me? It doesn't pick and choose. It hits this man and that man. And the next and the next go free" (Mendel 193).

fate of his former enemies from the war, and he wonders whether they might be suffering as he is.

Auf allen Straßen der Welt schreien sie nach Erlösung! Der Franzos, der mich zum Krüppel schoß, der Neger, der mich zum Krüppel schoß, schreit vielleicht nach Erlösung... Ob er noch leben mag? Und *wie* wird er leben? . . . Ist er blind, ohne Arm, ohne Bein? Er tat mir weh, und ein andere tat ihm weh... Wer aber tat uns allen weh? Ein Geist sind wir, ein Leib. (Toller, DdH 246)¹⁰⁸

Here, the focus of the text shifts from the isolated nature of Hinkemann's experience of disability and toward a consideration of the suffering of others. This passage culminates in the statement that suffering is not only a result of war, but also of collective discourses and far-reaching events that transcend the experiences of any one individual and connect the experiences of many individuals.

Hinkemann's long final monologue is typical of the modes of representation and the rhetorical devices used in Expressionist drama, for example a preference for the exceptional and the extreme as well as a tendency to exploit the grotesque. In the case of Hinkemann, there is an especially interesting tension between the Expressionist "awareness of the fundamental isolation of man" and universal statements regarding "some aspect of the 'human dilemma'" (Ritchie, *German Expressionist Drama* 17-21). In other words, while Hinkemann is presented an

¹⁰⁸ "In all the streets of all the towns of all the world they cry: Deliver us. The Frenchy that fired off my bullet - or the nigger (sic!) maybe - he's crying out just the same: Deliver us. I wonder if he's alive and how he likes it? Of all the halt and the maimed and the blind, which is he? He did me in, and another fellow did him in. But who did us all in? All of us: one soul in one body" (Mendel 193).

isolated individual, he also stands for an experience to which many people could connect in the time and place it was written.

As indicated above, when it comes to disability myths, the portrayal of Hinkemann is wrought with ambiguities and contradictions. Just as he neither succeeds in “overcoming” or “compensating” for his disability, he is also neither killed nor cured by the end of the narrative. While he is portrayed as an isolated individual who suffers, his despair cannot be attributed to his disability alone. Instead, the play effectively demonstrates that the cause of Hinkemann’s demise comes from outside of his body in the form of discourse. That is, the text draws attention to a complex matrix of discourses on gender, ability, and ideas about the relationship between the individual body and the collective body that constitutes Hinkemann, i.e. that brings him into being as a culturally-intelligible body.

Thus, while Hinkemann is pathologized at the opening of the play, by the final scene, the text has effectively located the source of his suffering and despair at various intersections of these discourses. This is apparent in the words of Grete when she says: “Wir sind in einem Netz, Eugen. Eine Spinne sitzt da und läßt uns nicht los. Sie hat uns eingesponnen” (Toller, DdH 246).¹⁰⁹ Taking up this powerful metaphor, Hinkemann reflects on the slippery nature of discourse: “Wo ist der Anfang und wo das Ende? Wer will das bei einem Spinnewebe sagen?” (Toller, DdH 246).¹¹⁰ Frustrated by his (and his wife’s) inability to locate and resist the discourses that restrain them, he takes hold of the one object he sees that embodies the ideal of masculinity and ability from which he is discursively denied membership - the image

¹⁰⁹ “We’re caught in a trap, Gene, that’s what it is. A spider’s got hold of us and won’t let go. We’re all tied up and tangled and can’t move a step” (Mendel 192).

¹¹⁰ “Alpha and Omega, first and last. Who can find any first and last in a spider’s web?” (Mendel 193).

of the priapus - and throws it into the fire, calling it a “Lügengott! . . . armseliger Schlucker!” (Toller, DdH 246).¹¹¹ This statement is located at the heart of the message of the play: that the world is cruel to those who do not or cannot live up to phantasmatic ideals of embodiment.¹¹² Hinkemann indicates this explicitly a few lines earlier:

Ein Kranker hat hier nichts zu suchen auf dieser Erde, so wie sie da eingerichtet ist... in der jeder nur gilt, was er *nützt*. Entweder ist er gesund, dann hat er auch eine gesunde Seele. Das sagt der gesunde Menschenverstand. Oder er ist im Gehirn krank, dann gehört er in eine Irrenanstalt. Es stimmt nicht ganz, aber es ist auch nicht falsch. (Toller, DdH 244, emphasis in original)¹¹³

This statement concisely sums up a major theme of the play, namely Hinkemann’s insight that, in his society, the only bodies that are valued are bodies that are considered to be healthy, sane, able-bodied, and useful. Although Hinkemann’s words are earnestly serious here, there is also a linguistically playful treatment of the healthy/sick dichotomy present. The idiomatic flair of “das sagt der gesunde Menschenverstand,” is better captured in a translation as “healthy common sense dictates it”. Interestingly, the use of such an “ability metaphor” within a key bit of dialogue serves to draw attention to the fact that the ability/disability dichotomy, as it can be observed in language, in fact constitutes an entire way of thinking and reading

¹¹¹ “You lying god. You wretched devil, you” (Mendel 193).

¹¹² In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler asserts that “The “real” and the “sexually factic” are phantasmatic constructions - illusions of substance - that bodies are compelled to approximate, but never can” (Burke, et. al., *The Routledge Language and Cultural Theory Reader* 177).

¹¹³ “There’s no place for a cripple in this world where no one’s any good that can’t make good. Either he’s healthy and then his soul is healthy, or he’s not right in his mind and ought to be put away. That’s what healthy, sensible people say. It’s not really true; but it’s not really lies either” (Mendel 191-92).

bodies according to hierarchical binaries. In the context of a second reading of Hinkemann, the use of disability metaphors can be seen as a technique that draws attention to the discourses that make them culturally meaningful and highly resistant to subversion. Thus, in a diegetic sense, this statement is part of the culmination of Hinkemann's despair at what he has observed and experienced throughout the play.

In a semiotic sense, such metaphors can be understood as points of engagement with discourses in the world beyond the dramatic plot. For example, Hinkemann's comment on the idea that "a healthy mind in a healthy body" is an ideal to strive for could be seen as a critique of the cultural equation of physical with mental health in the Weimar Republic. One text in which this is apparent is Würtz' *Das Seelenleben des Krüppels* ("The Inner Life of Cripples"), which posits that people with physical disabilities are also disabled mentally and/or emotionally and thus require special education. At the opening of the second scene of the third act, Max Knatsch's good-natured comment to Hinkemann that "Du fühlst dich nicht wohl, Hinkemann... man sieht's dir an... Du bist krank..." (Toller, DdH 234)¹¹⁴ indicates that the text is also negotiating this myth of disability drift, in which physical and mental disabilities are conflated. Interestingly, Würtz' book was published in Germany in 1921, which is the very time and place in which *Hinkemann* is set.

This intertextual connection can shed a different light on Hinkemann's evaluation that the concept of "a healthy body in a healthy mind" is not really true but also not completely false. We can take this statement as Hinkemann's rejection of the concepts of "disability drift and the disability hierarchy" (Dolmage, *Disability*

¹¹⁴ "You aren't feeling well, Gene - I can see you're not yourself" (Mendel 185). The English translation loses some of the force of the myth of disability drift; Knatsch clearly states that "one can see it... you're sick", thus transferring his knowledge of Hinkemann's body to his mental state.

Rhetoric 62) while acknowledging that the equation of physical with mental health is “in the true” in a discursive sense. However, even as this passage laments the social privilege that bodies categorized as healthy and able enjoy over bodies considered sick and disabled, it also does not question the binaries of health/ability and ability/disability. Instead of pointing out that these are social constructs - that is, that these binaries have their origin in discourse and not in biology - the text presents them as social realities against which individuals struggle.

This is the general stance the text takes with regard to the issue of subjecthood; for the most part, the subject is positioned as a pre-discursive entity. For this reason, it is especially interesting that what the piece demonstrates is precisely the opposite, namely that Hinkemann - and implicitly, all humanity - is spoken into existence by discourse. This becomes especially salient in scene four of act two, as Hinkemann converses with his friends and acquaintances at the bar.

Interactive and reflexive positioning

In the midst of his friends’ idealistic dreams of a better future society, Hinkemann asks the question that others do not raise, namely: Is there a place in that society for people who are “von Natur krank und innen krank, unheilbar krank... oder außen krank, unheilbar krank” (Toller, DdH 218)?¹¹⁵ He then goes back and forth with Michel Unbeschwert about how the Socialist State would accommodate people different kinds of disabilities - those missing arms or legs as well as “solche, die

¹¹⁵ “. . . supposing a man had something the matter with him that couldn’t be cured - something the matter with him inside - or outside for that matter - that could never get better, would it make him happy if there were to be sensible social conditions?” (Mendel 173).

gesund sind und doch krank in ihrer Seele” (Toller, DdH 219).¹¹⁶ Unsatisfied with the response that physical disabilities can be accommodated with prostheses while psychological disorders can be treated in institutions, Hinkemann finally raises the question that interests him the most because, though the others do not yet know it, it applies to him: “Wenn nun einem... der im Krieg war . . . zum Beispiel . . . das Geschlecht... Geschlecht fortgeschossen wurde... was... was würde in der neuen Gesellschaft mit dem geschehen?” (Toller, DdH 219).¹¹⁷ Max Knatsch says that it is best not to think about such people: “Der Mensch ist am glücklichsten, wenn er an sowas nicht denkt,” because “Die Menschen, denen sowas zustößt, sind eben Opfer. Das Proletariat hat ein Recht auf Opfer” (Toller, DdH 220).¹¹⁸

This is a key moment in the complication of the play as the tension builds toward the climax. Discursively, the text positions the Movement as a locus - and the proletariat involved in it as agents - of truth, knowledge, and power that not only read disabilities as individual problems to be amended for the good of the collective body, but that also write “disabilities of sex/gender” as collateral damage, so to speak, that are not worth thinking about. Thus, this passage points directly to the source of Hinkemann’s problem, namely, that he has no way to position himself in a positive light within the political-discursive matrix that frames and gives shape to the interaction in the bar. Indeed, the only position available to him is that of a victim.

¹¹⁶ “I mean people who aren’t ill, exactly, but who have something hurting them - in their souls - if you take my meaning” (Mendel 174).

¹¹⁷ “. . . supposing a man had lost his - manhood, as you might say. Supposing *that* had been blown off in the war. What do you think would become of him in a Socialist State?” (Mendel 174).

¹¹⁸ “Better not worry your head about things like that. . . . Accidents like that can’t be helped. Casualties have to be sacrificed. The Movement demands sacrifice” (Mendel 175).

Instead of accepting this implicit other-positioning, Hinkemann tries to resist it by presenting an identity narrative that highlights his struggle to come to terms with his disability and to establish a subject position for himself that is valued in his society (Toller, DdH 221-2). Although he tells his own story, starting before the war and leading up to the present, he says that it is about “ein Freund von mir” (Toller, DdH 220)¹¹⁹ in case his story should be met with laughter, pity, or scorn. He concludes the narrative by saying that the man in his story was finally able to discover a sense of self-respect and worth through the love of his wife, who loved him for his soul and not his body. This monologue is significant because, although Hinkemann initially refuses to take on the subject position of “victim” and attempts to carve out a positive discursive space for himself, in the end he fails because his identity narrative is not valid within the discursive matrix that constitutes bodies in his world.

After Großhahn publicly humiliates him in the bar by cornering him into confessing that the story was indeed about himself, Hinkemann comments on his friends’ conversation about the happiness the new order will bring to all humanity. He throws their ideals back at them, saying:

Nun lacht ihr doch! . . . So ein Schauspiel habt ihr noch nie erlebt!
Seht her, hier steht ein leibhafter Eunuch! Wollt ihr mich singen
hören? . . . Sing ich nicht so gut wie ein geblendeter Distelfink? . . . Ihr
Toren! Was wißt ihr von der Qual einer armseligen Kreatur? Wie

¹¹⁹ “A friend of mine he was” (Mendel 175).

müßt ihr anders werden, um eine neue Gesellschaft zu bauen! (Toller, DdH 225)¹²⁰

Here, Hinkemann admonishes his friends for their hypocrisy for laughing at someone with a “deviant” body after just claiming that there will be a valued place for every person in the new, improved society they are trying to bring about. Furthermore, he again takes up the motif of the blinded goldfinch from the first act and - via simile - draws a parallel between the violence visited upon it at the hands of his mother-in-law and the discursive violence he experiences daily. He concludes by pointing out the metaphorical “blind spot” in the ideology of the Movement, namely that the utopia they imagine neglects to amend the injustices done to bodies at the junction of binaries such as ability/disability and sickness/health: “Die Worte sind für *gesunde* Menschen! Ihr seht eure Grenzen nicht . . . es gibt Menschen denen kein Staat und keine Gesellschaft Glück bringen kann. Da wo Eure Heilmittel aufhören, da fängt unser Not erst an” (Toller, DdH 226).¹²¹ As a literary body with a diegetic disability, Hinkemann is portrayed as experiencing the discursive violence that persists even among his revolutionary friends, which results in him “seeing” this “truth” from a perspective that is inaccessible to them.

The dialogues in this scene serve to illustrate that the negotiation of individuals’ subject positions occurs in the context of social interactions. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Hinkemann cannot maintain the kind of positive identity he

¹²⁰ “Laugh, all of you. Go on. . . . You don’t often see a freak of nature. A real live eunuch. Shall I give you a song? . . . I sing almost as well as a blinded goldfinch, don’t I? . . . Fools! You don’t know what it’s like - torture. What a change there’d have to be before you could build a better world” (Mendel 178).

¹²¹ “Words are all very fine for people in good health. But you don’t see the places you can’t reach. There are people you *can’t* make happy with all your states and society and family and community. Our sufferings begin where your cures end” (Mendel 179).

desires without support from his diegetic interlocutors. As discussed in Part One, this phenomenon is discussed by Bronwyn Davies and Rom Harré in their 1999 article “Positioning: The discursive production of selves.” With regard to their view on how subjectivity emerges via reflexive and interactional positioning, they write that:

An individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate. Accordingly, who one is, that is, what sort of person one is, is always an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one’s own and others’ discursive practices and within those practices, the stories through which we make sense of our own and others’ lives. (35)

The concept of positioning, then, is a useful tool for understanding how the text positions the discourses that frame the interactions in the text, as well as the ways in which the characters position themselves and one another in the midst of those interactions. For example, Hinkemann repeatedly uses the word “Krüppel” to refer to himself; in each instance where this occurs, it is portrayed as a self-perception and a self-positioning (reflexive positioning). While others never use this word when speaking to Hinkemann directly, Paul Großhahn does position him indirectly when telling his friends about the strongman he saw perform: “es war kein Mann mehr, es war ein Eunuch!” (Toller, DdH 225).¹²² This interactional positioning not only implies that eunuchs are not men, but it reads their bodies as suffering from a kind of

¹²² “. . . it wasn’t a man at all, it was one of these chaps they call eunuchs!” (Mendel 178).

“disabled masculinity” in which gendered subject positions are intertwined with the binary of ability/disability.

Furthermore, Hinkemann’s wife Grete not only refers to him as “gar kein Mann,”¹²³ but also as “ein Krüppel” (Toller, DdH 202)¹²⁴ in her own “confession” to Paul Großhahn in the opening scene of the play. Thus, Grete positions Hinkemann as disabled by his emasculation in that she locates identity in his body, which she reads as inadequate to accord with the ideal image of able-bodied masculinity. While it is impossible for any individual to fully embody this image, it is also compulsory that individuals attempt to do so. However, although Hinkemann is no less able to live up to this ideal than his friend Großhahn, Hinkemann lacks the signifier of membership within able-bodied masculinity that Großhahn does not: the phallus.¹²⁵ Because of the conflation of the phallus and the penis, Hinkemann’s physical lack is already a symbolic lack. Thus, Großhahn’s relative success in embodying the idealized image of able-bodied masculinity, especially in comparison to Hinkemann’s failure, illustrates that it is impossible to separate the biological from the cultural.

Großhahn makes use of this mechanism and employs it as a technique as he attempts to seduce Grete. By positioning Hinkemann as a “non-man” who can no longer claim the right to “keep” his wife (Toller, DdH 204),¹²⁶ he tries to convince her that sleeping with him would not really be cheating on Hinkemann. Although this line of reasoning does not work and Großhahn has to change tactics to get what he

¹²³ “. . . he isn’t properly a man at all” (Mendel 164).

¹²⁴ “. . . he’s a cripple, in a manner of speaking” (Mendel 164).

¹²⁵ This term, as it was used by Lacan in conjunction with the concept of “lack”, is discussed in *Gender Studies: Terms and Debates* (2003) as part of the theory that “there can be no unified subject, only the imaginary fantasy of one” (64).

¹²⁶ “. . . a man like that has no business to keep you - selfish of him, I’d call it - if he really cared for you he’d let you go” (Mendel 164).

wants from Grete, Großhahn's positioning of Hinkemann as an inauthentic man and an undeserving recipient of a woman's devotion present him this way to the reader and introduces the main discursive undercurrent that drives the plot forward by positioning Hinkemann as a suffering victim. While Hinkemann's characterization via positioning demonstrates that the human body cannot be divorced from the cultural meanings that make it intelligible, his experience of being written out of the sphere of valued and valuable subjectivity illustrates how individuals can be disabled by an essentialist worldview that posits that one's biology determines one's destiny.

Having examined the significance of Hinkemann's character development with regard to the structure, language, and main themes of the play, I will now take a closer look at these themes as they relate to Hinkemann's disability. As mentioned above, the play is rich with metaphors and similes that weave together the topic of embodiment and the experience of disability with a wide variety of societal discourses to produce complex layers of meaning. These include discourses on the value of animals' bodies (including bodies of the human-animal) and the phenomenon of sickness of the body and mind/soul. Furthermore, the play investigates - through the eyes of Hinkemann - the disabling effects produced by discourses on gender, politics, economics, and the relationship of the individual body to the collective body within patriotic discourse.

Fear, pity, disgust, and laughter

As discussed above, the play opens with Hinkemann mourning the blinding of a goldfinch at the hands of his mother-in-law. Although this bird is one of the only animals to actually appear and play a direct role in the plot (besides the rats and mice

Hinkemann eats), Hinkemann frequently talks about various animals, uses animal metaphors, and compares and contrasts their experiences to those of the human-animal throughout the play. Referring to the family dog that got mange and became disgusting to his owners, Hinkemann asks his wife: “Bin ich son [sic!] Hund?”¹²⁷ Thus, via simile, he draws a parallel between the disgust the family felt toward the dog they once loved and the disgust and pity he fears his wife feels for him now that he has a disability. Following Bill Hughes’ argument in “Fear, Pity and Disgust” (2012), we can understand Hinkemann’s fear as connected to the fear that exists in the able-bodied figures in the play: “In modernity the threshold of repugnance narrows and attitudes to bodily and intellectual difference . . . harden into aversive emotions like fear and disgust and into the conviction that impairment is a tragedy, its ‘victims’ deserving of benefaction and favour” (Hughes, “Fear, Pity and Disgust” 68).

Thus, Hinkemann’s fear, which runs throughout the play, can be understood as a function of the emotions that comprise the non-disabled imaginary within and beyond the dramatic world. In other words, the text positions Hinkemann as someone who is well aware of the fear, pity, and disgust that are associated with a disabled (i.e. inauthentic) masculinity. Thus, one of the central conflicts he deals with is his fear of the pity, disgust, and laughter of the other characters. Interestingly, it is the laughter of the other characters, for example Großhahn, that serves to dispel their own fear in the presence of disability: “Entschuldigen Sie, Frau Hinkemann, es kommt mir nur...

¹²⁷ “Am I like that dog?” (Mendel 161).

es kommt mir nur so die Kehle herauf... Wenn ein Mann das hört, da muß er eben lachen” (Toller, DdH 203).¹²⁸

The theme of laughing at disability surfaces frequently in the text, often in the words of Hinkemann himself, for example in the first act in his interaction with his wife when he asks her why she is crying: “Weinst du . . . Weil die Menschen mit Fingern auf mich deuten würden wie auf einen Clown? . . . Weil mich der Heldenschuß einer verfluchten Kreatur zum elenden Krüppel... zum Gespött machte?” (Toller, DdH 197).¹²⁹ Plagued by paranoia that he will be mocked, he tells her about the worst thing he can imagine: “Und dann auf einmal sehe ich dich . . . deine Lungen plustern sich, dein Bauch kollert sich vor Lachen . . . Gretchen, nicht wahr, du könntest nicht über mich lachen, das könntest du mir nicht antun?” (Toller, DdH 198).¹³⁰

Later in the play, Hinkemann’s fear of being laughed at indeed becomes a reality. Not only do Großhahn (see Toller, DdH 202) and Hinkemann’s circle of friends (see Toller, DdH 225) laugh when they learn that he is emasculated, but Grete also claims to have laughed in her attempt to convince Hinkemann to take her back (Toller, DdH 242). While the truth of her claim remains ambiguous, it is the one thing Hinkemann says he cannot forgive her (Toller, DdH 242). Großhahn certainly makes reference to Grete’s laughter as he attempts to get Hinkemann to “confess” his disability to their friends: “Sie hat gelacht! Erst hat sich sich geekelt... dann hat sie

¹²⁸ “Oh, excuse me, it just popped out - you know how things pop out? When you hear that sort of thing, you can’t really help laughing” (Mendel 164).

¹²⁹ “Are you howling because I’m - because I - because people would point at me in the street like a freak . . . Because some blasted hero’s bullet made a cripple of me - made a laughing stock of me?” (Mendel 160).

¹³⁰ “And then, all of a sudden, I see you . . . laughing, holding your sides for laughing, laughing fit to burst yourself, laughing . . . Now, Maggie, you couldn’t do that, could you? You couldn’t laugh at me?” (Mendel 161).

gelacht” (Toller, DdH 223).¹³¹ Storming out of the bar at the end of scene four in act two, Hinkemann’s departing words of despair reflect the extent to which the fear of ridicule plays a role in his demise: “(*als ob sein Gesicht seine Stimme verzerrte*): Gelacht hat das Weib!” (Toller, DdH 226).¹³²

Generally speaking, the text frames Hinkemann’s fear of being ridiculed as the driving force behind many of his actions, with the goal of being taken seriously by the other characters and respected within his social context. His search for work can thus be understood as an attempt to “conform to the hygienic notions of somatic control and appearance” (Hughes, “Fear, Pity and Disgust” 68) that constitute the dividing lines between masculinity/femininity and ability/disability in the world of the play. His search for gainful employment is shown to be inseparable from his desire to be perceived as an able-bodied man, even as he compares himself to a beast of burden: “Ich schaff Arbeit!... Und wenn ich gleich mich ducken muß wie ein Tier!” (Toller, DdH 198).¹³³ In this sense, the play is tragic because Hinkemann’s attempts to perform able-bodied masculinity are continually posited as illegitimate and absurd. This is epitomized in the words of Großhahn in scene three of act two: “Aber das ist ja ein erbärmlicher Betrug! So sieht der deutsche Held aus! Einer ohne... Ein Eunuch... Hahahaha! So mag der deutsche Heimatkrieger ausgesehen haben! . . . Du, der Budenbesitzer macht Profit mit Pappel!” (Toller, DdH 210).¹³⁴

¹³¹ “She laughed. It made her a bit sick at first, but then she laughed” (Mendel 177).

¹³² “(*his face distorting his words*). The woman laughed” (Mendel 179).

¹³³ “I’ll get work all right. Just you wait! Even if I have to crawl on all fours and make a beast of myself” (Mendel 161).

¹³⁴ “Did you ever hear of such a fraud! A man without - what they call a eunuch. That’s the sort of hero they kept on the home front - . . . That’s a fine show to make of a lump of padded putty!” (Mendel 169).

While much of the dialogue positions Hinkemann's masculinity as an inauthentic imitation whose "performance" is in fact a farce because he lacks the signifier of able-bodied masculinity, it is also possible to find a second reading here. Butler's notion of performativity in *Gender Trouble* (1990) indicates that all performances of gender are "inauthentic" in the sense that they do not originate in a pre-discursive essence. Therefore, the evaluation of Hinkemann's masculinity as inauthentic must extend to the masculinity of, for instance, Paul Großhahn as well, since within a poststructuralist paradigm, gender is the product of performance and not its origin.

According to Butler's theory, sex is always already gender; thus, it becomes impossible to separate these two entities because each concept depends on the other. That the body is the site at which culture becomes manifest is demonstrated very well in *Hinkemann*; furthermore, this play problematizes, even as it portrays, the compulsory nature of able-bodied masculinity. That is, masculinity is discursively so closely tied to maleness that Hinkemann's lack of genitals prevents him from accessing the sphere of masculinity. At the same time, Großhahn inhabits that sphere with ease because of the symbolic power of the bodily marker of membership in that category he possesses. The drama portrays this discursive connection between embodiment and gendered subjectivity as doing a great injustice to Hinkemann and as unjustly rewarding Großhahn for his aggressive behaviour.

While his awareness of his exclusion from this sphere causes Hinkemann to question the naturalness of the order of things, Großhahn's "authentic" performance of masculinity depends upon discursively positioning Hinkemann's body outside the

sphere of masculinity and all the rights and responsibilities that belong to its performance: “Wer gibt dir das Recht, deine Frau zu behalten? Überhaupt ist das ein gesetzlicher Scheidungsgrund! Sogar für die katholische Kirche, die sonst sowas wie Ehescheidung nicht kennt” (Toller, DdH 224).¹³⁵ Another tragic aspect of the play highlighted here is Hinkemann’s acceptance of the subject positions open to him within the discursive framework Großhahn - and thus, symbolically, society - presents to him. In other words, Hinkemann actively participates in writing himself as a pitiful and powerless victim: “Erst schickt mich das Vaterland hinaus und läßt mich zum Krüppel schießen. Und weil ich ein Krüppel bin, hat meine Frau den gesetzlichen Ehescheidungsgrund. Das hatte ich vergessen, dass die Welt so eingerichtet ist . . . Ich bin ein gesetzlicher Ehescheidungsgrund” (Toller, DdH 224).¹³⁶ Instead of asserting his right to be married and to be happy with his wife, Hinkemann takes up the idea Großhahn presents to him - that his disability constitutes grounds for divorce - and turns it into the essence of his subjectivity. This is a key moment in the narrative as Hinkemann falls deeper into despair. While he is frequently portrayed as suffering from the violence of disabling discourses and interactional positioning, the text positions his suffering in this instance as a result of his own belief in the essential truth of those discourses.

At this moment it becomes explicit that discourses on ability and gender not only constitute Hinkemann’s body, but also that it is impossible for him to establish a subjectivity that excludes the body, something he attempted to do earlier in the scene:

¹³⁵ “What right have you to hang on to her, anyway? She’s got grounds for divorce, she has. Even the Catholic Church would allow that” (Mendel 177).

¹³⁶ “Your King and Country needs you - and smashes you up - and when you’re properly smashed your wife has grounds for divorce. I’d forgotten that’s the way things happen. . . . Nothing but a ground for divorce, that’s all I am” (Mendel 177).

“Sie konnte tun, was sie wollte, sie war ein gesundes Weib und er ein kranker Mann... aber er wußte, sie hatte ihn lieb, trotz allem. . . . Das Weib hatte... seine Seele lieb” (Toller, DdH 222).¹³⁷ Hinkemann’s hope of finding fulfillment in the spiritual love of his wife - even if some forms of physical expression of love are impossible - is dashed during his interaction with Großhahn in the bar. On his way out, he utters words of despair that express his fear of being ridiculed and despised: “Da wächst ein Wald, der heißt: Hohn und Spott. Da brandet ein Meer, das heißt: Lächerlich. Da würgt eine Finsternis, die heißt: Ohne Liebe” (Toller, DdH 226).¹³⁸

Suffering, compassion, and the human/animal boundary

Earlier in the analysis, I discussed Hinkemann’s development of compassion for others as a result of his own experience of suffering as one of the central themes of this play. What is particularly interesting about this is the fact that his reflections on suffering continually return to the experiences of animals and their treatment at the hands of the human-animal. Although the text leaves certain binaries intact - such as health vs. sickness - Hinkemann’s words often blur the pervasive human/animal binary. This is significant because it makes explicit that the discursive production of Hinkemann’s body and bodily identity also takes place within and at the borders of this binary in connection with ability/disability. Hinkemann’s words in the first scene of the first act demonstrate this well:

Was war mir früher der Schmerz eines Tieres? Ein Tier, nun gut. Man dreht ihm den Hals um, man sticht es tot, man schießt es. Was weiter.

¹³⁷ “He didn’t care what she did - after all, she was a healthy woman and he was a cripple - as long as he knew that she loved him just the same. . . . that woman loved - as you might say - his soul” (Mendel 176).

¹³⁸ “The trees are thick with mockery and the waves make fun of me. There is a choking darkness, without love” (Mendel 179).

Als ich gesund war, erschien mir das alles, als müßte es so sein. Nun ich ein Krüppel bin, weiß ich: Es ist etwas Ungeheuerliches! Es ist Mord am eigenen Fleisch! . . . Foldern bei lebendigem Leib!... Aber früher!... Wie mit Blindheit geschlagen ist der gesunde Mensch. (Toller, DdH 196)¹³⁹

While the concluding statement in this passage has been critiqued for its use of negative disability metaphor (Poore, *Disability in German Culture* 42), it is striking that a disabled character uses it to align his human experience with the experience of animals and position himself as morally superior to the non-disabled characters in the play. His “spiritual sight” and compassion with other living beings are posited as qualities that he acquired only after acquiring his disability, and that are inaccessible from an able-bodied perspective.

In stark contrast to Hinkemann, Paul Großhahn is a figure that is able to occupy the privileged position within the binaries of masculinity/femininity and ability/disability; thus, he remains uncritical of the notion that he has the right to use and abuse as he pleases. Indeed, the image of masculinity within which his subjectivity is produced involves the domination of other living beings and even inanimate objects. Thus, the text positions him as an ultra-masculine character whose aggressive masculinity borders on animality (as his name indicates), while ironically demonstrating that the human-animal is in fact the most violent of all animals.

¹³⁹ “... didn’t I use [sic!] to do the same thing and think nothing of it? The feelings of an animal, well, what about it? Wring its neck, cut its throat, put a bullet through it - who cares? When I was in good health all that seemed just as it should be. Now that I’m a cripple I know; it’s a horrible thing! It’s murdering one’s own flesh. Worse than murder; torturing a live body. But in those days - people in good health are blind, I tell you, just blind!” (Mendel 159-160).

In particular, his statements regarding his relationship to women and machines both explicitly and implicitly justify themselves within the hierarchical human/animal binary. Bragging to Hinkemann about his affair with Grete, Großhahn declares that all he wants from her is “Mein Vergnügen. . . . Und wenn sie bei mir nicht genügend Vergnügen findet, dann lasse ich sie aufn Strich gehen... dann fahr ich zweispännig” (Toller, DdH 224).¹⁴⁰ This statement positions Großhahn as a kind of predator who is primarily concerned with his pleasure and with appearing unencumbered by the feelings or wellbeing of others.

The text also frames Großhahn’s behaviour as “animal-like” through the stage directions, which indicate his demeanour as “mulish” (“stier” in the German original) and through lexical choices like “zweispännig fahren”, which evokes the imagery of a man driving two horses before a coach. Although this imagery is not carried over in the English translation, the translator has embellished Hinkemann’s reaction to underscore Großhahn’s brutish nature: “You swine, you!” (Mendel 178). The dialogue in this scene serves to blur the human/animal boundary in Großhahn’s characterization through the use of animal metaphors while simultaneously questioning the superiority of rational, civilized man over the instinct-driven and supposedly violent animal. Already in the first scene of the first act, Großhahn’s words indicate that man is indeed far more brutal than the animal because of his desire to dominate and abuse:

Wenn ich an der Maschine stehe, packts mich mit Teufelslust: Du
mußt den Knecht da fühlen lassen, daß du der Herr bist! Und dann

¹⁴⁰ “Just what I please . . . And if she doesn’t get enough fun with me, I’ll send her on the streets. Then I’ll be in clover” (Mendel 178).

treibe ich das heulende und surrender und stöhnende Ding bis zur äußersten Kraftleistung, daß es Blut schwitzt... sozusagen... und ich lache und freue mich, wie es sich so quält und abrackert. So, mein Tierchen, rufe ich, du mußt gehorchen! Gehorchen! Und das wildeste Stück Holz laß ich die Maschine verschlingen und laß es sie formen nach meinem Befehl! Nach meinem Befehl! (Toller, DdH 200)¹⁴¹

In this passage, we see that Großhahn's treatment of machines is a performative constituent of the image of masculinity he believes to flow naturally from his biology; that is, when he approaches his work in this way, he is a man. The passage also contains evidence that his image of masculinity depends upon various hierarchical binaries: man over machine, lord over servant, and human over animal. Furthermore, the "Teufelslust" he feels when he works at the machine is reminiscent of a sadistic-masochistic interaction. Thus, there is also an indirect reference to a hierarchical understanding of sexual practice and gender relations. Grete's reaction to this undertone not only foreshadows the affair she will have with Großhahn but also illustrates how her desire for him is produced by the discourse that masculine sexual activity and female passivity are both natural and inevitable: "(*starrt Großhahn unverwandt an*): Wie wild Sie blicken können, Herr Großhahn" (Toller, DdH 200).¹⁴²

Within the logic of the binaries that delineate Großhahn's subject position, this dialogue positions him as a representative of the discourse that it is only "natural"

¹⁴¹ "When I'm working in the factory I often think to myself: I'll teach that blasted old machine who's the boss. Let the damn thing whizz and creak and bang, so long as I'm driving it - driving it hard, driving it till it fairly sweats blood, as you might say. Makes me laugh to see it banging his old head off. Whoa, old horse, I say, smell the whip! You'll swallow anything I damn well feed you and you'll turn out just what I tell you to. I'm the fellow who gives *you* orders, understand?" (Mendel 162).

¹⁴² "(*stares strangely at PAUL*). How you do excite yourself, Paul Grosshahn" (Mendel 162).

that machines, women, and animals are passive recipients of active male domination. The passage also shows that the binaries of man/machine, lord/servant, and human/animal are also gendered discourses. As a man from the working class - and thus, as someone with very little political or economic power within the dramatic world - Großhahn is portrayed as making use of the privileged position within whichever binaries he can in order to establish himself as a powerful subject.

The figure of Paul Großhahn, then, can be viewed as the embodiment of the phantasmatic ideal of able-bodied masculinity against which Hinkemann compares himself. Großhahn's assertive claim that "Mich drückt die Maschine nicht. Ich bin der Herr und nicht die Maschine" (Toller, DdH 200)¹⁴³ stands in sharp contrast to Hinkemann's aversion to "the machine": "Die zerbricht uns unsere Knochen, ehe wir noch so recht aufgestanden sind. Mir graut vor jedem neuen Arbeitstag, . . . wenn abends die Fabrikglocke geht, stürme ich zum Fabriktor hinaus, als wenn ich besessen wäre!" (Toller, DdH 199-200).¹⁴⁴ Thus, Großhahn's admonishment of Hinkemann to "Sei ein Mann, Eugen, dann bist du der Herr" (Toller, DdH 200)¹⁴⁵ is thoroughly integrated with his ideal of active, aggressive masculinity to which Hinkemann should also aspire. There are, however, limits to the acceptability of this image of masculinity; after Großhahn forces Hinkemann to disclose his disability, Peter Immergleich polices the boundary Großhahn has crossed in betraying his friend: "Daß du weißt, Großhahn... Du bist ein Schuft" (Toller, DdH 226).¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ "Machines don't bother me. *I'm* the boss of the machine" (Mendel 162).

¹⁴⁴ ". . . those blasted machines that break your bones before they're fairly grown - why, I used to dread going to the works of a morning, couldn't think how I'd get through the day, and when the bell rang in the evening, I'd do a bolt out of doors like a mad thing!" (Mendel 162).

¹⁴⁵ "Buck up, Gene, you've only got to be a man, to boss a machine" (162).

¹⁴⁶ "You're a swine, you are, and no mistake" (Mendel 179).

Crisis of modernity, crisis of identity, crisis of the body

The text's positioning of Großhahn and Hinkemann as opposites on the scales of masculinity/activity, femininity/passivity, and ability/disability is connected to a critique of the crises of modernity and identity. While Großhahn remains unreflected in his actions, Hinkemann, as a character who has been thrown into confusion due to the acquisition of an impairment that destabilizes his position within the order of things, is compelled to question the naturalness of the status quo as well as his former and current position within it. This is very much a part of the spirit of Expressionism as a literary and cultural revolution, which is generally seen as a protest against many elements in society perceived as status quo, for example "das auf alten Autoritätsstrukturen fußende, selbstgenügsame wilhelminischen Bürgertum mit seinen ausgehöhlten Bildungsidealen, gegen das kapitalistische Wirtschaftssystem mit seinen imperialistischen Tendenzen, gegen eine zunehmende Industrialisierung und Mechanisierung des Lebens" (Schweikle, *Metzler Literatur-Lexikon* 145). Considering that *Hinkemann* was written after this revolution failed to transform society according to the Expressionists' vision of justice, it is not surprising that the figure of Hinkemann is portrayed as unable to overcome the challenges facing him.

Indeed, Hinkemann can be seen as the embodiment of the crisis of modernity and the crisis of identity many individuals experienced following the First World War that Elwardy discusses in *Das Wandlungskonzept in der expressionistischen Dramatik* (2009). Elwardy's study examines the concept of transformation as Ernst Toller's answer to a number of inner and outer crises facing post-war German society. She identifies Friedrich (the protagonist in *Die Wandlung*) as the embodiment of the

New Man, who, through a process of a personal transformation, gains qualities that will help him to transform society, such as self-knowledge, a humanist spirit, and the willingness to peacefully work to end poverty, war, and suffering (compare 120).¹⁴⁷ Elwardy also writes that “Das Fehlen dieser Fähigkeit bei [einer Hauptfigur] lässt sie als scheiternde [Figur] erscheinen, die die Idealisierung des neuen Menschen [unterstreicht]” (120). According to this interpretation, the figure of Hinkemann can be read as a character that, instead of rising to the challenges before him, is overwhelmed by them. In this sense, the play as a whole can be understood as a tragic dwelling-in-crisis.

Thus, the significance of Hinkemann’s disability can and has been understood primarily in terms of its semiotic use. In discussions on Hinkemann’s body, scholars tend to highlight the way in which Toller uses his disability to express something else, namely his political critique. However, as I have shown above, Hinkemann’s body is also a diegetic body that, by means of its disability, speaks about disability itself. Roland Borgards has described how the self-reflexive nature of literature, by making use of particular forms, draws attention to what those forms achieve: “Daher sprechen literarische Tiertexte nicht nur über Tiere, sondern auch über die Weise, wie Tiere repräsentiert werden” (“Tiere in der Literatur” 95). A few paragraphs earlier he elaborates on how an animal represented in literature *are* not fantastic or realistic, but rather only *appear* as one or the other depending on the relationship between the world that is being represented and the world in which the story is being told (92).

¹⁴⁷ In the introduction to *Lyrik des Expressionismus* (1999), Silvio Vietta describes Toller as a “messianic Expressionist” and cites a connection to the concepts of *Gemeinschaft* (community) and the brotherhood of humanity in Gustav Landauer’s thought (6).

While Borgards' study focuses on the representations of animal bodies, his conclusions also apply to representations of human bodies. Like bodies that inhabit the physical world, bodies that appear in literature always have a semiotic dimension; in the case of Hinkemann, his body is marked diegetically via impairment and semiotically via association with a national body that is also viewed as "disabled." While scholarly focus has dwelled on the connections between the latter phenomenon and the world in which the play was written, this analysis has paid close attention to way in which the former phenomenon connects to discourses on the body produced within a particular literary genre and in a particular historical-discursive context. As Poore has emphasized with regard to *Hinkemann*:

Whereas the rehabilitation system could attempt to remasculinize veterans with some other types of disabilities, such as amputations, by outfitting them with prostheses and putting them back to work, the castrated veterans presented an insuperable challenge to traditional concepts of masculinity in the postwar situation, and this is precisely the theme in Toller's tragedy. (42)

Thus, while *Hinkemann* can be understood as a portrayal of the demise of the New Man, it can also be understood as a hyperbolic Expressionist representation of an experience of disability. This representation not only takes up, but also resists some discourses on the body - and in particular, the disabled male body - that were in the circulating in the collective consciousness following the First World War.

The figure of Hinkemann is therefore not only an embodiment of the crises of modernity and identity and the failure to come to terms with them, but he also brings

the body into the spotlight by drawing attention to it as a site at which these crises become manifest. In doing so, *Hinkemann* reveals how these crises are thoroughly connected to embodied experience and how they play a role in the emergence of subjectivity within gendered, ableist, and utilitarian discourses. Thus, Hinkemann's body is shown to possess powerful semiotic connotations on the collective level while having intense diegetic meanings on the individual level.

Conclusion

Having come to the end of the analyses of the primary texts, I will conclude Part Two by summarizing the most salient aspects of the representations of disability in *Die Wandlung*, “Der Krüppel,” and *Der deutsche Hinkemann*. I bring together the discussion on these three texts as well as position my reading of them against the backdrop of the dominant readings of these texts within German literary studies and disability studies. I then discuss the significance of the results of the analysis as they relate to the theoretical issues I raised in Part One. Finally, I discuss the relevance of these Expressionist dramas in the discursive climate of the present day and indicate some areas for further research regarding the representation of disability in German literature directly following WWI.

As discussed earlier, scholars in German literary studies have tended to focus on the semiotic properties of the disabled bodies that appear in the primary texts; that is, they have analyzed the ways in which disability is used to represent abstract concepts. Within this reading, disabled bodies are often interpreted as allegories for the national body, as embodiments of the universal isolation and suffering of mankind, or as critiques of the human suffering caused by militarism, nationalism, and capitalism. Often they are seen as symbols of social ill and as embodiments of all the injustices that can be overcome through revolution and the emergence of the New Man.

In disability studies, scholars tend to focus on the negative cultural meanings connected to representations of disability in literature. Carol Poore concisely sums up this position with her statement that, “when physically disabled characters do appear,

literary discourse tends to invest their disabilities with systems of meaning, make them a spectacle, and present them as metaphors with negative resonances . . . ” (195-96). Seen through this lens, disabled bodies are interpreted as carriers of negative cultural meaning: for instance as grotesque or comical figures, as victims or recipients of charity, as metaphors that reference loss or lack in the body that are used in the service of an author’s political aims. In essence, disability studies scholarship has drawn attention to all the ways in which disability is used in literary texts to reference or represent something else besides disability itself.

Thus, the tendency in both German literary studies and disability studies is to highlight the semiotic dimensions of literary representations of disability, i.e. the ways in which they fulfill particular narrative functions or transport abstract meanings. In its preference for discussing the symbolic, however, this dominant reading tends to downplay the diegetic properties of disabled figures. Thus, literary bodies with disabilities are often not taken seriously as beings that inhabit and negotiate the discursive matrix that constitutes their literary world. In this way, the workings of such figures at the diegetic and micro-linguistic level often go unnoticed or undervalued.

Within *Germanistik*, the representations of disability in the plays I have analyzed are largely considered to be political or personal allegories, and the few disability studies scholars who have examined them are critical because these representations are negative, highly symbolic, and inauthentic. In the analysis chapters, I have argued that the significance of these representations of disability lies in the discursive work they do, that is, in how they take up, challenge, and otherwise

negotiate ideas about the body and disability both in the represented world and within their historical context. In order to demonstrate this, I have paid particular attention to the diegetic dimensions of the disabled characters in the primary texts, that is, on how they are constructed and positioned by the text as beings that live, think, feel, speak, and interact with other diegetic bodies in the play. In the following paragraphs, I briefly summarize those findings.

Central to *Die Wandlung* is the belief that a more just society can be brought about through the transformation of individuals. The protagonist Friedrich, moving from station to station, portrays the struggles and trials that are necessary for the emergence of the New Man. According to the dominant reading of this text, the disabled characters in this play are primarily read on the semiotic level as carriers of negative cultural meaning. For example, the disabled characters that confront Friedrich in his studio in scene seven are often interpreted as existing solely to assist Friedrich on his path to transformation. These figures do have particular narrative and symbolic functions in the text. Indeed, they fit the description of what Mitchell and Snyder have called “narrative prostheses” because their brief appearance serves to bring about Friedrich’s crucial moment of insight. However, my analysis has highlighted the significance of the diegetic dimensions of these disabled characters; that is, the ways in which they exist and speak for themselves within the text.

While the two characters in scene seven are positioned in the text as suffering victims of their disabilities, the female character also explicitly draws attention to and critiques various discourses that led to her disability and that position her and her husband as victims as recipients of charity. For instance she observes that, just as

soldiers were sent out to battle like sheep to slaughter, they in turn behaved like unthinking beasts. She also points out how those who profited from the war view the bodies of poor people as mere pawns who needed to be sacrificed for “God and country” in order to maintain the economic status quo. This figure draws attention to the ways in which nationalist and religious discourses were taken up by the wealthy elite to functionalize the bodies of common people in their efforts to preserve their own privileged position in society. Thus, this portrayal of disability exercises a critique of religion, politics, and capitalism by pointing to the ways in which they produce suffering on the individual level and particularly disadvantage persons with disabilities. In this way, these two disabled figures exist for their own sake.

However, it is also true that Friedrich’s encounter with these characters is both a revelation and a crucial moment in his transformation. Furthermore, it is also the moment in which he rejects outright the ideals embodied in the statue he has been carving. His destruction of this muscular, aggressive image of the proud nation is indeed positioned in the text as a direct result of his encounter with disability. Described as “larger-than-life,” the statue represents an aesthetic, gendered, and able-bodied ideal that most human bodies could never hope to approximate. A sharp contrast is formed by its silent, lifeless presence in the studio as Friedrich converses with the two figures whose suffering is a direct result of the war. Their bodies serve as a mirror in which Friedrich sees that the ideal of the ultra-able body he has been attempting to give concrete form in fact produces disability, both discursively and physically. The physical presence of the two disabled figures both reveals the statue

as an embodiment of an unattainable ideal and serves as a critique of the discursive and physical violence in which it is implicated.

By physically destroying his statue, Friedrich is also discursively dismantling the phantasmatic ideal of the able body. Having been confronted with the tangible fruits of nationalism and militarism, namely, the suffering bodies of the two characters that visit him in his studio, Friedrich realizes that he has been chasing an unattainable, violent fantasy and decides to change his ideological course. This action is reminiscent of the kind of disability aesthetics that Tobin Siebers outlines in *Disability Aesthetics* in which he analyses the ways in which the portrayal of disability in works of art can serve to dismantle the persistent cultural preference for beauty, health, and ability. Although I analyzed *Die Wandlung* primarily for its discursive work as a text, the image-like scene structure and vivid linguistic texture of this piece indeed invoke the visual and could make for a strong statement about aesthetics on that level as well.

Another scene in which the text's visual qualities stand out prominently is scene six. Here, in the military hospital, seven prototypical cripples are paraded out by a doctor/professor. My analysis of this scene built upon Poore's discussion of these figures as a critique of both the military and rehabilitation science (40). My analysis went further in drawing out the ways in which the portrayal of these figures serves to critique these loci of knowledge and truth as existing to serve the interests of the state while robbing individuals of their agency and capacity for independent thought. I have also argued for the significance of the second set of "cripples" in this scene: the five disabled veterans who speak from their beds and describe their

experience of disability. Having received their wounds in the war, they are now in hospital, where medical and rehabilitation experts produced knowledge and truth about their bodies via the authority of the medical gaze. However, these men reject all efforts to comfort and re-construct their bodies, as well as insist on communicating their suffering and despair.

Their resistance participates in a critique of the production of knowledge about disability from loci of truth and knowledge such as science and medicine (embodied in the figures of the doctor/professor and the nurses) and religion (embodied by the priest). However, I have argued that these critiques function not only by means of, but also for the sake of, the disabled characters in this scene. While the portrayal of their bodies invokes a variety of disability myths, and while their presence certainly plays a role in the protagonist's transformation, these figures are significant because they serve to draw attention to disability as a phenomenon that is experienced by individuals. Furthermore, they critique the discursive violence that is done to bodies scrutinized under the medical gaze.

The portrayal of disabled characters in *Die Wandlung* is thus more complex than German literary studies or disability studies have thus far acknowledged. On the semiotic level, their bodies can and have been read as metaphors for the general suffering of soldiers and the poor, and as narrative prostheses. On the diegetic level, however, they draw attention to embodied experience as a mode of producing knowledge about the disabled body and reveal the origins of discourses on the body that were circulating during and after the war. Furthermore, they question the motives and the validity of the truths posited from within loci of knowledge and power such

as rehabilitation science, religion, and political and economic discourses by foregrounding the truth of lived experience.

“Der Krüppel” portrays a day in the life of a disabled veteran who is depicted as the suffering occupant of the lowest rung of society. With regard to the semiotic dimensions of the protagonist’s disabled body, *Der Krüppel aus dem Jahre 1916* (“A cripple from the year 1916”) is positioned as the *ecce homo*, which could be interpreted as an allegory for the suffering Christ or Nietzsche’s concept that to be “a man” alone is more than to be “a Christ.” All of the characters, including the protagonist, remain unnamed, carrying only short titles such as “the young republican,” “three officers,” and “two ladies.” In this way, these characters cannot be understood to represent particular individuals in the physical world. Instead, the text explicitly positions them as representatives of various social strata in post-WWI Germany. As caricatures inhabiting the microcosm of “ein Asphalt-Bürgersteig, nach der großen Zeit,”¹⁴⁸ their portrayal is decidedly over-generalized and hyperbolic. Thus, their interactions with each other can be read primarily as negotiations of the discourses on disability and the body they represent through their words and actions.

In the world of this play, the semiotic and diegetic dimensions of the protagonist’s body are thoroughly intertwined. By using the semiotic dimensions of his body, but also for the sake of the wellbeing of his body and personhood, the protagonist resists the ways in which militaristic, charitable, and utilitarian discourses seek to turn him into a particular kind of subject. While the other figures want to position him as an ever-sacrificing hero of the fatherland, as a poor, helpless cripple in need of charity, or as a lazy, ungrateful beggar looking for a handout, he refuses to

¹⁴⁸ “An asphalt sidewalk, after the great time.” (my translation)

allow himself to be objectified in this way. He achieves this by foregrounding the lived experience of disability by means of appropriation, that is, by making use of the words of others to express his own meanings.

As highlighted at the beginning of Part Two, the representation of disability in *Der deutsche Hinkemann* is generally seen as an expression of Toller's disillusionment in the face of the failed revolution of 1918-1919, especially in contrast to the optimistic tone of *Die Wandlung*. Indeed, the play expresses deep pessimism regarding the potential of individuals to transform themselves and society. In this sense, Eugen Hinkemann, the protagonist, presents a kind of antithesis to the figure of Friedrich, who in many ways embodies the ideal of the New Man. The semiotic dimensions of Hinkemann's body have been discussed at length in both German literary studies and disability studies, where his body is generally seen as an allegory for the emasculated and crippled national body of Germany after WWI. Within this dominant reading, the disabled protagonist's downfall is interpreted as an expression of Toller's personal and political disillusion. Although some scholars have made reference to the diegetic significance of the portrayal of Hinkemann, notably Poore, this is often overlooked in traditional literary analyses and downplayed in the context of activist readings. Disability is understood to function primarily as negative metaphor or allegory, and the disability tropes taken up in the play are interpreted at face value as affirming a variety of myths about disability.

In my analysis of this text, however, I have shown that the portrayal of Hinkemann's disability and character development serve to draw attention to the origins and techniques of disabling discourses. The text does this by invoking and

demonstrating the discursive violence that is inherent to hierarchical binaries. These include not only the privileging of ability over disability and health over sickness, but also the notion that masculinity is superior to femininity and the gendering of activity and passivity. The text furthermore shows that these binaries are intertwined with the complex power relations that emerge within the human-animal-machine triad. The text not only shows that the value of human and animal life is subjugated to the parameters of utilitarian thinking, but it also depicts organic life in general as losing the battle against the de-humanizing effects of industrialization and against the selfish individualism fostered by capitalism.

As I discussed at length in the analysis, the representations of disability in this text are thoroughly connected to these broader themes. While Hinkemann can be fruitfully read as a semiotic body, I have proposed a reading of him as a diegetic body and highlighted the ways in which his characterization draws attention to the fact that binary thinking structures reality by de-valuing the second aspect and by limiting the emergence of subjects to positions within the confines of binary categories. For example, Hinkemann lives in a world in which human subjects are either “masculine” or “feminine.” The text demonstrates the discursive violence this binary is visited on Hinkemann in the form of both interactive and reflexive positioning. Because he lacks genitals, the signifier of masculinity, Hinkemann positions himself and is positioned by other characters as less than masculine. Thus, he is feminized by his disability when it is discursively brought out into the open. The text not only positions his disability as both loss and lack, but it demonstrates

how the particularities of his embodiment deny him access to privileged subjectivity within binary categories.

In the context of the second reading of *Hinkemann* I propose, I read Hinkemann's body as both a semiotic body and a diegetic body; that is, as a body that lives, interacts, and *has meaning* in its literary world in a way similar to the way physical bodies live, interact and *mean* in the physical world. Since the cultural meaning of bodies cannot be separated from embodiment, I interpret the use of disability metaphors in this text as a technique for drawing attention to the discourses according to which bodies have meaning and within which particular kinds of subjectivities and experiences are possible. While Hinkemann's body can and has been read on the semiotic level as an allegory for the defeat, despair, and proverbial emasculation of the German national body, on the diegetic level his experience also stands in for the lived experiences of individuals who find themselves written out of the privileged categories of health, ability, progress, and potent masculinity.

Generally speaking, my analysis has demonstrated four major points when it comes to the representations of disability found in *Die Wandlung*, "Der Krüppel," and *Hinkemann*. First of all, I have demonstrated that all three of these plays connect embodied experience to abstract concepts (and vice versa) by blurring the boundaries between the semiotic and diegetic dimensions of disabled characters. In one sense, the representations of disability I have examined are used to talk about something else, such as a critique of the military, rehabilitation science, or religion. These aspects are well researched in German literary studies and have been touched on to some extent in disability studies.

In another sense, however, I have argued that these representations of disability say something about the phenomenon and experience of disability in German society after WWI. For instance, I have shown that they reflect and position themselves to the fact that disabilities acquired in the war were often perceived and experienced as a loss or a tragedy. Furthermore, I have demonstrated how they reveal and deplore the fact that disabled veterans continued to be subjected to discourses on the body that called for them to be useful in some way, i.e. to present themselves as patriotic, grateful, economically productive, and docile. These aspects are generally overlooked in German studies and are typically overshadowed in disability studies by critiques of the pervasive negative connotations of disability.

Secondly, I have shown how these plays uncover the workings of disabling discourses by representing disability in various modes and by using familiar tropes that are typical of the hyperbolic Expressionist style. For instance, while disabled characters are portrayed as suffering victims, they are also portrayed as defiant resisters of the discourses that turn them into suffering victims (as they do in *Die Wandlung*), as characters who “speak their truth” and tear down ideals (as the protagonist does in “Der Krüppel”) or as characters in whose development disabling discourses become visible to and tangible for readers (as is the case in *Hinkemann*).

Thirdly, these plays draw the attention of the reader/viewer to the significance of disability as a phenomenon in the physical world without claiming to authentically or accurately depict the experience of particular individuals. This is significant because, as my analysis deals with textual representations of physical experiences, it is important to highlight that such representations are always constructed. The

overwrought Expressionist style of these plays is a constant reminder of that constructedness. However, I have argued that this hyperbole nevertheless invites the reader/viewer to notice disability and to reflect on the experiences of physical bodies. Furthermore, the “truncated,” “broken,” or “disabled” language of these plays draws attention both to the association of disability with pain and suffering as well as to the impossibility of a “whole language” that is capable of accurately representing the complex nuances of embodied experience. Thus, even as the brokenness of Expressionist language underscores the pain and suffering of disabled characters, it also brings the limitations of textual representation of experience into sharp focus.

Finally, I have demonstrated that, while these plays are not “true” in a biographical or autobiographical sense, they indeed reveal and critique “truths” about disability in post-WWI Germany. For instance, in scene six of *Die Wandlung*, the seven machine-like prototypes present a critique of the de-humanizing effects of rehabilitation science in the service of the military and the liberal economy of post-war society. In a different way, the five men who speak from their beds present a challenge to the medical gaze by insisting on embodied experience as a valid way of producing knowledge and truth about disability. Their words are thus both a critique of medical science and religious discourse as well as a call to listen to the voices of persons with disability in order to learn something about disability. In scene seven, the two “war invalids” confront Friedrich not only to help him along the path of transformation, but to bring to light the experiences of individuals whose suffering was brought about by the war. These figures furthermore challenge the feasibility of the able-bodied aesthetic of Friedrich’s statue, which embodies the physical and

moral ideals of the German nation. They accomplish this by their mere presence, which draws attention to the fact that these ideals are not only unlivable, but that they discursively exclude the bodies of persons with disabilities from the “national body.”

In “Der Krüppel,” the disabled protagonist presents a critique of disabling discourses not only via the visibility of his disability as he sits on the sidewalk, but also through his interactions with passers-by. By means of appropriation, he takes up the words and meanings of others and re-shapes and re-functionalizes them to express his own meanings and his own lived experiences. While his efforts are not successful in the sense that he convinces others to see the world from his perspective, it is the very act of his active defiance that positions him as successful in seeing through the ostensibly well-intentioned words of the other figures. While he does not have “all the answers” or a better solution for how society should treat him, he does identify and point out the ways in which current ways of “making sense” of disabled bodies positions him as a victim, as a symbol of his nation, as a recipient of charity, and as a lazy, rude, and ungrateful beggar. While the protagonist does not explicitly attempt to replace the paradigms presented to him by other figures with his own notions of morality, for instance his biting words do point to lived experience as a paradigm for “making sense” in the world via language.

In *Hinkemann*, the protagonist’s body is portrayed as a site at which discourses on masculinity and disability are negotiated. While the “hidden truth” of Hinkemann’s castration serves to drive forward the plot, the main conflict is the protagonist’s struggle to establish a masculine, able-bodied subject position. This attempt not only ultimately fails, but it is constantly belittled and mocked by the

figure of Paul Großhahn, Hinkemann's supposed best friend who is positioned in the text as the epitome of masculinity and ability.

On the one hand, the play demonstrates that the impaired bodies of soldiers carried symbolic meaning in that they were a reminder of the crippling defeat of the German nation in WWI. On the other, they also highlight the fact that these men, upon returning to civilian life, were faced with the sometimes insurmountable challenge of living up to ideals of able-bodied masculinity. The play portrays Hinkemann as monstrous and laughable, not as a result of his embodiment but rather as a consequence of discourses that disable him by categorizing his body as inadequate to fulfill the requirements for a valued subjecthood. In other words, Hinkemann experiences in an acute way the phenomenon McRuer has called "ability trouble," that is, "not the so-called problem of disability but the inevitable impossibility, even as it is made compulsory, of an able-bodied identity" (10).

This is the point at which these representations are interesting for discussions on disability and the body today. The discourses on the body that are negotiated in these three plays, and arguably, that were experiencing a heyday in the Weimar Republic, are still in circulation today in one form or another. Particularly when it comes to the value-laden binaries of health/sickness and ability/disability, not much "progress," in the sense of a shift of values, when it comes to the human body, despite the "cultural progress narrative" McRuer has criticized (179). Because of the current preference for the realistic mode within disability studies, i.e. for literary representations that do not "flatten out the real, lived experiences of disabled people"

(Poore, *Disability in German Culture* 196), the value of the hyperbolic and symbolic bodies in Expressionist drama is overlooked.

For instance, the detailed, melodramatic descriptions of physical and emotional suffering that can be found in the dialogues and stage directions of *Die Wandlung*, “Der Krüppel,” and *Hinkemann* draw attention to the feelings of fear, pity, and disgust people often feel when confronted with disability. Hughes has examined this topic in depth in his 2012 article “Fear, Pity and Disgust,” where he also asserts that in our society today, “the time may have come . . . to celebrate mess, waste and excess. It . . . can only bring benefit to disabled people and to everyone who is subjected to the body fascism of ableist culture” (75). Thus, while non-disabled people prefer to put thoughts of sickness, disability, and mortality out of their minds, the representations of disability in these three plays can provide “a small window, through which - despite denial and disavowal - [they are] able to see, to some extent, a refracted reflection of self in the despised other” (76).

Furthermore, I have shown that the representations of disability I have analyzed indeed critique the way in which binary distinctions always privilege some forms of embodiment over others. In the analysis I demonstrated this with regard to some discourses on the body that were circulating in the time and place in which the plays were written. For instance, rehabilitation efforts such as those exemplified by Konrad Biesalski and Hans Würtz are scrutinized for the de-humanizing effects they produce at the individual level. In this sense, these pieces can be understood as early critiques of the medical model’s objectification of bodies, that is, how they turn certain kinds of bodies into disabled subjects.

As recent work in disability studies demonstrates, the struggle to dethrone the medical model of disability as a dominant means of producing knowledge and truth about disability continues to the present day (see, for example, Barnes, “Understanding the Social Model of Disability” 2012). However, far from Barnes’ concern that postmodernist analyses of cultural representations of disability serve to “shift attention away from the primacy of economic forces in the creation of disablement toward a politically benign focus on culture, language and discourse,” (22) this dissertation has demonstrated that Expressionist drama in post-WWI Germany was very much involved in a critique of disabling discourses with an eye on their linguistic (re-) production within unjust political and economic systems.

These findings support my argument for a second reading of the primary texts on the diegetic level and for a new understanding of the significance of the representations of disability they contain. Most importantly, these texts engage with discourses on disability and the body that played a role in constituting individuals’ experiences and subjectivities directly following WWI. In addition, they actively resist modes of producing knowledge about disability from within the scientific-medical sphere and criticize the role of patriotic, religious, and economic discourses in supporting a status quo that disables individuals whose bodies do not conform to able-bodied ideals.

In the final sections of this conclusion, I use the results of my analyses of the primary texts to address and expand upon the theoretical discussions outlined in Part One. I will demonstrate that these three Expressionist plays are valuable for study today because of the ways in which they identify, address, critique, and negotiate

discourses on disability and the body that were not only characteristic of post-WWI Germany, but that persist in North American society today.

Semiotic bodies, diegetic subjectivities

This dissertation has argued for a reading of the disabled bodies in *Die Wandlung*, “Der Krüppel,” and *Der deutsche Hinkemann* as diegetic bodies as well as semiotic bodies. By focusing on the ways in which these figures live, interact, and experience embodiment within their literary worlds, I have revealed how their subjectivities emerge within a discursive matrix that is not unlike the one that characterized Germany following the First World War. I have shown that primary texts make use of a variety of disability tropes and myths in order to exercise critiques of religion, politics, and capitalism, but also to demonstrate how these loci of truth, knowledge and power are complicit in producing disabled subjects.

The representations of disability in the three primary texts are significant for discussions on the body and subjectivity in a variety of ways. All three pieces contain distinct negotiations of the meanings of the body and of disabled subjectivity. Just as Friedrich destroys the body of the statue in *Die Wandlung* along with the ideal of able-bodied masculinity it embodies, Hinkemann’s sense of self is eventually destroyed by that same ideal. While Friedrich realizes that the statue of the muscular, aggressive man of marble can no longer represent the nation when so many living, breathing members of society live with disabilities, Hinkemann’s disabled body represents both the individual experience of disability and the sense of collective loss experienced as a result of WWI.

In this regard, the figure of Hinkemann also shares a certain overlap with the war-disabled protagonist of “Der Krüppel.” Semiotically, both characters can be read as symbols of the defeated nation that embody the sense of loss and despair felt throughout the population at the end of the war. Diegetically, these bodies can also be read as disabled not as a result of their impairments, but rather by means of the subject positions that are discursively available to them following the experiences of impairment and emotional trauma. After losing the normative status he once enjoyed as an able-bodied man, Hinkemann realizes that the discourses on ability and masculinity that once privileged him in fact do terrible violence to all those whose bodies do not conform to them. Having identified the discursive techniques that shape his society, the protagonist of “Der Krüppel” loudly protests the ways in which his interlocutors seek to deny him agency in the production of knowledge on his body.

Furthermore, the representations of disability in *Die Wandlung*, “Der Krüppel,” and *Der deutsche Hinkemann* consistently locate the origins and workings of disabling discourse and position the bodies of disabled figures as sites at which those discourses are negotiated. The texts’ use of disabled bodies to critique nationalistic and militaristic discourses, for example, functions simultaneously as a critique of how those discourses act upon bodies to make them docile pawns. Similar to Foucault’s analysis of the techniques of the military gaze in the chapter on “Docile Bodies” (135-169) in *Discipline and Punish* (1979), these techniques are also revealed and critiqued particularly in scenes five and six of *Die Wandlung* and in the third scene of act two of *Hinkemann*. While the seven prototypes who are paraded out on display and the other performers who share the stage with Hinkemann represent

bodies that have been disciplined to become “subjected and practised bodies, ‘docile’ bodies” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 138), the five men who speak from their beds in the military hospital put up resistance to being turned into that kind of docile subject by insisting on their experiences as the foundation of their individual subjectivities and collective identity.

Both Hinkemann and the protagonist in “Der Krüppel” also attempt to resist discourses that would have them be docile, including the gaze of medical science and the techniques of the military. Their resistance also involves a critique of the ways in which political and economic discourses, as well as unreflected opinions grounded in so-called common sense, work to “increase[] the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminish[] these same forces (in political terms of obedience)” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 138). Through their experience of impairment and disablement, both Eugen Hinkemann and the nameless cripple come to realize that these discourses shape experience and subjectivity by positioning individuals’ disabilities as personal failings. Such discourses act upon the emergence of subjectivity to render individuals’ bodies useful to the collective body by writing them out of the sphere of subjectivity or by seeking to increase their abilities.

Identity, storytelling, and political strategy

While the primary texts share some similarities when it comes to the negotiation of disabled subjectivities, they differ greatly when it comes to how those negotiations are positioned as stories that tell the reader/viewer something about identity and political strategy in the physical world. For instance, *Die Wandlung* presents an optimistic outlook, namely, that a commitment to brotherly love and

cooperation will conquer the power of the disabling discourses that exist in politics, religion, and socio-economic relations. As the crowd takes up Friedrich's revolutionary chant at the close of the last scene, one can almost imagine the wounded, traumatized, disfigured, and disabled figures Friedrich has encountered (and as whom he has at times appeared) marching beside him and taking up the call to bring down the unjust status quo and create a society in which everyone is valued and respected. Thus, the political strategy of this piece involves speaking out against and taking collective action to dismantle the techniques of disabling discourses.

Hinkemann, on the other hand, portrays a very different outlook on the possibility of peaceful revolution via individual and societal transformation. The disillusioned, pessimistic trajectory of this piece makes it difficult to separate the texts' political overtones from the representations of disability it contains. However, acknowledging the semiotic dimensions of Hinkemann's body does exclude a reading of him as a diegetic body; instead, this can serve as an acknowledgement of the way in which bodies have meaning in both the literary and physical world. Hinkemann's downfall can serve as a hyperbolic portrayal of how the bodies of persons with disabilities can become lodged at the intersection of binary categorizations and are thus pushed to the periphery of the idealized notion of the rational, able-bodied human subject. Although Hinkemann "fails to transform", he succeeds in identifying the points at which he is discursively denied access into this realm.

Because his subjectivity is in a constant state of negotiation at the borders of ability and disability, masculinity and femininity, productivity and idleness, and even

humanity and animality, Hinkemann is forced into a position from which he is able to observe and reflect in a way that other figures, such as Paul Großhahn, are unable to do. Furthermore, the increasing tension between Hinkemann's lived experience and the symbolic meaning of his body serve to underscore the struggle faced by many individuals in the physical world who are relegated to the "inferior" category of one or more binaries. If a political strategy can be gleaned from this text, it can be said to involve identifying binaries, amplifying them, and demonstrating their disastrous consequences for individuals whose bodies are perceived as (and who come to see their bodies as) inferior.¹⁴⁹

The political strategy of "Der Krüppel" can be located somewhere between the two extremes formed by the political strategies of *Die Wandlung* and *Hinkemann*. This short piece portrays one attempt (albeit, an attempt that at least initially fails) of an underprivileged subject to transform disabling discourses via appropriation and the foregrounding of lived experience. While the protagonist shares some overlap with the figure of Hinkemann in that he is portrayed as a traumatized, disabled veteran who gains insights into the unjust workings of his society, he is also shown to actively resisting the discourses that disable him. In the context of each interaction, he cleverly picks up on "body language" (that is, on language that references the body in some way) and skillfully weaves his own narrative about the things he did, witnessed, and had done to him during the war.

¹⁴⁹ This strategy of the text works in conjunction with its portrayal of reality and individuals' perception of reality. As Kirsten Reimers points out in *Das Bewältigen des Wirklichen*, Hinkemann's monologues in particular draw attention to the fact that "Die Realität wird als Äußeres erkannt, doch ist die Darstellung an eine Person gebunden . . . Wirklichkeit und wie sie erkannt wird, hängt vom Bewußtsein des einzelnen ab, sie steht damit immer in der Gefahr, manipuliert zu sein" (92).

Thus, the protagonist's strategy in "Der Krüppel" involves a persistent turn towards making meaning with his body. By oscillating between embodied experiences and abstract meanings, he tests and stretches the boundaries of what language can express about lived experience. When he realizes that his efforts have gone unnoticed, unappreciated, and have been misunderstood by his interlocutors, he resorts to using the physical presence of his body to underscore what he wants to express: that his body has been used as an object to achieve collective goals and then thrown away when it was no longer of use. Thus, the protagonist is portrayed as employing a combination of linguistic and pantomimic strategies to achieve his goals. While his efforts are lost on the other, one-dimensional figures in the play, his meanings presumably break through to the reader/viewer.

While the three primary texts present differing strategies for responding to disabling discourses, they share one further strategy in common, that is, the use of literary representation as a means of drawing attention to disabling discourse. In this way, the representations of disability in these dramas differ from the utilization of disability in political and societal critiques such as Ernst Friedrich's *War Against War* (1987; original publication 1924). Because they take up numerous literary tropes and myths that hinge on disability, disability is shifted into the spotlight in the context of the over-arching political tones of these plays. Just as these stylistic and rhetorical conventions serve to re-inscribe or subvert cultural meanings about disability, my argument has been that they are useful for discussions on how literary representations of disability serve to perpetuate, challenge, or shift the meaning(s) of disability in the physical world.

These plays represent disability in ways that were revolutionary at the time in which they were created. As Expressionist dramas, they portray supra-individual, typified characters that are constituted by a use of language that is “sowohl metaphorisch, symbolisch überhöht als auch die traditionelle Bildersprache zerstörend” (Schweikle, *Metzler Literaturlexikon* 146). Thus, these dramas represented disability in ways that embraced and yet challenged routine ways of representing, talking about, and imagining both the phenomenon and the experience of disability. Far from accurately portraying these in a straightforward manner, these representations serve to reveal universal aspects of human experience such as suffering and isolation.

Almost one hundred years after the publication of these dramas, discourses on disability and its representation in literature have undergone significant changes. One of the most significant developments in the second half of the twentieth century was the advent of the disability rights movement and the founding of disability studies in the Western world. Thus, when considering the significance of these dramas in the present day it is useful to view these plays as “in dialogue” with not only the contemporaneous discursive currents I discussed in Part One but also with discourses on disability today.

Texts in discursive dialogue

By taking up concurrent discourses on disability and the body in the realms of science and medicine, politics, religion, economics, as well as “common sense,” the primary texts enter into dialogue with and negotiate these discourses at the level of the individual. Particularly in scenes five and six, *Die Wandlung* challenges the belief

that medicine and technology will improve society by “repairing” individual bodies by portraying the techniques of rehabilitation science as de-humanizing. Beyond the world of the play, one can see a connection to and critique of discursive formations such as the texts on rehabilitation and special education written by Konrad Biesalski and Hans Würtz.

The critique of scientific-medical discourses and techniques is accompanied by an insistence that persons with disabilities have the right to speak about their experiences. Seen in this light, the wish for death expressed by the five wounded men in scene six does not constitute a plea to eliminate “life unworthy of life” as proposed by Alfred Hoche and Karl Binding. Rather, it merely supports the notion that persons with disabilities have the right to determine their own fate, a right they should not relinquish to medical and religious “experts” who produce knowledge about disabled bodies and know “what is best” for them. While *Die Wandlung* negotiates this idea against the discursive-historical context in which it was written, it also aligns with the goal of disability studies scholarship today by presenting an alternative way of establishing knowledge about disability that is based on people’s situated experience. As Mark Sherry writes in “Reading Me/Me Reading Disability” (2005), “disabled people have been spoken about, and spoken for, but rarely listened to” (165).

In a fashion similar to the disabled characters in *Die Wandlung*, the protagonist of “Der Krüppel” resists all those who wish to tell him not only what is best for him, but also what his disability means and what kind of person he is because of it. The text of this play is thus also in dialogue with various discourses that exist in the physical world beyond the limits of the dramatic world. For instance, the young

republican embodies a combination of capitalist discourse and the rehabilitationist discourses that were criticized in *Die Wandlung*. His suggestion that the protagonist use a wheelchair or prosthesis is directly tied to the neo-liberal belief that the individual must carry sole responsibility for his or her wellbeing. His accusation that the protagonist is simply lazy (Wittfogel, K 30) is supported by the good citizen, who takes this concept further by saying that the existence of persons unwilling to work will ruin society and that the state should “do something about it” (31).

Almost twenty years after the publication of “Der Krüppel,” this blend of compulsory physical and mental ability with the notion that the value of life is tied to economic utility proved to have disastrous consequences. In 1939, the establishment of the *Aktion T4* killing program would serve as a precursor to the Holocaust. In her 2011 dissertation, Susanne C. Knittel explains how the National Socialists drew upon the notion that persons with disabilities are economically unproductive to establish this program to dispose of “unnütze Esser” (“useless eaters”) (48). Thus, the ability to work was one of the main criteria used to determine whether a person should be euthanized. While the victims of the *Aktion T4* program were mostly persons with intellectual disabilities and institutionalized persons (Knittel 47), the justification for the establishment of this program demonstrates the discourse that in order to be worthy of life one must be economically productive is one that extended to encompass all bodies.

In *Die Modellanstalt: Über den Aufbau einer “modernen Krüppelfürsorge,”* (2004) Philipp Osten traces the development of experts such as Konrad Biesalski from well-meaning experts on rehabilitation and special education to supporters of

racial hygiene in the 1920's (354). Performed in Berlin for the first time in 1920, "Der Krüppel" picks up on this discursive shift that was occurring in post-WWI Germany. The final lines of the play, spoken by one of the three officers, concisely captures this disability drift: "Also - wie das immer so ist - mit die Fußerl hat's ang'fangt, dann hat sich's aufs Herz g'schlagen" (Wittfogel, K 32).¹⁵⁰

In this line it becomes clear that the protagonist's interlocutors have disregarded his words as the raving of a person with a mental illness. It is also strikingly reminiscent of the book Hans Würtz published in 1921, which he bases on the premise that persons with physical disabilities also have mental, emotional, or intellectual disabilities, and vice versa (*Seelenleben des Krüppels* 3). The portrayal of this concept in "Der Krüppel" as not only misguided, but also as a discourse that disables individuals, is relevant in discussions on the continuing popularity of disability myths such as "disability drift and the disability hierarchy" (Dolmage, *Disability Rhetoric* 62).

In *Hinkemann*, there is a strong connection between the protagonist's disabled body and discourses on the bodies of disabled soldiers in post-WWI Germany. The original title of the piece, *Der deutsche Hinkemann*, as well as the constant ridicule the protagonist endures (and which he also turns on himself) serve to demonstrate the porousness of the line that divided unique individual experiences of disability from the symbolic meanings they carried in the collective imagination. Thus, *Hinkemann* demonstrates what Beth A. Ferri has pointed out in "Disability Life Writing and the Politics of Knowing": that the body is "inevitably both cultural and material, both experience and subjectivity - in dialogic interaction" (4).

¹⁵⁰ "Well, that's the way it goes - it started with his leg and then it infected his heart." (my translation)

Beyond the author-function

My reading of the primary texts serves to challenge the tendency in both German literary studies and disability studies to interpret the significance of these texts' representations of disability in accordance with the identities of their authors. Instead of focusing on the ways in which the authors of these texts employ symbolic meanings of disability to realize their political or aesthetic programs, I have primarily focused on the negotiations of disabled subjectivity and the critiques of disabling discourse that occur at the micro-discursive level of these plays. The results of the analysis show that these Expressionist dramas are valuable for current discussions on disability and the body because they make use of a variety of strategies to accomplish complex negotiations of embodied subjectivity and while identifying and challenging disabling discourses. These include positioning, appropriation, complicating the boundaries, and a use of disability aesthetics that borders on crip critique.

Positioning

Understanding the negotiations of subjectivity in the primary texts via the lens of positioning theory has allowed me to identify, on the linguistic level, the moments in interaction that give rise to particular kinds of subjectivities. The disabled characters in all three plays position themselves, via reflexive positioning, and are positioned by other characters via interactive positioning. In *Die Wandlung*, the seven prototypes are positioned in scene six by the doctor/professor as de-individualized cogs within the medical-military apparatus he maintains through his work. However, the five wounded men who speak from their beds resist being turned into objects this way by positioning themselves as authorities on their embodied experience. The two

disabled characters in scene seven bemoan the fact that their bodies have been positioned as pawns and turned into victims by the wealthy elite in their society. Thus, on the level of interaction, positioning is a means of drawing attention to the origins of disabling discourse in this piece. On the level of the text, disability is positioned as something that many persons experience as a direct result of nationalistic and militaristic discourse as well as a product of unjust political, economic, and social relations.

Similarly, the protagonist in “Der Krüppel” experiences the effects of disabling discourses as he is positioned by his interlocutors who represent the military, rehabilitation science, charity, and neo-liberal politics. In response, he positions himself as the “ecce homo” who, because of his experiences and observations at the lowest rung of the social ladder, is able to see through the pretenses of the people he encounters and reveal their true intentions, namely to utilize his body for their own intentions without concern for his wellbeing. The interactive positioning enacted by the protagonist and the other figures serves to write each other out of their respective realms of subjectivity. The text positions the protagonist as speaking from the experience of disability, and the other figures as viewing disability from outside of embodied experience positioning themselves as experts on how to solve the “problem” of disability. Because each of the characters stands for a particular societal milieu, the positioning in “Der Krüppel” creates a hard line between the protagonist and the other figures both on the level of interaction and on the level of the text.

In *Der deutsche Hinkemann*, the protagonist increasingly positions himself as a ridiculous, monstrous person who has no hope of establishing a respected place in society. This occurs in conjunction with, or perhaps in response to, his positioning (via characters such as Paul Großhahn) as a farcical figure who, because of his disability, no longer has the right to call himself a man, have a romantic relationship, or live a happy life. In the first act, Hinkemann positions himself as a victim while attempting to secure a position of respect for himself by securing employment and fulfilling the role of the family provider. However, as the plot progresses, Hinkemann becomes aware of his inability to subvert the symbolic power of his disability and succumbs to the despair he feels upon realizing his discursive exclusion from the privileged position of able-bodied masculinity.

Thus, the instances of positioning in this text trace the emergence of the protagonist's disabled subjectivity. Although Hinkemann experiences a revelation regarding the workings of disabling discourses in his society, the positioning he experiences and participates in serves to both literally and physically disable him. On the level of the text, disability is positioned as a form of human suffering that cannot be "overcome" by a shift in the political system when that system does not account for the ways in which a variety of other discourses on the body, including gender and ability, serve to privilege some bodies over others.

Complicating the boundaries

While the disabled characters in the primary texts insist on their disabled identities in one way or another, they also participate in complicating the boundaries of the binary categories that do violence to them. This is most prominent in

Hinkemann, where the protagonist both reflects on the hard lines that divide masculinity from femininity, humanity from animality, the individual from society, and useful life from useless life while himself transgressing these boundaries via language. From singing in a sing-song voice, to identifying with a goldfinch and comparing himself with a beast of burden, and by reflecting on the fate of other persons with disabilities and even his enemies from the war, Hinkemann draws out the similarities between his experience and the experience of other living beings. His use of interactive and reflexive positioning, mimicry, as well as hyperbolic similes and metaphors, allows him to do this while still accounting for the uniqueness of his experience.

In *Die Wandlung*, a complicating of the boundaries takes place most notably through the fact that the protagonist Friedrich often appears in the guise other figures. Not only does he appear in scene six in the role of a medical student who observes the de-humanizing effects of the medical gaze and as a priest whose efforts to comfort the suffering are confounded, but he also appears as a wounded and traumatized soldier in scene five. Thus, Friedrich's transformation progresses not only via his encounters with disabled characters, but indeed through the experience of disability in the form of his war trauma and the medical treatment he receives.

Because it serves to reify the lines between disabled subjectivity and the non-disabled perspective, the text of "Der Krüppel" participates much less in complicating the boundaries than the other two plays. However, it is significant that it is a dog that has compassion with the protagonist at the end of the play after it has become clear that the other human figures do not understand the protagonist or have

compassion with him. While one could interpret the protagonist's interaction with this dog as a sign that he has been "reduced" to the position of the animal, it is also possible to read this ending as a statement that animals are capable of a kind of unconditional compassion that at times transcends human capacities.

Disability aesthetics as crip critique

Far from "just happening to have a disability," the disabled various characters in the primary texts, as literary portrayals constituted in language, are intentionally disabled in the sense that their disabilities have very clear meanings and functions within the text. As semiotic bodies, they transport and transform abstract meanings and serve as narrative prostheses in their respective texts. Furthermore, they serve as critiques of the aesthetic, political, and economic preference for beautiful, integral, healthy, and able bodies. Their effectiveness as semiotic bodies, however, depends upon their existence as diegetic bodies that live, move, and interact with other figures in the context of their literary worlds. The diegetic properties of the disabled characters also form further connections to the physical world beyond the text.

Written (and set) against the historical backdrop Germany just following WWI, the semiotic and diegetic bodies of the disabled characters in the primary texts serve a broader function. By portraying disabled bodies that suffer, lack, and fall into despair, these texts not only present a critique of militarism and capitalism; they also react to discursive currents that threatened to make disability, and disabled people, disappear from the collective consciousness. Henri-Jacques Stiker has discussed this phenomenon at length in *A History of Disability* (1999, original 1982), where he critiques efforts to repair the maimed bodies of soldiers by replacing missing parts or

compensating for lacking functionalities: “rehabilitation marks the appearance of a culture that attempts to complete the act of identification, of making identical. This act will cause the disabled to disappear and with them all that is lacking, in order to assimilate them, drown them, dissolve them in the greater and single social whole” (128).

Literary figures such as Hinkemann, the “Krüppel aus dem Jahre 1916”, and the many disabled characters that appear in *Die Wandlung* are literary bodies that refuse to be seamlessly (re-) integrated into their societies. While this refusal is variously portrayed as emanating from the wishes of the character or as occurring against his or her will or despite his or her efforts, what they all have in common is that they are positioned in the texts as bodies that fail to “be made whole again” by scientific-medical, political, religious, or economic discourses. In their own ways, they insist on expressing their suffering, physical and emotional pain, and experience of objectification and exclusion. In other words, their dramatic portrayal is reminiscent of the disability aesthetics Siebers identifies in the visual art being created in Germany following the First World War in *Disability Aesthetics*.

Furthermore, the disability aesthetic of the disabled figures I have discussed makes it difficult to read them as purely semiotic or merely prosthetic. Indeed, I see in their portrayal a resistance to the demands of what McRuer has called “compulsory able-bodiedness” (*Crip Theory* 30). By revealing the workings of disabling discourses, the plays I have analyzed provide the reader with the opportunity to reflect on the ways in which these discourses are detrimental to people with disabilities and in fact to all living beings. While it would be difficult to describe

these plays as participating in a crip critique à la McRuer, it is possible to value them as literary works that employ hyperbolic language, stark characterizations, and disability aesthetics to reveal the power of compulsory able-bodiedness and to present a critique of the consequences it can have for individuals whose bodies do not approximate such ideals of embodiment.

Disability and the crises of self, alienation, poverty, and war

In Part Two, I have demonstrated that Wittfogel's "Der Krüppel" and Toller's *Die Wandlung* and *Der deutsche Hinkemann* contribute important insights with regard to our understanding of literary representations of disability in post-WWI Germany. Most importantly, these Expressionist dramas portray disability in a way that draws attention to it as a phenomenon one encounters in the physical world without claiming to authentically or accurately convey the experience of specific individuals who live in the physical world. In the dramas I have examined, disability is treated as one of the universal experiences of human existence; however, the plays are quite specific when it comes to the type of characters they portray as disabled. The majority of the disabled figures I have analyzed in *Der Krüppel*, *Die Wandlung*, and *Hinkemann* are primarily men who fought and were wounded in the Great War. These portrayals of disability are similar in that they investigate the impact of acquired disabilities on masculine subjectivity as well as the ways in which the individual body becomes wrapped up in the negotiation of national identity.

Instead of positioning people with disabilities as "abject others," these plays' use of disability lends support to the notion that some experiences and fears are common to all people, including disability, loss, rejection, suffering, and death. In

this way, the primary texts negotiate the inner crises of self and alienation as a moment of potential connection to other living beings that suffer, whether they are human or non-human. This is evidenced by the goldfinch with which Eugen Hinkemann identifies in the opening scene of *Der deutsche Hinkemann*, the dog that comforts the protagonist at the end of “Der Krüppel,” and the priest in scene six of *Die Wandlung*, who, wearing the countenance of Friedrich, encounters suffering others and realizes that the words he intended to comfort them in fact serve to further torment them. All three plays point to the potential of lived experience to foster the development of compassion for others and the ability to recognize and transform disabling discourse.

However, the plays also demonstrate that not everyone will take advantage of this potential, as evidenced by the passers-by in “Der Krüppel,” who seek to integrate the protagonist into their discourses in order to use his body to achieve their own objectives without concern for his wishes. In a similar way, the figure of the doctor/professor in *Die Wandlung* represents all those who view individuals and their bodies as interchangeable parts that exist only to benefit the collective body and that can be re-functionalized to serve the needs of the nation. In *Hinkemann*, Paul Großhahn represents all those who benefit from the binary categorizations of bodies that disable bodies that are read as feminine, animal, weak, or disabled. Thus, the plays locate the crises of self and alienation at the boundaries of binary categorizations that enable the production of disabled subjects.

The primary works also negotiate the outer crises of poverty and war with which post-WWI German society was faced via the representation of disability. The

characterization of disabled figures serves to portray and critique the consequences of nationalist and capitalist discourses that uphold the ideal of strong, healthy, rational, and integral bodies in order to achieve national prosperity and dominance. Indeed, they demonstrate that these discourses and the ideals of embodiment they promote serve to disable individual bodies even as they promise to benefit the collective body. In this sense, the primary texts not only demonstrate that the crises of war and poverty both are experienced most acutely by the poor and by persons with disabilities, but also that capitalism and nationalism are complicit in the production of disability as a stigmatized category.

Thus, these representations of disability are not merely “surface visions, quickly to be forgotten” (Rosenberg 181), as Bertolt Brecht did in 1920. Instead, I have argued that they assist the reader/viewer in developing a critical eye for discourses that disable and devalue bodies both in the literary worlds they inhabit and in the physical world we inhabit. Thus, the disabled characters in the primary works are “bodies that matter” in the sense Butler elucidates in her 1993 book of the same title. Their bodily presence in these dramas exposes the fallacy of the “verlogene Bilder” (Toller, DdH 221)¹⁵¹ Hinkemann used to unquestioningly accept, that is, the compulsory able-bodiedness that is continually reproduced as a naturalized, aesthetic ideal of embodiment within political, economic, and scientific-medical discourse.

While the disabled bodies are positioned in these dramas as characters who see through the fallacy of the way things seem and are able to access the essential truth of the world and the human condition, I have proposed a second reading of these characters as diegetic bodies that reveal the impossibility of peeling away

¹⁵¹ “And of a Saturday night you go and see a pack of lies on the movies” (175).

cultural meanings to access ideologically-neutral knowledge about the body. By drawing on various disability myths and literary tropes, these pieces are not merely employing disability to talk about something else. Rather, I have argued that these representations serve to draw attention to the lived experience of disability while demonstrating the ways in which disabled bodies were embedded in political and economic discourses in Germany following the Great War.

One hundred years of disability: paradigm shifts and resilient discourses

While there are significant differences between the discourses on the body in post-WWI Germany and discourses on the body in North America almost one hundred years later, there are several discursive currents that connect these times and places. For instance, the medical model of disability, especially in the form of rehabilitationist discourse, continues to be a major paradigm within which bodies are diagnosed as impaired and sought to be re-integrated into the ranks of economically-productive, self-sufficient members of society. Despite what Barnes has described as a “general “softening” of attitudes in policy circles in wealthy states” (13), utilitarian discourses on the body continue to disable individuals by framing disability as an individual problem to be overcome. Thus, as Barnes argues, it is essential that disability studies continue to participate in the “struggle for a fairer and just society” (23). In this dissertation, I have argued that the primary texts taken up in the analysis indeed participate in such a project within their historical-discursive context via a specific literary genre. I have furthermore argued that, although they were written almost one hundred years ago, scholars in both literary studies and disability studies

should take these texts seriously for the discursive work they do in resisting disabling discourses, some of which continue to characterize Western society today.

When it comes to discourses on the bodies of disabled veterans, Serlin has demonstrated in *Replaceable You* (2004) that the development of prosthetics to allow individuals to once again become productive and self-sufficient has been a persistent theme in North American society in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Serlin's study further demonstrates that the bodies of disabled soldiers continue to carry symbolic meaning as representatives of the national body despite the fact that they experience impairment and disability as individuals. Thus, the lived experiences of disabled veterans and the rehabilitation of their bodies often still become wrapped up in narratives of national recovery. In this way, both the symbolic meanings and lived experiences of the "war disabled" characters in the Expressionist dramas I have analyzed continue to be relevant to the individual experiences and collective meanings of disability today.

Regarding contemporary scientific-medical discourses on human bodies in general, David B. Agus' popular book, *The End of Illness* (2012), demonstrates that the view of the human body as a machine and the pursuit of health as a belief system continue to be intertwined with expectations placed on individuals. At the same time, this text reflects the discursive shift that has taken place since the 1920's away from a top-down view of the power of medical professionals toward a neoliberal model that places the responsibility for maintaining health and ability into the hands of individuals. In his book, Agus essentially proposes that individuals adopt the medical gaze and apply its techniques on themselves by observing, evaluating, and

“managing” their bodies. Agus promises that this will not only enable individuals to increase their energy, productivity, and quality of life, but also to ward off disease, avoid disability, and postpone death. While Agus’ book presents enticing promises regarding the ability of individuals to achieve these goals, it implicitly perpetuates the notion that people who are ill or have disabilities may be at fault for not doing all they could have to have healthy, able, and self-sufficient bodies.

This underlying notion of personal responsibility for health and ability is thoroughly neoliberal in terms of its assumption that individuals possess sufficient rationality, agency, and autonomy to achieve any goal they set for themselves. In this sense, neoliberal thinking, whether in economics or in scientific-medical discourse, constitutes a disabling discourse because it disregards factors outside the realm of individual control. Furthermore, neoliberalism puts persons with disabilities at a disadvantage because it seeks to reduce collective responsibility for taking care of individuals who do not live up to certain standards of health and ability and who lack the means to take care of themselves. As Karen Soldatic and Helen Meekosha have pointed out in “Disability and Neoliberal State Formations,” “neoliberal regulating regimes entrench disability relations of poverty, marginalization and exclusion” (206). Thus, it is more important than ever to understand the ways in which current political and economic discourse participate in maintaining power relations that particularly disadvantage persons with disabilities.

My reading of three Expressionist dramas has identified them as literary texts that critique utilitarian thinking about the body within medical, political, and economic discourses. I have highlighted the ways in which some disabled characters

in these plays actively resist (re-) integration into these discourses via the objectification and re-functionalization of their bodies; these include the protagonist in “Der Krüppel” and the five men who speak out from their hospital beds in scene six of *Die Wandlung*. Other characters are portrayed as succumbing to the techniques of the medical gaze, such as the seven prototypes in scene six of *Die Wandlung*, or as turning those techniques against themselves, such as Eugen Hinkemann.

All three texts, however, criticize the fact that health and ability are not promoted for the benefit of individuals, but rather in order to ensure the productivity of individual bodies so that they are perceived as useful to the collective body. As neo-liberal discourse increasingly shapes the experiences and subjectivities of individuals in the twenty-first century, these three plays can assist readers today in identifying the ways in which neo-liberal techniques re-inscribe disabling discourses and re-produce unequal power relations. Indeed, the primary texts I have considered here can be seen as an antidote to the ableism that continues to persist within neoliberalism. In contrast to narratives of individual compensation and overcoming or cultural progress, the disabled characters in these pieces insist on suffering and feelings of loss and despair as legitimate experiences of disability.

Finally, these plays demonstrate that the Cartesian ideal of the autonomous individual who can “achieve anything he sets his mind to” both (re-) produces compulsory able-bodiedness and legitimizes discrimination against individuals whose bodies do not conform to given standards of health and ability. In this sense, the primary texts can be said to take part in a posthumanist critique à la Cary Wolfe in that they reject the transhumanist fantasy of limitless agency and infinite able-

bodiedness even as they emphasize the frailty, finitude, and value of the human body. While these dramas are deeply humanist, they nevertheless do not hesitate to identify and critique various mechanisms that produce disabling discourses, as I have discussed in the analysis chapters and paragraphs above.

My dissertation does not provide a comprehensive overview of the function of disability in Expressionism or in the history of German drama. Rather, it is an exemplary study that demonstrates the significance of three plays that negotiate meanings of disability following the Great War as well as the difficulties of representing lived experiences of disability more generally. My analysis of the primary text demonstrates how an interdisciplinary approach to analyzing disabled bodies in literature can be useful in the context of contemporary debates concerning textual representations of disability. I have brought together a variety of discussions, approaches, and conceptual tools from German literary studies, disability studies, and critical theory in order to enrich the dominant reading of the primary texts.

While the disabled characters therein have primarily been read as semiotic bodies, I have proposed a second reading that emphasizes the diegetic dimensions of these characters that accounts for their Expressionist style, their historical and discursive positioning, as well as various theories of the body and disability that emerged later in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Working at the intersection of various fields of inquiry, I have demonstrated that the representations of disability in these dramas cannot be understood merely as carriers of abstract meaning or as narrative prostheses that exist only to drive forward the dramatic plot. Via the steamroller tactics of Expressionism, these representations unequivocally seek to

draw attention to the subjective consequences of disabling discourses that emanate from various loci of truth, power, and knowledge that, even as they are located within the dramatic world, make reference to and engage discursive currents in the physical world.

This study has shown that even non-canonical or previously neglected texts may contain intriguing discursive formations and negotiations with regard to the complex relationship between lived experience and textual representation. In the context of a culture that prefers upbeat, sanitized, and progress-oriented images of the human experience, the disabled characters discussed in the analysis have something particularly important to say. Positioned at the centre of the plot, these characters words and actions serve to unsettle readers today by forcing a confrontation with the notion that suffering, despair, sickness, and disability are valuable aspects of the human experience that need to be seen, heard, and discussed. For this reason, they continue to be relevant today to discussions on the representation of bodies that the “non-disabled imaginary” would prefer not to think about. Although the Expressionist style of the primary texts is currently out of fashion, they provide essential insights into how the phenomenon of disability was being processed in German literature following the First World War. The relevance of these plays today lies in their negotiation of disabling discourses that, although having undergone significant shifts over the past hundred years, continue to shape individual experience and subjectivity in the present day.

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