

The Incest Taboo as Anti- Family Values in Elfriede Jelinek's *Die Ausgespernten*

Roger Dale Jones II

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Approved by:

Advisor: Richard Langston

Reader: Clayton Koelb

Reader: Jonathan Hess

Abstract

ROGER DALE JONES II: The Incest Taboo as Anti- Family Values in Elfriede Jelinek's *Die Ausgesperrten*
(Under the direction of Richard Langston)

According to some theorists, the incest taboo is the basis for the formation of all society, and the family unit is the basic structure of power in which the incest taboo is enforced. Ironically, in Elfriede Jelinek's *Die Ausgesperrten*, the protagonist, who is on the verge of becoming an adult, is forced to murder his entire family because it stands in the way of his accepting the incest taboo. Needless to say, there are severe problems in his family and in his society and these problems place him in this contradiction. Using Freud's theory of the Oedipus Complex. I will reveal the nature of the bourgeois family structure and of society in 1950s Austria as disastrous for the incest taboo and, with it, for the fundamentals of society. I will also reveal how the eradication of the family structure allows hope for progress.

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INTRODUCTION

Elfriede Jelinek's novel, *Die Ausgesperrten*, depicts the story of a young man who must kill his entire family in order to accept the incest taboo. Although this essay discusses incest and the incest taboo, it deals more with society than with the actual sexual act of incest. As I will discuss, society has a direct interest in the enforcement of the incest taboo. In fact, according to one theorist, Lévi-Strauss, the establishment of the incest taboo is a necessary precursor to the formation of language, culture and society. (51) For him, the family unit is the most basic unit of society (46), so it is ironic that Jelinek presents a story in which the protagonist must destroy that basic unit of society, which is also the primary site for the enforcement of the incest taboo, in order for him to accept the incest taboo. Jelinek, then, presents a story, in which the very basic elements of society are falling apart, from society down to the familial structure. Katharina Grabbe explains the connection between the incest motif in literature and society, stating, "Das Inzest Motiv wird darin immer wieder im Zusammenhang mit einer Krise sozialer und kultureller Normen bzw. einer notwendigen Neubestimmung des Wertekomplexes aufgrund gesellschaftlichen Wandels gesehen" (9-10). Indeed, the novel reveals a society in crisis, in which the post World War II Austrian society deals with and neglects its past involvement with the Nazis and resulting guilt, as well as the survival of fascism in the family and society even after the war. Yet 1950s Austria also offers a promising future, for its own economy is successful enough to earn the term *Wirtschaftswunder*.

The greater question I address in this paper is why Rainer fails, in the end. At least, this is the conclusion that Jelinek scholars have continually reached. The question they have not addressed is why does Rainer murder his family and destroy all of his chances for success in life, especially if he is willing to accept society and the incest taboo? Although presented with several opportunities, Rainer does not commit incest and, ultimately, accepts the incest taboo. Yet Rainer is intent on breaking taboos; if he does not break the incest taboo, then he will break others. The narrator illustrates the situation, stating, “Rainer wird hier vielleicht ein Tabu brechen, das Tabu des Inzests, um zu sehen, ob etwas dabei herauskommt, aber er bricht es dann nicht, so müssen dann andere Dämme brechen, der Halbwüchsige reißt sie persönlich ein [...]” (Jelinek 177). According to the protagonist, dams must break. Built-up pressure must be released. The fact that Rainer does not break all taboos, specifically the incest taboo, suggests that Rainer is not the anarchist he proclaims to be. Dams must be broken, but some dams must be maintained. Being that taboos are social constructs, Rainer’s destruction of some taboos and his observance of others is a very specific statement about the state his society is in. In order to understand what that statement is, one must understand certain features of post World War II Austrian society, as presented in Jelinek’s novel.

In the first chapter I will discuss the structure of the family as pertains to Freud’s Oedipus complex, as well as how this family structure serves as a mechanism that enforces the incest taboo. I will also explain the different stages of development within the Oedipus complex to determine and better understand Rainer’s position within it, and to better understand the conflict between Rainer and his father. Finally, I will discuss Rainer’s relationships with the different members of his family, in order to more fully comprehend the delicate ties that hold a family together under this model, as well as to see more clearly

Rainer's motives and desires that influence his questioning of the incest taboo. Using this oedipal understanding of Rainer's family structure as a basis, I will show how his family affects his views of and interaction with society, as well as how society, in turn, interacts and influences his family structure. Although some Jelinek scholars recognize the oedipal situation certain family members are trapped in, all fail to explore, explain and connect the basic structure of the family to the greater forces in, and the problems of, Rainer's society¹. In the second chapter, I will explain how fascism exists, despite the loss of the war, in the family and in society, and how it interacts with the structure of the family. In Rainer's society, fascism coexists with capitalism. The capitalist side of society offers hope of progress, yet the offer proves to be only an illusion, which society only implements to further manipulate and control Rainer. In Jelinek's novel, capitalism proves no better than fascism. The title of the novel, *Die Ausgesperrten*, describes Rainer's situation well. He is shut out from society and kept away from all the progress and benefits it offers.

Society puts Rainer in a precarious bind. It expects him to accept the incest taboo and its authority to enforce it, yet it will not allow him access to it. To exacerbate his situation, Rainer's society only mirrors the fascism that exists in the basic structure of the family: the oedipal structure. Rainer is presented throughout the novel with no reason to accept the incest taboo, and yet, despite this, he accepts it. For this, other dams must burst, and other taboos must be broken. In this paper, I will explain what Rainer's decision to accept the incest taboo means for the novel and the society presented therein, as well as why his entire family had to die as a result of this decision. I will also argue that Rainer, by murdering his family, does not ultimately fail but rather progresses as an individual, for he is afterwards able to accept,

¹ In this paper, society refers to specific public institutions and phenomena, consisting of Austria's school system, as well as Austria's economy and politics (both present and past.)

and be accepted by, society. Yet his society has progressed as well due to the destruction of his family, for, by rooting out his family, Rainer destroys, symbolically, the root of fascism.

THE OEDIPAL STRUCTURE OF POWER IN THE WITKOWSKI HOME

Rainer's family is held together by the oedipal model of power, which denotes a post-oedipal phase, but the familial situation threatens to regress to a pre-oedipal phase due to the resurrection of the threat of incest. The threat of incest emanates from his mother and his sister. Furthermore, there is an oedipal conflict between Rainer and his father, and Rainer considers killing his father as a solution. Yet Rainer never commits incest with any family member, and he never kills his father to have possession of his mother and his sister. Despite this, the structure of patriarchal power that holds Rainer's family together threatens to fall apart and Rainer's relationships to the female members of his family play a crucial role in this disintegration. In the following chapter, I discuss the structure of power under which this family exists and the role sex plays in holding it together. To this end, I investigate the incest taboo as both the basis for all patriarchal authority, and as the possible cause of its collapse.

Sigmund Freud explains the oedipal structure with the father and/or mother at the center of power in the family². Children born into a family are born into a structure of power and must accept or deny their place within that structure. Children also have certain desires which they must forego. Sharon Heller sums up the Oedipus complex as such, "[...] in a vague, unspeakable, and strange way, all little boys wish to kill their father and marry their mother, and all little girls wish to get rid of their mother and marry their father" (181).

² This term is first coined and explained in Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, or more specifically, in his essay "The Return of Totemism in Childhood." His ideas presented therein are essential to the understanding of the structure of the family, (143) the incest taboo and the formation of society through exogamy (146). Many of the ideas presented in this paper are based on Freud's ideas.

According to this idea, children of an early age desire sex with their parent of the opposite gender. They desire one of their parents sexually, and wish to kill their same-gender parent in order to have sole access and control over the desired one. I will refer to these desires to love and to kill in the family as oedipal desires, and the phase in which the oedipal desires are present, as the pre-oedipal phase of the larger oedipal development. The oedipal phase is the moment that the authority of the child and the authority of the parent clash. The child must decide to accept or reject the father's authority. Children, however, eventually abandon their oedipal desires and accept the authority of the parent. In the case of a young boy, he eventually accepts the authority of his father and abandons his sexual aspirations for his mother (Young 3-4). The child thus accepts the incest taboo, and the oedipal conflict has been resolved.

This post-conflict phase is called the post-oedipal phase. The male child, however, only accepts the incest taboo (and his father's authority) for something in return. Robert Young explains this "something," stating, "If all goes well in psychological development, the child comes to see how he or she benefits from the parental union and learns to contain possessive and hostile feelings." (3) The male child thus only accepts the father's authority over the mother because it benefits from the presence of both parents, or from what Young calls the "parental union." Therefore, the male child can justify giving up its oedipal desires, because he is, in turn, protected and nourished by the parents. In this paper, I will refer to this structure of formal power as the "oedipal model," and I will also refer to the child's acceptance of the oedipal model as the "oedipal contract."

The Oedipus complex usually applies to young children in their earliest stages of social development. I argue here that the original acceptance of the incest taboo is traumatic,

in the Freudian sense. The male child's first great desire (to be with his mother and kill his father) is crushed by the father's authority, and the child learns to be submissive. However, oedipal elements pertaining to incest and power can return, like the Freudian uncanny, at times when the oedipal contract is either in danger of or actually is being breached. In the following section, I will show the explicit existence of the Freudian oedipal model of authority in Jelinek's novel, as stated by both the omniscient narrator and the individual characters involved. The presence of the threat of incest at a time when the protagonist, Rainer, is on the verge of becoming an adult is poignant. Rainer is in the post-oedipal phase, yet the threat of Rainer's oedipal desires suggests a regression, or a return to the pre-oedipal phase. It is the responsibility of Rainer's father to enforce the oedipal contract, so the return of Rainer's oedipal desires suggest a failure on his father's part. In this next section I will investigate the presence of the oedipal model of incest in *Die Ausgesperrten*. I will focus on Herr Witkowski's position as oedipal father/ruler and Rainer's relationship to both of his parents. Lastly, I will focus on how the text complies with and diverges from the oedipal model, thus revealing a critical reevaluation of the oedipal contract.

Rainer's Oedipal Father

Herr Witkowski's role in the family is that of the ultimate authority. According to the oedipal model, his role is to protect his wife from his son's sexual desires and to crush his son's wish to kill him. The first step he must take in order to achieve this is to make Rainer accept his authority. However, to uphold the oedipal contract, he must also provide Rainer with a "parental union" that offers him something in return for his submission. The fact that incest is such a prominent theme in the novel suggests that at least one of the two necessary

steps has not been fully accomplished because Rainer is no longer a young child. In fact, he is on the verge of becoming an adult himself. Herr Witkowski's actions counteract Rainer's oedipal desires. His ultimate goal, in reference to his family, is the complete domination of his wife, specifically her sexuality, and his children, and he is willing to be violent to enforce it.

Herr Witkowski's interaction with his wife is directed solely at her sexuality, and he is willing to maintain his control over her (and it) through violence. It is apparent that his domination over her involves not only her sexuality but also his perception of himself as an authoritative figure. In one of the earlier scenes in the novel, he says to her, "Du willst dir wohl wen aufreißen, aber ich bin als Krüppel noch immer mehr Mann als ein anderer Mann, der zwei Beine hat und doch kein Mann ist. Soll ich es dir sofort beweisen?" (Jelinek 36) Here, Herr Witkowski is addressing the threat of his wife cheating on him. Yet, he is overzealous because the text offers no evidence to back up his concern. The threat he perceives is an imagined sexual one, and he intends to combat it physically through sex. He will exhibit his superior masculinity by exercising sexual dominance over her.

Hook summarizes Herr Witkowski's rule, stating, "Herr Witkowski establishes his marital sovereignty through the sexual violation of his wife" (113). It is not enough that he dominates her sexually, he must also violate her. Not once is there a sexual act between the parents that involves affection. Their marriage is defined by violence, power and submission and not by love and mutual respect. The following scene shows the extent to which Otto will go to in order to control his wife and her sexuality, "Der Exoffizier geht, einem jähen Entschluß folgend [...], in die Küche, um seine Frau zu vergewaltigen" (Jelinek 102). By raping his wife, Herr Witkowski shows his ultimate authority as head of the family. He

exercises complete control over it, even at the cost of violating it. It is no coincidence, then, that Frau Witkowski is often referred to as a farm-animal.³ The farm-animal is to be controlled, regardless of the will of the animal itself, and Frau Witkowski is treated similarly. Just like a passive animal, she does nothing to provoke her husband. On the contrary, she is submissive to his desires. Herr Witkowski creates situations where he can act out his desires, because otherwise he cannot display his “sovereignty” over her. By directing this violence at her sexuality, Herr Witkowski desires to control her very body. He also desires to control her interactions with her children, and by extension, society, as can be seen in his fear of her having sex with someone else. In reference to the oedipal model, Herr Witkowski’s complete sexual domination of his wife is one way to prevent his son from acting upon his sexual desires for his mother. By controlling his wife, Herr Witkowski controls his son.

Herr Witkowski also controls his son directly with physical violence. This is another way in which he can ensure that Rainer obeys the oedipal model of authority.

Der Papa hat gesagt, jetzt gehst ministrieren, und schon ist er gegangen, die Hiebe vom Vater haben mehr Weh getan als die kalten Fliesen unter den geschundenen Knien. Diese Eiskälte im Winter um 6 Uhr früh und die schlagende Hand des Herrn Pfarrer, der immerhin keine Hilfsmittel dafür verwendet hat wie Kleiderbügel oder Krücken [...]. (Jelinek 177)

Rainer is controlled physically by two fathers: his biological and his spiritual one. While the biological father uses *Hilfsmittel*, like a clothes hanger or a crutch, the church father uses his bare hand to strike Rainer. It is the physical threat of violence which controls him. Herr Witkowski is interested in controlling his son sexually, at least when it comes to Rainer’s mother. He is indeed afraid that Rainer has incestuous desires for her. Just as he often accuses Frau Witkowski of cheating on him, he also accuses his son of having sex with his

³ For instance, in this very scene discussed, she is referred to as a “Kuh” (102), at another time as a “Sau” (17) and at another time as a “Pferd” (32).

wife. “Der Vater giftet sich über das Schweigen des Sohnes und macht einen Inzestvorwurf, hast du etwa auch schon mit der Mama gepempert, wie ich fort war und für euch schwer gearbeitet habe?” (Jelinek 146). Herr Witkowski presents this accusation of incest as directly connected to his role as an authoritarian figure and protector of the family. As stated earlier, according to the oedipal model, the young boy gives up his desire for his mother due to the gained benefits of the “parental union.” In this case, one of those benefits is the financial support that the father provides for the family. Herr Witkowski accuses Rainer of having sex with his wife while he was away “working hard” for the family. Of course, this is absurd because Herr Witkowski has no real reason to suspect Rainer of committing incest with his mother. Also, even though Herr Witkowski works, he neither works hard nor does he provide much income for the family. Through his overbearing control of his wife’s and son’s sexuality, he reveals his fear of an oedipal breakdown. Although Rainer is eighteen years old and practically an adult, meaning that he should be in the post-oedipal phase, Herr Witkowski acts as if Rainer is in the pre-oedipal phase. In this phase, Rainer has not yet accepted the incest taboo, nor has he discovered the benefits of the parental union. Thus, Herr Witkowski feels he must prove his authority over Rainer by fighting his son’s desire to kill him with returned violence, and he also feels he must crush his son’s desires for his wife. However, Herr Witkowski shows himself to be overzealous, which creates the uncertainty whether his fears are justified. Does Rainer want to have sex with his mother and kill his father, or is Herr Witkowski paranoid?

What is clear at this point is that Herr Witkowski is concerned with enforcing his position of authority, and this authority is indeed based on the oedipal model. He also proves that he is an effective oedipal leader, because he enforces his authority, physically when

needed, and because he ensures that his son does not have sex with his wife. Yet, if Rainer really is in the pre-oedipal phase of development, he is expected to accept his father's authority and the incest taboo through the threat of violence. As explained earlier, a male child will only accept the oedipal model of authority for something in return. It becomes clear here, though, that Otto forces his authority on Rainer rather than allowing Rainer to accept the oedipal contract on his own terms. While Herr Witkowski plays his part as familial leader in the oedipal model, he is reckless. He creates a structure of power based on the brutal enforcement of his authority and does not create one based on mutual exchange. Do Rainer's actions justify his father's overbearing display of authority? Is Rainer stuck in the pre-oedipal phase and does he require his father's abuse before he will accept the incest taboo and oedipal model? In the next section I will discuss Rainer's relationship to his mother and father to explain his role within the oedipal model and determine whether or not he is indeed stuck in the pre-oedipal phase.

Rainer as Passive Son

The father-son relationship described under the oedipal model is based on power and violence. It is true that Rainer wants to kill his father for the sake of his mother. He wants to protect her from his father's overbearing domination and abuse. In fact, he tells his sister of his concern, "Anni, wir müssen etwas unternehmen wegen dem alten Schwein. [...] er wird sie umbringen" (Jelinek 143). Rainer is concerned that his father will kill his mother and he expresses his desire to take control of the situation. He feels that he should do something to save her. According to the oedipal model, Rainer would choose his mother over his father if the "parental union" were in danger. In fact, Rainer attempts to kill his father during a father-

son trip into a neighboring village. After his father picks up a young woman in a restaurant and makes out with her in the back seat of the car while Rainer is driving, Rainer expresses his disgust of his father's unfaithful behavior toward his mother, "Der Rainer schluckt an seiner eigenen Kotze, die nicht so gut schmeckt wie vorhin [...] Dieser Mensch tut das alles mit meiner Mutter, denkt er" (Jelinek 148). His father's actions make him choke down his own vomit as he tries to hide his disgust, but it is only with respect to his mother that his desire to kill his father arises, "Im letzten Augenblick wird der Vatermord, kombiniert mit Selbstmord, abgeblasen, weil man zu Feige ist [...]" (Jelinek 150). In the end, Rainer proves too afraid to kill both himself and his father. What is clear, though, is that there is a connection between his desire to kill his father and the desire to protect his mother from him. It would appear, then, that Rainer is stuck, or has regressed back to, the pre-oedipal phase.

Yet there are signs that Rainer rejects his father's mode of authority altogether, in that he shows signs that he is not content with the oedipal contract's terms, as his father executes them. As a male child, Rainer will one day be in the position of having his own wife to sexually dominate and his own children to terrorize, if he follows in his father's footsteps. He will one day inherit his father's authority, the oedipal model. However, Rainer shows signs of rejecting this inheritance. Veronika Vis explains, "Zugleich weigert sich Rainer, ein Mann zu werden wie sein Vater einer ist. Da sein Vater sich vor allem durch seine Körperlichkeit, seine Stärke und seine Potenz hervortut, bemüht sich Rainer, das Gegenteil zu werden [...]" (370). Vis claims that Rainer is repelled by the physical nature of his father's control, namely the physical abuse of his wife and children and his sexual domination of his wife. Rainer therefore rejects his father's mode of domination.

Rainer's Love for his Mother

If Rainer is in the pre-oedipal phase, then he will exhibit a sexual desire for his mother. Rainer wishes to kill his father for the sake of his mother; yet, his feelings for her are ambivalent. On the one hand, Rainer expresses that his love for his mother is strictly platonic, and is of the highest sort. “Wir sind doch alle gleich, nämlich Menschen, die aus Fleisch und Blut sind. Du aber nicht, Mama, du bist körperlos wie der Liebe Gott [...]” (Jelinek 181). Through this, he implies that he has no sexual desires for her. Rainer's statement about his mother here is ironic. His mother is presented wholly in the physical realm. It is her body that is beaten, sexually abused and dominated by Rainer's father. It is also her body which, according to the oedipal model, Rainer should be sexually attracted to. Although this description of Rainer's mother is purely separated from her physicality and, thus, her sexuality, there are other clues which suggest that he does think about his mother sexually and that establish a link Rainer's conception of his mother and her sexuality.

While the oedipal model describes the young boy's interest in his mother as physical, Rainer displays his interest as being discarnate. This is because his mother's body has been corrupted. Rainer has carnal knowledge of his mother, but it does not come from his own experience with her but rather from his father's explicit sexual domination and from his father's pornographic photographs of her. In fact, Rainer is completely disgusted by her body, “Aber man hat ja noch eine Frau und Mutter, an der man sich rächt. Man sagt ihr, daß ihr Körper immer mehr einem verfaulenden Stück Käse ähnelt [...]” (Jelinek 35). She is told that her body looks like rotting cheese. The narrator uses the subject “man,” which conceals the exact identity of whoever says this to her. The sentence preceding this, however, refers to Frau Witkowski as wife and mother, suggesting that both husband and children insult her in

this way. Also, the context of this passage explains how Rainer and Anna insult and are disrespectful to their parents. It is safe to assume that both Rainer and Anna have made this comment about their mother's body. If Rainer says this about his mother's body, then he could hardly be attracted to her physically. The text offers some clues to explain Rainer's disgust over his mother's body, and these clues lead us directly to her sexuality. Of course, this goes against Rainer's claim that he sees his mother as "körperlos," and that he thus has no interest in her sexually.

Herr Witkowski has developed a hobby of photographing his wife nude while she plays the role of a maid who is being violated. Many of these photographs focus on her genitalia. The text reveals the connection between Rainer and these photographs, stating, "An die schweinischen Fotos, die da angeblich existieren, denkt Rainer niemals[...] Es sollen auch Detailaufnahmen von Genitalien vorhanden sein, was man nicht sieht, das existiert eben nicht" (Jelinek 185). According to the narrator, Rainer never thinks of the pictures and thus, never thinks of the explicit content of his mother's physicality. The text also states that the photos only "supposedly" exist, but this presents Rainer's perspective and not the narrator's, because the narrator has already described scenes where the father photographs his wife and has already described this as Herr Witkowski's hobby. The narrator knows the photographs exist. It is for Rainer that these photographs "supposedly" exist. He is aware of their existence, but has never actually seen them.

The text points out the specific content of the photographs, suggesting that Rainer is also aware of their explicit, graphic nature. Veronika Vis explains Rainer's relationship to his mother's body, "Körperlichkeit der Frau [...], besonders seiner Mutter, ruft bei ihm Abwehrreaktionen hervor [...]" (372). This explains why Rainer sees his mother as

“körperlos.” He is disgusted by the body, because, in reality, all that Rainer can see is his mother’s body: he sees her battered body and he sees her genitalia, as imagined through the pornographic photographs. Because he cannot escape her body, he desires a more ideal view of her, one that is disconnected from his reality. He wants to see her as one would see a deity, pure and perfect, but in order to do this, he must disconnect the body and its reality from his idea and desire of her.

Rainer, while disgusted with his mother’s body, has an ideal image of what his “mother” represents. This ideal borders on religious. In Catholic society, the Mother Mary represents the ideal mother figure. She also represents the desired “woman” who is sought after sexually, according to Klaus Theweleit. Theweleit offers one feasible explanation for Rainer’s ambivalent relationship with his mother, namely that it is based on an ideal that is, by nature, unattainable, “Mary possesses traits (she is ‘unattainable’) that are ‘not to be found in nature, art, and the world of man’ (that is, nowhere). The young man’s desire, then, is required to attach itself to something non-existent, something he will never be able to attain.” (1: 373-4) Ulrike Rainer makes a similar claim about Jelinek’s novel, stating, “Within this novel, who individual women really are is of no interest, nor should the question even be asked” (185). Women are not individuals because they are either treated as complete objects (by Herr Witkowski) or as a complete ideal (by Rainer). Dagmar Lorenz also supports this idea, stating that in the novel, “All males consider themselves potential owners of all females” (112). The discrepancy between Rainer’s ideal view of the mother and his physical disgust of her reveals two aspects about the oedipal model and oedipal contract. First, it shows that Rainer follows and accepts the oedipal model, because he has created an ideal, a desired object which he can never have. This puts him under the control of his father and all

authority, by making Rainer passive. However, the discrepancy between his ideal and reality, i.e., his mother's disgusting body, is too great to be ignored. If Rainer does not want this mother physically at all, then the father has no real, lasting power over him, and Rainer has no reason to accept his power. This point is exacerbated by the fact that the mother's physical appearance is worsened by the father's constant abuse. "Zu oft sah das Kind seine Mutter, ähnlich dem Skelett eines alten Pferdes, wie sie unter den Prügeln des Vaters einknickt zu einem großen V" (Jelinek 32). Therefore, the father is partially to blame for Rainer's disgust, and thus fails to create an oedipal model which would appeal to Rainer. Herr Witkowski has, in this way, offered Rainer little through the "parental union."

Yet, Herr Witkowski is not the only one to blame for disrupting the parental union. Frau Witkowski does not provide Rainer with a solid parental union. As a parent, she is obligated to protect Rainer. Yet, she neither protects her son from his father nor from the outside world. In theory, she is also obligated to love both her children equally. According to the oedipal model, a strong affinity should exist between Rainer and his mother and between Anna and her father, but Rainer's mother loves her daughter more than she loves her son. The narrator explains, "Was die Mutter mehr liebt als ihn [Rainer], ist seine Schwester. Sie sagt, diese braucht es nötiger, weil sie seelisch gefährdeter ist als er. Sein Vater mag wieder ihn lieber, weil er Stammhalter ist und den Namen weiterträgt" (Jelinek 31). The narrator justifies this oedipal reversal by saying that Anna needs her mother's love more than Rainer does. Rainer, after all, has the preference of his father. The stated division of affection does not quite fit the oedipal model for the mother's role and appears to be a complete reversal of the oedipal structure of the family. The narrator offers one explanation for this non-oedipal parent-child relationship. Rainer, being the only male child, is, in the patriarchal mind-frame,

the inheritor of his father's power. He carries on his family name and the entire "honor" which it bears. Yet, as explained in the beginning of this chapter, it is important for the son to desire the mother in the pre-oedipal phase, so that the father can enforce the incest taboo and thus establish a structure of authority. If the mother chooses a female child over a male one, then she works counterproductive to the conditions that are necessary for Rainer to learn about authority. In fact, she is working against the entire structure that holds the family together. This can possibly explain why Rainer disrespects his mother, despite his idealization of her.

As a parent within the "parental union," Frau Witkowski carries some weight as an authoritative figure. However, she is recognized by neither Rainer nor Anna as such. Paul Jandl states, "Souverän ist die Mutter Witkowski nicht als Autorität innerhalb der Familie, nicht einmal ihre Schwäche wird zur Tugend erhoben" (Jandl 18) Frau Witkowski's lack of authority over Rainer and Anna is evident in the disrespect they show her. They insult her cooking, leave her nothing of what she cooks for her to eat, and completely disobey her requests. Most of all, even though Rainer shows a desire to protect her from his father, he never once do anything to stop his abuse. Yet, how can she uphold the "parental union" if she has no authority? Her lack of authority actually weakens the union which, in turn, undermines the oedipal contract which Rainer is expected to accept.

Rainer's relationship with his mother offers proof that he has not regressed to the pre-oedipal phase. Although Rainer is held within the oedipal model of authority, his desires can not be described as purely oedipal. First of all, he wishes to kill his father for his mother's sake, but he does not want to accept his father's inheritance. He does not want to be an oedipal ruler. Second of all, while he idealizes his mother, he is disgusted by her physicality

and shows no signs of sexual interest in her. Rainer also disrespects his mother, which shows that she is not upholding the oedipal contract, because she is not offering him a parental union that he wishes to accept. Also, Frau Witkowski prefers her daughter over her son, and therefore gives Rainer no reason to prefer her over his father. Rainer's desire to kill his father, then, does not stem from his desire to have sex with his mother, and Rainer does not express any desire to have sole possession of her. He does not even want to be around her, as is expressed through his disrespect of her. None of Rainer's desires can be seen as purely oedipal, and his parents are partially responsible for this. They neither create a parental union that Rainer wants to accept, nor do they encourage Rainer to have oedipal desires, which are necessary in order to control him. In fact, the strongest incest motif that occurs in the novel is between Rainer and his sister, Anna, and not between Rainer and his mother. While sibling incest motif may appear, at first glance, to exist outside of the oedipal model, according to some, it is in concurrence with it.

The Incest Commandment: Geschwisterliebe!

Rainer shows a strong sexual interest for his sister in specific moments throughout the novel. And sibling incest is firmly ensconced within the realm of the oedipal model. Katharina Grabbe states, "Der Geschwisterinzest gilt [...] als Übertragung oder Verschiebung des Begehrens der Tochter nach dem Vater auf den Bruder bzw. des Sohnes nach der Mutter auf die Schwester" (Grabbe 9). According to Grabbe, it is theoretically possible that incestuous interest among siblings springs from a pre-oedipal interest in the parents. In other words, sibling incest exists under the oedipal model. Because the desired parent cannot be had, the siblings transfer their sexual desire onto each other. This is a way to satisfy the need

for sexual gratification and sole ownership of someone within the family, while, at the same time, not threatening the authority that the parents have over each other. Grabbe's idea complies with Theweleit's idea of the incest commandment, "The brother is driven to her [the sister...] by all the many modes of parental behavior, which (where the boy is concerned) are there to fixate him on the mystery of the forbidden body [...]" (1: 377). Rainer's sister offers him a way out of the predicament his parents have put him in. Since his mother exists as an ideal, and therefore outside of the physical realm, and since Rainer is physically disgusted by her, she can not offer him an object worthy of his oedipal desires anyway. His sister is simply more accessible, and she serves as a convenient substitute for his mother. If this is the case, then Rainer could have indeed regressed to the pre-oedipal phase, and his sister offers him a way to do this.

Rainer's sister offers several other benefits that his parental union does not. For instance, he shares a very close bond with her, as Ulrike Rainer points out. "[...] [T]hey are intellectually and emotionally close, and she [Anna] is the only one to share his [Rainer's] innermost thoughts and secrets" (185). Because they share this closeness, they support each other, which is more than their parents do for them. They also have in common that they both suffer under their father's abusive authority. The twins, in turn, offer each other a union that serves as a substitute for the lacking parental union. On top of this emotional closeness, they also share the same room, which is only divided by a thin, home-made wall. This physical closeness allows them very little privacy, from each other and from their parents, for noise travels very easily throughout the apartment. Being that the twins are aware of their parents' sexual activity and much of its graphic nature, they also become more aware of their own

sexuality. This physical and emotional closeness, combined with a highly sexual atmosphere, creates a ripe situation for an incestuous relationship to develop between the two.

The first scene that explicitly reveals incestuous feelings between the twins occurs the second time that Anna has sex with her boyfriend, Hans. Rainer has heard all the moans and noises from his sister during sex, and the narrator states, “Heute wird bei Rainer in der Nacht sicher wieder ein Onanieren stattfinden, um eine Spannung abzuführen [...]” (Jelinek 164).

While it is not explicitly stated here that Rainer wants to have sex with his sister, he has been sexually aroused by her and Hans’ encounter and this leaves him sexually frustrated. He will masturbate in order to release this sexual tension. In the end, he is aroused by and will satisfy himself because of his sister’s sexual activity. Shortly after this statement from the narrator, Anna comes out of her room and into her brother’s, “Die Schwester schmiegt sich mit ihrem ganzen Körper an dem Bruder an, als ob sie einen Inzest begehen will. Sie will aber nicht, denn sie ist gerade befriedigt worden” (Jelinek 166). Even though she nuzzles up close to her brother, she does not want to have sex with him. The reason given, though, is not because she does not have sexual feelings for him or because he is her brother and that is taboo, but because she has just been satisfied by Hans.

Shortly after this scene the twins lie together in each other’s arms while their parents play their dirty games outside the twins’ room. Because all the walls in the apartment are thin, Rainer and Anna can hear everything their parents are doing, “Sie liegen heute beide auf Annas Bett und halten sich umklammert; den Wind der Realität haben sie in der Wohnküche, darstellend eine Bauernstube, umgeleitet, während sie den Wind der Vergangenheit hier drinnen wehen lassen” (Jelinek 177). The “winds of the past” refers to the fact that they are twins and once held each other in their mother’s womb. While the twins are lying in each

other's arms, Rainer begins to think about sex, "Rainer wird hier vielleicht ein Tabu brechen, das Tabu des Inzests, um zu sehen, ob etwas dabei herauskommt, aber er bricht es dann nicht, so müssen dann andere Dämme brechen, der Halbwüchsige reißt sie persönlich ein, weil in diesem verkommenen Haushalt keine freieren Sitten einreißen dürfen" (Jelinek 177). This passage points out several important factors. First, sexual desire is not given as the primary motive for Rainer's impulse, but rather curiosity over the outcome. Second, Rainer is interested in breaking taboos, and considers breaking the incest taboo to see what will happen. The text alludes to Rainer's parents, whose hegemony over the children decides what is allowed (or what is taboo) and what is not, as possibly influencing his decision not to commit incest. And what would happen if Rainer committed incest with his sister?

According to Grabbe, Rainer's interest in her is, in reality, his displaced feelings for his mother. Instead of breaking this taboo, Rainer decides to break other ones, which the narrator refers to as "dams." This, however, does not answer the question why Rainer does not have sex with his sister. Ulrike Rainer offers an explanation, stating, "Even his [Rainer's] twin sister's sexuality remains a mystery and repulsive to Rainer [...]" (185). Rainer may be repulsed by her sexuality, but he still considers committing incest with her, and he is also sexually aroused by her and Hans' sexual activity. His desire to have sex with his sister is oedipal, yet, just as Rainer rejects his mother and his father, he also rejects his sister. His desire for her can be categorized as oedipal, and would place him in the pre-oedipal phase of oedipal development. His ultimate rejection of her could be seen as his acceptance of the incest taboo and would suggest a progression to the post-oedipal phase. However, this acceptance is only under the condition that other "dams" break. While Rainer has accepted the incest taboo, he does not accept his current situation.

Chapter 1 Conclusion

It is clear that the Witkowski family is structured under the oedipal model. Herr Witkowski, the father, is centered at the head of the family and holds the position of enforcing the incest taboo. He upholds his authority with force and is intent upon dominating his wife sexually. It is also clear that the family's internal relationships are structured around their sexuality, and it is through their relationships with each other that it becomes apparent that the oedipal model is in danger of dissolving. The post oedipal phase threatens to regress to the pre-oedipal phase, as Rainer considers killing his father for his mother's sake and considers committing incest with his sister. However, Rainer is not to blame for wanting to reject the oedipal contract, for it is not being upheld by Rainer's parents. Rainer gains very little by accepting his father's authority, and he also expresses concern that, if he does not kill his father, then there will be nothing left of her to love. Indeed, Rainer is driven by his father's behavior to the pre-oedipal phase.

Despite the regression of the oedipal model from the post- to the pre-oedipal phase, Rainer ultimately accepts the incest taboo. Despite the constant threat of and multiple opportunities for incest, he never once has sex with any family member. He also accepts his father's authority over his mother's sexuality by failing to protect her from him. Instead of disrupting the familial order within the oedipal model, Rainer murders his whole family. His acceptance of the incest taboo leads to his rejection and destruction of the entire oedipal model. If Rainer were to kill only his father in those last scenes, then he would take his father's place as leader of the family and would also have complete control over his female family members. The return from the post-oedipal to the pre-oedipal phase would be complete, and Rainer would be free to act upon his oedipal desires. However, he would still

be working within, and thus accepting, the oedipal model. He would not be rejecting the idea of patriarchal authority within the family; he would just be assuming it for himself. By murdering his whole family, Rainer destroys all possibility of gaining authority within the family and of gaining access to the desired female-object. In other words, he destroys the entire oedipal model. This decision is connected with what I call his oedipal inheritance. Rainer does not want to be like his father, nor does he want to have the type of authority that his father has. Yet, this explanation does not sufficiently explain Rainer's decision to murder his whole family. Factors involving the society outside of the family structure play an important role and directly effect Rainer's actions. Society is, according to several theorists, also based on the oedipal model and complicates the structure of power under which Rainer exists. Rainer's place within and interactions with the structure of power outside of his family thus directly implicate themselves in his decision to murder his family, and they also bring into question whether Rainer ultimately rejects the oedipal model.

SOCIETY OF FAILURES

Society has a deep investment in the acceptance of the incest taboo at the familial level and therefore exercises great influence over a child's development. In the world created by Jelinek in *Die Ausgesperrten*, Rainer is influenced by his surrounding society in his considerations to either accept or reject the incest taboo and the oedipal model. Robert Young explains further the greater social implications for the oedipal model, claiming the necessity of its acceptance not only for the existence of the family structure but also for the existence of society, "Out of the resolution of the Oedipus complex comes the conscience, or 'superego'. Children learn not to act on violent impulses and to obey the rules of civilization and the conventions of culture and society, the incest taboo being the most basic of these" (3-4). What happens through this process of oedipal development, or from the movement from the pre- to post-oedipal phase is that, by learning to accept, in the case of a young boy, his father's authority, the boy develops a conscience. This conscience, in turn, delegates not only between the child's "impulses" and his father's rule, but also between the child, his society, and that society's culture and norms. In other words, the society holds authority as well as the father, and the child learns, through his acceptance of the incest taboo within the family, to accept authority of his society. According to this process, society is dependent upon the enforcement of the incest taboo within the family in order for individuals to accept society's power. Without the enforcement (on the part of the parents) and acceptance (on the part of the children) of the incest taboo, there would be no acceptance of authority and, therefore, no

recognition of society. Thus, the oedipal model includes not only the familial but also the societal structure of power.

According to José Brunner, society takes an explicit interest in the enforcement of the incest taboo. Only through this enforcement can society maintain a structure of power, in the same way that the taboo's acceptance within the family allows the father to maintain sexual dominance over the mother and physical dominance over the child. Brunner states further in *Freud and the Politics of Psychoanalysis*,

[...] Freud understood all social authority as structured according to an Oedipal pattern, where the child accedes to the father's injunctions and gives up incestuous sexual desires which are directed towards the mother. According to Freud, people who become authorities and elicit obedience from others are to be seen as father figures not only if they impose their laws in the face-to-face politics of their biological families, but also if they rule in the larger sphere of public politics. However, I suggest that while Freud traced all public forms of authority to oedipal interactions, he also portrayed the dynamics of early sexual development in political terms. On the one hand, Freud presented politics in the public domain as shaped by an unconscious familial dynamics. On the other hand, he prefaced this depiction of public politics by the politicization of childhood sexuality. (147)

Brunner claims that, according to Freud, all social authority is structured under the "Oedipal pattern," meaning that all acceptance of authority first relies on the acceptance of the incest taboo within the familial context. Because the acceptance of social authority first relies on the acceptance through the "familial dynamics," society desires the continual acceptance at the familial level in further generations in order to maintain its present and future authority. Because of this, "public politics" politicizes childhood sexuality. In other words, society reinforces this taboo at the familial level to ensure its own structure of power. One of the first lessons a child learns, then, is to abandon violent impulses, to control sexual desires and to accept the existing authority, be it that of the father or that of the society. This establishes a connection between familial and societal authority and allows a further connection between

the child and society. While the child benefits through the acceptance of the incest taboo, as already stated, from the “parental union,” it also benefits from society. The society, like the parents, takes responsibility in protecting and helping its members in return for the child’s obedience. This parallel between parents and society allows for a symbiotic relationship between individual and collective. The incest taboo is not solely forced; it is also accepted. Needless to say, the child will only accept the oedipal model unquestioningly, and thus move from the pre- to the post-oedipal phase, if it is protected and taken care of by both its parents and its society.

Klaus Theweleit explains further, in his work *Male Fantasies*, the method in which society controls the individual. This control is accomplished through what he calls the incest double-bind, which is described as the presence of both the incest taboo and the incest commandment in society. The coexistence of the command *to do* and the taboo *not to do* present an ambiguity that is difficult for individuals within a society to decipher. Theweleit explains how the young, male child’s sexuality is formed at a young age and how this ambiguity is used to control him.

The boy is sexualized. His desire is – indeed is *required to be* – directed solely toward women. All of the growing boy’s ideas, hopes, dreams and plans must be focused and fixated on the conquest of that one object, woman. And the object *woman* is encoded as a woman within the family. She need not be the mother. (1: 375)

Theweleit explains that the young boy is sexualized by society. The focus of his energy becomes one object, the “woman,” and his entire goal in life is coupled with the drive for sexual gratification. However, Theweleit describes this process not as the natural *will* of the boy but rather as the requirement from outside forces (for the boy is “required to be”), and those outside forces represent the greater will of society.

In that case, what analysts label “incestuous desire” must somehow be installed in the subject from without, by society. And how is that “desire” installed? By means, it seems to me, of an indirect prescription, by the fixating of desire on the *mystery of Woman* (predominately the sister in this case) – a prescription that merits the name “incest commandment.” (1: 376-377)

Although the boy may have sexual desires for any woman in the family, and not necessarily for the mother, the Freudian model of the Oedipus complex comes into play, and the incest taboo arises to put a stop to the boy’s incestuous desires for any female in the family.

Therefore, the boy is programmed by society to want and desire “woman” sexually but he is also, and at the same time, prohibited by that same society from having it. Theweleit explains further how this double bind expresses itself in the individual boy, “Out of that longed-for redemption comes the ‘meaning of life’. And since redemption will never occur – it is predicated on misdirected desire – the German quest for the meaning of life, defined as attainable through a single act, will never end, either” (1: 376). Theweleit defines “redemption” as the attainment of “*the woman*,” the “defeat of the father,” as well as the overcoming of “guilt, fear, uncertainty [and] feelings of inferiority” (1: 376). The individual, then, develops an idea of “redemption,” in which he feeds his hope of gaining the desired object, woman, by overthrowing the father and by taking his position of authority (thus ridding himself of “feelings of inferiority”). Redemption, then, is the materialization of the boy’s oedipal desires. The problem, however, is that this solution to the boy’s problem is an illusion. Even if he were to kill his father and obtain the woman, she could never fulfill all his “ideas, hopes, dreams and plans.”⁴ Therefore, the boy is put in a bind. On the one hand, he, as instructed by society, desires his mother, his sister, or some other female within his family. His attainment of her has become his life’s ambition. Yet on the other hand, the

⁴ Theweleit attributes this to the fact that the “boy” has been taught to desire the “mystery of woman” and not an individual woman (1: 377). The mystery must remain mysterious for its existence, and therefore, can never be explained. In other words, the mystery relies on its very nonexistence for its existence.

same society which has instructed him to desire “woman” has also prohibited him, through the incest taboo, from ever having her. This is what Theweleit refers to as the double bind of incest.

This engenders a whole series of potential double binds, the core of which lies in the simultaneous incest commandment and incest prohibition: thou shalt covet (take) thy mother (sister), but thou shalt not be allowed to have either one. Or, thou shalt love *women*, but only one *woman*. Thou shalt know the world, but stay at home. (1: 378)

Why, then, would society do this to the individual? Why would it demand both the desire of and the abstinence from the boy’s greatest desire? The answer, according to Theweleit, is that this double bind allows the individual to be more easily controlled, “The more antithetical constructs [...] are built into human relations, the more easily human beings can be dominated and ruled” (1: 378). Therefore, by creating and controlling sexual desire, society creates and controls individual citizens. The incest double-bind allows society to accomplish this.

According to this model, Rainer’s society has a great interest in wanting him to accept the incest taboo, yet, specifically under the terms issued by Theweleit’s incest double-bind. Rainer must desire a woman within his family and accept that he cannot have this woman. It is not clear whether this is the case for Rainer because he does not desire his mother sexually and because he never even tries to form a relationship with her. While presented with every opportunity to have his sister, and while even having the desire to commit incest with her, he never does. If Rainer does not desire any woman in his family, then neither his father nor society can control him. He cannot be placed in the incest double-bind. There is yet another problem that threatens society’s control. Rainer’s parents do little to create an acceptable parental union, which in turn does little to encourage Rainer to accept the incest taboo. Despite this parental lack, society also offers benefits for the acceptance of

its authority. Although Rainer is at the brink of rejecting the oedipal model at the familial level, he is also of the age of becoming an adult. Society offers him an escape from his father's abuse and from the bizarre sexual relationships which threaten to form. In the novel, Rainer is only weeks away from graduating from high school. He will soon be able to move out of his parents' apartment, and because he has good grades in school, he can go to college and improve his social standing. If Rainer is willing to accept these benefits, then he will be willing to accept society's authority as defined under the oedipal model.

Unfortunately, society offers only a dead end for Rainer because the society in which he lives is in a state of crisis itself. In the context of the novel, Austrian society has gone through major social and cultural changes. The novel takes place in the 1950s, approximately one generation removed from the end of World War II. In this time, Austria has moved from a fascist society to a free, capitalist one. It also has overcome, or at least dealt with, the horrors of the Nazi atrocities of the past, and it has focused on its economic future and power. On the surface, things are going great for post World War II Austrian society. The country has successfully converted its Nazi past into a capitalist economy worthy of the term *Wirtschaftswunder*. This system offers all the social and economic hope anyone could ever dream of. Theoretically, Rainer's chances of being successful once he leaves his family are extremely high. Yet, despite the claim that Austria has reformed itself, in Jelinek's novel, fascism and the horrors of Austria's Nazi past still exist. Hook explains Jelinek's own personal views on the subject,

She [Jelinek] considers the social and economic foundations of bourgeois capitalism, "with [their] unbelievable brutality," one step removed from the rigid monopolies of a dictatorship [...] The most threatening aspect of fascism is not that it may happen again, but that it already exists in the day-to-day relations between men and women and their children. (103)

In *Die Ausgesperrten*, the two forms of society, the present capitalism and the past fascism, coexist and work together to further disillusion Rainer. Indeed, the incest motif stands “im Zusammenhang mit einer Krise sozialer und kultureller Normen,” as Grabbe states it (9-10). The rest of this chapter discusses how the current situation in Austrian society works to put Rainer in a further double-bind, and how fascism and capitalism affect the oedipal model at the familial level. Both systems, capitalism and fascism, offer false hopes to both the family structure and the new generation and both are responsible for the eventual breakdown at the end of the novel. Ulrike Rainer makes the following claim about the post World War II Austrian society, “The twins’ search for affection, an unspoiled structure of beliefs, and guidance toward a livable system of thought, fails miserably. The Vienna of the late 1950s does not offer a genuine new departure into a new age” (184). Rainer’s society fails him for several reasons. However, while most Jelinek scholars have argued that Rainer is completely trapped in his situation, I argue that he in fact finds a solution to his problem. This solution comes through the murder of his entire family.

Fascism in the Family

According to the oedipal model, the father as the central authority figure in the family serves as a model for the authority of all of society. It is important for authority to be accepted by children on the familial level so that those children learn to accept the authority of society. As I have already claimed, Rainer’s society is defined by two different systems: fascism and capitalism. Both forms affect the father’s authority over the children by simultaneously strengthening and weakening the existing familial structure. This paradox creates a conflict that strives to be resolved in Jelinek’s novel. It is within the family that this

conflict arises and it is expressed in the behavior of the individual members. First, I will investigate the effects of fascism, which is a remnant of the past Nazi era, on the family structure. Klaus Theweleit claims in *Male Fantasies* that Nazism both buttressed and destroyed the family (2: 252). In the novel, Herr Witkowski's control over the family is both strengthened and weakened by his past as a Nazi SS officer. On the one hand, he is presented as a powerful, deadly soldier that once worked in a concentration camp. He is a violent man, and his family is very afraid of him. His occupation was once a source of great power for him. The narrator states, "Seine Gegner von einst waren durch die Schornsteine und Krematorien von Auschwitz und Treblinka entwichen oder bedeckten slawische Erden" (Jelinek 15). He was once a powerful man who turned his enemies into dust and ashes. This fascist past is still with Herr Witkowski and still determines his character, "Oft denkt der Vater an die dunklen Skelette der Menschen, die er tötete, bis der Schnee Polens nicht mehr unberührt und blutig war" (Jelinek 33). He sees himself through the eyes of who he once was. He now views the control of his family as a part of his masculine identity and he is intent on upholding it, "Der Vater denkt an das Feld der Ehre, auf dem er nicht geblieben ist. Dafür achtet er jetzt auf das Feld der Familienehre, daß seine Frau, die Sau, nicht mit unbeschädigten Männern fremdgeht" (Jelinek 17). His former, complete control over individuals has taught him how to subjugate his family, as he now controls both wife and children with the same totalitarian rule that he once exercised over the concentration camp inmates, "Die Prügelei begann angeblich auf den Tag genau, als der Weltkrieg verloren war, denn vorher prügelte der Vater fremde Menschen in wechselnder Gestalt und Form, jetzt hat er dafür nur immer die Gestalten von Mutter und Kindern" (Jelinek 32). In fact, Herr Witkowski's fascism has simply moved "into the privacy of the sacrosanct home."⁵ Since he

⁵ The quote states in its entirety, "Their [Rainer and Anna] father, now furnished with a wooden leg, an

cannot continue exercising his power in the public sphere, due to the Nazis' defeat after of World War II, he exercises it in the private one. Fascism is still very much alive in Jelinek's novel; it just exists mainly within the family structure. Although the war has been lost, Herr Witkowski is still in power, and he serves as a physical link between Austria's fascist past and the supposedly reformed present. The only difference between then and now is that Herr Witkowski must exercise his control and violence on his family where no one else can see it. Thus, the adage, "Out of sight, out of mind" allows the public sphere to ignore the presence of fascism. This fascist presence allows Herr Witkowski to brutally subjugate his family members and control them completely. This societal remnant allows him to be the ultimate authority in the family.

Herr Witkowski's fascist past is also a great weakness for him in the present, "Herr Witkowski war aus dem Krieg einbeinig aber aufrecht zurückgekehrt, im Krieg war er mehr als heute, nämlich unversehrt, ein Zweibeiniger und bei der SS [...]" (Jelinek 15). Because he was a Nazi, the loss of the war is seen as a personal defeat as the power he once held over others was stripped from him. Ironically, while he was once responsible for killing 'weaker' races and peoples (Jews, communists, mentally handicapped, homosexuals, etc.,) he himself is now weak. Herr Witkowski has suffered losses on two fronts: his loss of power and the defeat in the war have become a psychological handicap, while the loss of his leg has become a physical one. The term "aufrecht" used in this passage has several meanings. He has one good leg left, which allows him to stand up straight, albeit with the help of crutches. Also, despite the loss of one appendage, his insistent sexual domination of his wife implies that he

invalid's pension, and a job as a night-porter in a seedy hotel, replays the high points of his existence as a brutal guard and henchman within his four walls. Public terror has retreated into the privacy of the sacrosanct home. His sexually, physically, and psychologically abused wife and his children serve as substitutes for the victims of his former power; the family has replaced the thousands of anonymous prisoners of the camps [...]" (Rainer 177).

is determined, as an unrelenting fascist, to stand erect. But his character is everything but upright because he is a murderer and because he is abusive to his family. This makes the novel's statement about him being 'upright' ironic. Because fascism no longer has public power, Herr Witkowski has also become publicly weak. The reformed, post war society has little use for him. Being handicapped, he offers little economic viability to the *Wirtschaftswunder*. While he has a job, it is not one to be proud of and pulls in very little income⁶. He also receives disability from the government, which means he is actually a burden to Austria's economic progress.

While Austria's new political and economic system does little to help Herr Witkowski, it allows his fascist rule to exist behind closed doors. Yet, the loss of the war is not the only reason that fascism weakens Herr Witkowski. According to Theweleit, the fascist structure in Germany (and Austria) was just as ambivalent about the family structure as the post war model. It is important to remember, as discussed in the first chapter, that society relies on the acceptance of the oedipal model at the familial level in order for the individual to accept the greater authority of society. Theweleit explains the strengths and weaknesses of Nazism towards the family, "[fascist family policy] lent support to the formal power of the father (demanding absolute obedience of the children) and to the position of the mother as the great bearer of children" (2: 252). Nazism is based on the principles of the patriarchal system of rule: It is based on the family. The *Führer* is comparable to the father, where the family is the entire country. The *Führer* takes responsibility over his people and expects full obedience. In the Witkowski family, as in the Nazi era, obedience is taken by force.

⁶ See footnote 6.

The *Führer* can also undermine the family structure by undermining the father's authority. Since there cannot be two leaders in the family, just as there cannot be two fathers, a conflict arises. Theweleit explains further, "In the event of conflict between the *Führer* and family demands, the child was encouraged to take action against its parents as an informer in the service of the *Führer*" (2: 252). The father, even though he is a leader in the family, is a child to the actual *Führer*. The father is subordinate to society. The child in the family unit has the opportunity to turn against and overthrow its father, if the father is disobedient to the *Führer*. The system of Nazism, then, presents a threat to the leader, or the father, of all family units. However, this fact does not necessarily dissolve family units. As already stated, Nazism needs the family unit as a model and as justification for patriarchal rule. The father compensates for this loss of power, and Theweleit explains this compensation as increased violence,

While the state defended the dictum of "honoring thy father and mother" with increasing vehemence, it simultaneously deprived parents utterly of the qualities on which a child's respect might have been founded. It then became necessary for the respect demanded of children to be thrashed into them [...] No child [...] truly loves or respects its parents: on the contrary it hates them, since it necessarily experiences as terror the substanceless domination to which it is subjected. (2: 252-253)

The child loses respect for its father because its father is weaker than the *Führer*. The father, then, tries to earn the child's respect through increased violence and by repeated physical domination. This might force the child to be more obedient, but not more respectful to the father. The ties, then, that hold the family together begin to become undone. The children begin to hate their father and view his domination as "substanceless." The mother does not escape this fate, either. Although she is not responsible for the implementation of obedient-measures, she is also hated by the children. The reason for this is "her failure to protect the

not-yet-fully-born from searing coldness” (2: 253). The bonds that hold the family together, or the child to its parents, are dissolved by the hatred that the system of Nazism brings about.

Theweleit’s ideas play themselves out perfectly in Jelinek’s novel (except for the fact that the *Führer* no longer exists.) Although Herr Witkowski dominates his wife and his children, he often appears comical to the readers due to the fact that, on a larger political and economic scale, he is impotent. Rainer and Anna, although afraid of their father’s “thrashing,” do not respect him and often undermine his authority by overwhelming him with tricks, “Sie begehen oft böse Taten gegen den verhaßten Vater, indem sie jede seiner Bewegungen voller Ekel nachaffen, ihm die Krücken wegreißen, ihm ein Bein stellen (wo er doch nur das eine besitzt), ihm ins Essen spucken und ihm nicht bringen, was er gern möchte” (Jelinek 35). These tricks are no fun and games; the two teenagers hate their father and attack him where he is the weakest. This hate stems from their fear of his violence. The father has indeed increased violence towards the children due to the losses caused by the war. The children have not learned respect from their father, so they do not give him any in return. Both children are aware of their father’s past as well of his violent treatment of their mother and they are both physically abused by him. Veronika Vis explains the twin’s doomed fate as stemming from their parents, “Die Identitätssuche der Zwillinge scheitert, weil sie weder fähig sind, sich in die von den Eltern vorgelebte Geschlechtsrolle einzufügen, noch sich von ihr zu lösen und diesen Rollen eine sinnvolle eigene Orientierung entgegenzusetzen” (370). The twins do not want to inherit the gender roles their parents have set out for them, yet they fail to find better alternatives. Thus, by being bad role models, their parents fail to uphold a

model of authority⁷ which the children are willing to inherit. The fascist remnants of the Nazi era lead to this oedipal-model breakdown within the family. This surviving fascism has undermined Herr Witkowski's authority by too great an extent to be compensated by increased force. He can no longer control his family and can no longer provide for them. The twins have no where else to turn to except to society. They hope that society will offer them an escape from their corrupted familial structure and economic hardship.

Fascism in Society

One of the greatest questions that arises in the novel is that of guilt, specifically, whether or not the twins are guilty of their attacks on other people, or whether they are simply products of their society. On the surface, it appears that the gang attacks its victims to break taboos and possibly to affect change within society, but it quickly becomes obvious that Rainer, Anna and Hans are really after their victim's wallet. Hoffmann states, "Bevor sie also das System verwerfen, hatte das System sie schon verworfen. Und an diesem vermeintlich von ihnen verworfenen System wollen Rainer und Anna um jeden Preis teilhaben" (62). Although Rainer and Anna seem to be rejecting society by attacking it, they are in fact fighting to get back in and be a part of it. They are stuck in the contradiction of attacking what they hate, and hating what they want.

The victims of these attacks reveal much more about Rainer's and Anna's motives than just their economic one. Hiltrud Gnüd states, "Vier Jugendliche haben sich zu einer »Elite«-Bande zusammengeschlossen, die ihre antibourgeoise Besonderheit am blind brutalen Zusammenschlagen zufälliger Passanten demonstriert" (197-198). While Gnüd

⁷ This model of authority, based on the oedipal model, indeed relies on starkly divided and defined gender roles, which is one of the main arguments of Veronika Vis' essay in *Darstellung und Manifestation von Weiblichkeit in der Prosa Elfriede Jelineks*.

claims that the group attacks out of antibourgeois sentiments, a closer look at the text reveals more than just a class struggle. The first attack the group commits reveals the presence of the Nazi past in society. The text presents this motif within the larger question of guilt, relevant to both the group, as perpetrators, and to their society, as reformed Nazis. The narrator states, in reference to the group's first victim,

Dieser Mensch sollte gerade von Anna in Ruh gelassen werden, weil sein Charakter besser ist als ihrer. Weil er ein Opfer ist. Anna ist eine Täterin. Das Opfer ist immer besser, weil es unschuldig ist. Zu dieser Zeit gibt es allerdings immer noch zahlreiche unschuldige Täter. Sie blicken voller Kriegsandenken von blumengeschmückten Fensterbänken aus freundlich ins Publikum, winken oder bekleiden hoher Ämter. Dazwischen Geranien. Alles sollte endlich vergeben und vergessen sein, damit man ganz neu anfangen kann. (Jelinek 7)

The first depiction is clear: Anna and the rest of the group are the perpetrators and the man being attacked is the victim. The victim of this attack seems to be one of the “innocent perpetrators,” who is full of “Kriegsandenken,” or memories of the war. Even though the narrator claims that this past should be forgiven and forgotten, (s)he still uses the term “Täter,” which defines these people as still being perpetrators. Yasmin Hoffmann discusses the socio-historical context of the phenomenon of “unschuldige Täter” and explains how this situation came about,

Die Schuld sei Österreich sehr leicht abgenommen worden, weil man als katholisches Land sozusagen zur Beichte gehen konnte, wodurch alles erledigt und vergessen und vergeben wurde. Die Parallele zwischen dem “überfallenen Land“ und dem überfallenen Opfer der *Ausgesperrten* ist nicht zu überlesen. Das Oxymoron “unschuldige Täter” nimmt ganz konkret politische Züge an. Unschuldig sind die Täter, weil weder die Justiz noch die Kirche sie verurteilt hat. (60)

The question of guilt and innocence here applies to the collective conscience and society as a whole, and the Austrian society is only innocent of its Nazi past because, according to Hoffmann, its guilt was overcome too lightly. Hoffmann explains further, “Das Opfer des Überfalls ist sowohl Opfer als Täter, schuldiges Opfer und unverurteilter Täter einer anderen

Epoche, freigesprochen durch Verjährung, daher seine Unschuld” (60). She claims that these “Täter” are only innocent because they have not yet been proven guilty, and that the passage of time made the urgency and seriousness of their crimes milder. Left to judge and discipline themselves, Austrians have quickly assumed the role of victims of the Nazis and, thus, avoided proper reform. If the victim of the gang’s attack is one of these “unschuldige Täter,” then are Rainer and Anna really guilty and are they really “Täter?” One could claim that, through their attacks, they are only pursuing a type of revenge for the lack of justice and for the situation that they have unwillingly inherited.

Another important aspect prevalent in the attacks is the role sexuality plays. The group uses Anna as sexual bait to lure and distract their victims, and the victims, who are all men, take the bait. Elizabeth Snyder Hook puts it, “In each case, Anna’s seeming innocence and vulnerability play a decisive role. Her male targets are drawn to her underdeveloped hips and tiny breasts, and entertain vivid fantasies of violating a virgin” (115). All of the group’s victims are attracted to Anna because of their desire to violate her sexually. The fact that the victims are attracted to her because she appears very young and innocent reveals much about their moral character. In fact, the victims’ motives are always explicit. While the gang is in a streetcar, one man takes notice of Anna, “Der Möchtegern-Lebemann macht ein häßliches Zeichen mit dem Zeigefinger, das Anna zweideutig signalisiert, ich möchte da rein, wie geht das am besten [...]” (Jelinek 72). It is fairly obvious that the man’s gestures are sexually graphic in nature, and the man is not inhibited by the fact that they are in a crowded, public place. The text reveals more insight into the victim’s belief system, “So denkt der Mann, so denkt die Frau nicht, weil ihre Geschlechtigkeit passiv abläuft. Ein Einzelkämpfer zu sein, liegt in meinem persönlichen Charakter vorgezeichnet [...]” (Jelinek 73). The victim sees

himself as a fighter and views Anna as a challenge. His direct approach is a sign of his perceived ability to attack and conquer, and he justifies this through his belief that women are passive, and thus deserving of domination. The group's last victim reveals the same motive. The narrator states, "Der Onkel äugt, prüft und mißt und sagt sich in originellen Wendungen, was er für ein Glück hat, daß er etwas Junges und einigermaßen noch Unverbrauchtes in seinen Besitz bringen kann [...]" (Jelinek 208). This victim is not only attracted to Anna's appearance of innocence and virginity, but also by his desire to dominate her. The victims' motives reveal that violating Anna and dominating her go hand-in-hand. In fact, they wish to dominate her by sexually violating her.

Thus, the victims are very similar to Rainer's and Anna's father. The victims try to violate and dominate Anna in the same way that the twins' father violates and dominates their mother. Rainer and Anna are actually attacking the oedipal father, or men who see their role as leaders and as authoritarian figures. Yet, these oedipal fathers are defined by a desire for sexual perversion and domination that is directly connected by the text to the Second World War. They pretend to be victims of the Nazis, but reveal their true fascist nature through their sexual desires to violate and dominate. Because the group's victims are chosen randomly, and because these attacks occur in public, one sees how fascism survives in society and not just in the Witkowski family, and the group need not work hard to reveal this, for the men are quick to react to Anna. In the public sphere, fascism lies just under the surface. This brings us back to the original question of guilt. While the group is portrayed explicitly by the text as perpetrators, it becomes clear that their "victims" are themselves not innocent. By seeing how easily the group brings out the fascist perversion of their victims, we can see how little the difference is between the men in society and the twins' father. Since

the twins only suffer under their father's unrelenting fascism at home, their attack on fascism in society is justified. Yet, the group is not only attacking the fascism in society, they are also attacking for financial gain.

Outcasts of the *Wirtschaftswunder*

There are strong similarities between the twins' economic situation and the double-bind presented by Theweleit in the first chapter. The twins have been taught to idealize the capitalist dream, the same way Rainer has been taught to idealize the woman. This partially explains Rainer's and Hans' infatuation with the rich Sophie. Yasmin Hoffmann states, "[Rainer and Anna] erfahren [...] durch ihre großbürgerliche Freundin Sophie, was es heißt, vom kapitalistischen System ausgesperrt zu sein" (62). Yet, they also have learned to hate that which they idealize. Hiltrud Gnüd states that they have "Haß auf »erstens Menschen mit Eigenheimen, Autos und Familie [...]" (198). They want money: Rainer and Anna rob their victims of their money and Rainer desires Sophie because she is rich. They also hate those who have money. They idealize money, it has become the supposed answer to all their problems, and society wants them to want it so that society can control them, yet they are not allowed to have it. Theweleit's conclusion for the incest double bind is also a fitting conclusion for this economic double bind, "The more antithetical constructs [...] are built into human relations, the more easily human beings can be dominated and ruled" (1: 378). Therefore, society controls Rainer and Anna through the incest double bind and this economic double bind.

The twins' most obvious chance of success comes from their education. They are both weeks away from graduating with their *Matura*, and they are both talented in one way

or another. Anna has musical talent and Rainer has book smarts. Yet, somehow, even their school education fails to teach them the important skills they need to survive and to take part in the economic future. As Ulrike Rainer states, “It emerges that the educational institutions, mired in outdated traditions as they are, may awaken expectations they then cannot fulfill; because they too stand firmly behind the entrenched powers and have no new directions and meaning to offer” (181). While their education is unable to offer a change due to “outdated traditions,” it is the current society and economy, capitalism, which “awakens” expectations that cannot be fulfilled. Ulrike Rainer explains how capitalism disillusiones the twins, stating, “Aided by the mass media, the new republic has successfully marketed the illusion of an emerging society of equals, making critical evaluation of political and economic realities nearly impossible” (179). While society has given the twins the belief that they can be equal, despite their poor background, it has simultaneously blinded them to the political and economic realities⁸. Those realities are that they really live in a fascist society and their hopes of economic advancement are naught. Ulrike Rainer explains further the dangers of this situation, “The terror of such capitalism is more subtle than that of fascism, but it is equally, or even more, dangerous because white starched shirts are more innocuous than brown uniforms” (180).

Dagmar Lorenz agrees that the school system offers no help, “Their *Mittelschul*-education alienates them from social and economical reality, teaching them that their needs are actually not their needs, and their desires not their desires” (115). Lorenz also connects the twins’ doomed present with their -and their parents’, fascist past,

⁸ The illusion of equality offered by this society is, of course, diametrically opposed, as an ideal, to the hierarchical system of fascism. The fact that this is only an illusion shows that, in the novel, the two systems are not that different.

Through the parents it becomes manifest that for the postwar children as well- for each class in a different way- there is no way out. All possibilities are limited, even if popular culture suggests the opposite. Birth determines the future. Postwar culture is shown as fascist in an insidious way: no external force is necessary to keep people in their place. Indoctrination through schools, pop culture, and homes creates concentration camps of the mind. (116)

Because the twins were born into their poor, fascist family, they will remain in their social caste system for the rest of their lives. It is through the family, then, that the “postwar culture” “keep[s] people in their place” and creates “concentration camps of the mind.” It is also through the family that the fascism of the past survives in the present. This simultaneous offering and refusal of hope creates a situation for the twins in which, even though the “world of tomorrow should be theirs,” because “they do not have command over the past,” “they are not able to exist in the present.”⁹ Therefore, they are “doomed to break under the massive weight of contradictions” (Rainer 181). Rainer and Anna, however specific their story may be, are meant to represent a larger, sociological problem. According to Allyson Fiddler, “The contradictions and inadequacies of the Witkowski twins’ lives are intended to typify the problems confronting a whole generation of war babies” (Rewriting Reality 93). In a sense, then, the entire post-war generation is trapped in a situation where they are controlled by a fascist past and, at the same time, provided the illusion of progress by the current system.

Sexual Outcasts

According to the incest taboo, Rainer cannot form any sexual relations with any female in his family. Fortunately, if Rainer is willing to wait, society eventually provides

⁹ The quote in its entirety reads, “The world of tomorrow should be theirs, but they do not have command over the past, and they are not able to exist in the present” (Rainer 190).

(through the presence of other females) a sexual outlet for Rainer's desires. Rainer is allowed to have sex, just not with anyone in his family. Yet Rainer's sexuality is as problematic as is his family, and the chances of him forming a sexual relationship with anyone outside the family is slim. In fact, Rainer is prohibited from forming any outside sexual relationships for both familial and societal reasons. First, Rainer's sexuality has been starkly influenced by his father and his fascist rule. This has had a two-fold effect. On the one hand, Rainer desires sex and female attention, yet, on the other hand, he also rejects their physicality. This has already been seen in his relationship with his mother. Rainer is infatuated with Sophie, his desired girlfriend. Ulrike Rainer states, "In Rainer's daydreams, he sadistically humiliates Sophie and hence makes her compliant" (186), and Veronika Vis states, „Die weiblichen Charaktere werden von Rainer als passive Dulder phantasiert" (380). Rainer's desire for Sophie's compliance is not merely sexually motivated, as Dagmar Lorenz states, "Rainer, much like Sepp, envisions sex as a means of social advancement [...]" (113). Yet, the view of women as passive puts Rainer into the same category of 'man' as his father, and Rainer's desire for control is comparable to his father's fascism (as well as his father's treatment of his mother.) It also puts him into the same category of man which the gang attacks. Both statements from Vis and Lorenz show Rainer's desire to physically control women. Ulrike Rainer states further that Rainer then reacts against this type of inherited masculinity,

Such sexual perversion and brutality are merely the reverse side of the myth of supermasculinity which once set out to conquer the world. The continuation of this insane plan provides a sense of entitlement to and legitimization of sadism towards women. This claim to total sexual domination over and pathological attitude toward the feminine are, therefore, also the only tradition that father and son share. [...] His [Rainer's] loathing of the female body presents a mirror image of his father's obsession with sexual potency and rape fantasies. (185)

Rainer's interaction with women, specifically with Sophie, is directly influenced by his father's behavior and rule. While Rainer shows a desire to control "the female body," he also rejects it, due to its proximity to his father's abuse. This creates the flip-side to Rainer's sexuality, one that is defined by rejection instead of desire, "Sexualität ist bei Rainer Witkowski stets mit der körperlichen Aktion des Verwertens und Verdauens und entsprechenden körperlichen Abwehrreaktionen verbunden" (Vis 374). Rainer's physical disgust and rejection has already been discussed in this essay in reference to his relationship with his mother, and was also discussed in relation to the oedipal model and is defined in the novel by his father's physical and sexual abuse. Rainer's relationship with his mother, as mediated through his father, has formed Rainer's larger sense of sexuality in relation to Sophie. Rainer cannot love his mother physically because she is physically and sexually abused by his father. He thus has learned to reject the physical. In order to deal with this rejection of the physical, he creates an ideal. Veronika Vis explains, "Für ihn [Rainer] soll Sexualität, wenn es um ihn selbst geht, etwas Unsagbares, etwas Erhabenes sein" (377). Here, Rainer runs into the same problems discussed by Theweleit in the first chapter¹⁰, and Rainer's desire and attempts are set up only for failure. Rainer wants to control Sophie physically, but he wants to love her platonically. It is, then, the failure of the oedipal model on the familial level that makes Rainer incapable of forming relationships with anyone in the outside society. It is also the societal influence of fascism, with its brutality, and its infiltration into the family that has created Rainer's familial situation. Rainer is thus barred from the outside world sexually. This puts greater pressure on him to obtain it where it is

¹⁰ The "boy," as Theweleit explains it, creates an ideal of "woman" which is so ideal that it can never be attained. Therefore, the boy has set himself up for failure.

more accessible, or more specifically, to obtain it from his sister. Yet his sister is in the same predicament and is just as cut off from society, sexually, as he is.

Anna's sexuality is marred by pain and violence. For instance, Anna's first sexual experience is with a razor blade, "Anna ist 14 Jahre alt. Sie sitzt nackt mit gespreizten Beinen auf dem Boden und versucht, sich mittels eines alten Rasierspiegels und einer Rasierklinge selbst zu entjungfern, um eine Haut loszuwerden, die dort unten gewachsen sein soll" (Jelinek 24). Anna appears to be in a hurry to lose her virginity. One can see that the brutality in her father's behavior and his sexual relationship with Anna's mother exhibits itself in Anna's brutality turned against herself and her own sexuality. While maturing into society might be a good thing, the fact that Anna initiates this alone and through self-inflicted violence suggests a maldevelopment due to her social surroundings.

Anna's first experience foreshadows the pain she will experience in the rest of her sexual encounters. Her next several encounters are with the muscular Hans. Things seem to improve for her here because she develops strong feelings of love for him. The relationship she desires from him is devoid of any masochistic pain. While Anna enjoys sex with Hans, she soon realizes that she has been fooled emotionally. Hans, while willing to share sex with her does not share her feelings. In fact, he thinks of another girl during sex, "In Anna ist ein warmes Gefühl , sonst nichts. In Hans ist ein Gedanke an Sophie [...]" (Jelinek 91). Anna, through her desire to have something that makes her happy, overlooks the fact that Hans is in love with Sophie and the fact that he has no intentions of staying with her. Anna is only being used as an object, and this time, as a substitute for Sophie. What makes things worse for Anna is the fact that this is the only time in the novel she is happy. Elizabeth Snyder Hook explains, "Their love-making, she believes, will free her from her anger [...]" What

Anna actually experiences with Hans is further loss” (116). Therefore, all of her sexual encounters are connected with either physical or emotional pain, or loss. While the sexual act may be in some way pleasurable, its implications of power and violence/pain destroy any chance of the act bringing her happiness. Anna is just as shut off, sexually speaking, from the rest of society as Rainer. Therefore, if Rainer were to have a sexual relationship with his sister, he would not be gaining any access to society.

Breaking the Bind: Destruction of the Family

As Dagmar Lorenz states, for Rainer and Anna, “there is no way out” (116). The family structure and the Austrian society have done everything in their power to control Rainer and keep him within the patriarchal, oedipal structure of power. Lorenz states further, “Rainer seems to have vaguely sensed this reality [...]”¹¹ (Lorenz 116). Yet, it is not clear in the academic world whether Rainer’s destruction of his family towards the end of the novel really offers a solution to Rainer’s problems. Even if society offers Rainer neither economic advancement nor a proper loving (sexual) relationship, it does offer him a direct escape from his family. None of the Jelinek scholars has addressed Rainer’s immediate escape from his family after he graduates, except through their claims that the capitalist/fascist society awaiting him offers no real change. But then, murdering his whole family offers Rainer as little escape from this situation as would a *change of address* after he graduates. The existentialist answer should be, “why bother killing his family?” Allyson Fiddler claims that Rainer’s murder “comes to stand for the ultimate act of self-hatred on the part of the son, who, recognizing the incurable patterns of dominance and submission, the sick and perverted

¹¹ This refers directly to the preceding “there is no way out” quote from Dagmar Lorenz.

nature of his class, attempts to disavow this social milieu by expurgating it” (Rewriting Reality 98). But if it is really an act of self-hatred, then why does Rainer not kill himself?

Fiddler also claims that Rainer’s murder is only an attempt to escape, suggesting that escape is actually impossible. Dagmar Lorenz calls the murder an “iconoclastic assault on the collective ‘holy cows’”¹² (117), and asserts that Rainer unmask “family and sexual relationships as conveniences based on economic conditions, of feelings as manufactured by the media” (117). But an “assault on iconoclasts” does not explain how Rainer exposes these types of relationships, nor does Lorenz state to whom this act exposes them to. Other than unmasking certain types of relationships, what has Rainer done for himself by murdering his entire family? He certainly did not unmask these relationships to himself; he was brutally aware of their reality. Marlies Janz describes Rainer’s act of murder as a “Rache am Nazivater” and states that it is simply “eine Wiederholung von dessen Greueln in Auschwitz und deren Fortsetzung im familiären Alltagsfaschismus“ (44). According to Janz, then, the murder of his family has only further entrenched Rainer into the same system of power that he struggles against. However, these conclusions leave only greater questions. As Dagmar Lorenz has stated, and as already cited in this section, Rainer is aware of the contradictions under which he is placed. Does Rainer murder his family out of self-hatred, does he want to “unmask” relationships, or has he accepted his fascist inheritance and now wants to exact revenge on his father? Rainer wants a solution, and while he may be desperate, he is not unaware of his actions.

I argue that, by murdering his family, Rainer has provided a solution to his situation. The scenes that follow the murder of Rainer’s family suggest that his actions indeed provide

¹² “Holy cows” are “disabled veterans, mother- and fatherhood, the home, love, and friendship.” (Lorenz 117)

a type of solution, in which several aspects of earlier conflicts are now resolved. There are some utopic characteristics of Rainer's short lived freedom after he murders his family. He travels with a friend (other than Hans and Sophie) to visit a priest and has a pleasant visit, "Der Pfarrer gibt ihnen zum Abschied noch die Hand und ein paar Stück Mehlspeise mit. Dann wird der Schulkamerad nach Hause transportiert, es war ein ereignisreicher Tag, sagt er noch und geht in seine Wohnung hinein [...]" (Jelinek 264). Here, the priest's hand offered in peace and respect is a great improvement over the usual "schlagende Hand des Herrn Pfarrer" that Rainer is accustomed to (Jelinek 177). This confrontation with authority and society is much more pleasant than any previous one, and it is Rainer's choice to visit the priest. He has also spent his day with an acquaintance outside of the gang, and they experience an "ereignisreicher Tag" together. Rainer then calls a girl other than Sophie and takes her out to a club,

Dann ruft Rainer von einer Zelle aus ein Mädchen an, das er seit Monaten nicht gesehen hat[...] das Mädchen Renate wird zum tanzen in die Picasso-Bar eingeladen und tanzt auch mit Rainer in der Picasso-Bar[...] Rainer erklärt weitschweifig die Bauweise der modernen Musik, die aus den Lautsprechern erklingt. Dann hört er auf zu erklären und bringt Renate wieder nach Hause. (Jelinek 264)

Amazingly, Rainer, who is never described as being physical, actually dances with the girl. While he talks a lot, he controls himself, stops talking and takes her home. It is only after the murder of his family that Rainer shows any initiative to meet other people and be social. Rainer's experiences with the outside world on the day he murders his family are not only positive but also very promising. These post-murder scenes have been neglected by Jelinek scholars. They suggest more than the conclusions that have been reached thus far as to the motives and consequences of Rainer's act. Before the murder he was very aware of his predicament and knew the only way to free himself would be to destroy the oedipal model

from the ground up. He achieves this by destroying his entire family. Only then can he accept, and be accepted by, society.

CONCLUSION

Die Ausgesperrten deals with expectations and norms. More specifically, it pertains to the idea and expectation of a normal family and a normal society. In this novel, the “normal” family is one structured under the oedipal model, in which the male child has accepted the incest taboo in return for the benefits of the parental union. The “normal” society is one which is based upon the oedipal model of the family. This society has borrowed, in a sense, its authority from the oedipal contract within the family and also provides the male child with benefits. The “normal” world in the novel, or the combination of the normal family and normal society, is one in which authority is not forced on individuals, but rather accepted, and the acceptance by the male child is directly dependent upon the benefits the parents and society offer. I claim that the expectation of “normality” is provided by the post World War II Austrian society as an attempt to both overcome and conceal Austria’s involvement with the Nazi party and the resulting guilt. The sense of normality is also crucial to the continued success of the economy, or *Wirtschaftswunder*. However, the chasm between the reality offered to the male child, Rainer, and the expectation, the ideal, or the sense or norm is too great to cross.

Because the Witkowski family is structured under the oedipal model, the family and society expects Rainer to accept the incest taboo. The threat of incest is imminent and Rainer considers killing his father for his mother’s sake. The presence of Rainer’s oedipal desires denotes a conflict that must be resolved in order for him to become a full member of society. Rainer must accept the incest taboo in order to receive the benefits society has to offer,

namely, material wealth, power, and a sexual partner. Society must allow Rainer to take part in the *Wirtschaftswunder*. Yet Rainer is *ausgesperrt*, cut off from all the things he so desires from society. His society only provides him with the illusion that he can succeed, while in reality he cannot; society will not let him. Rainer has no money and must steal from his “victims” in order to have a social life. With money comes power, and, in the capitalist sense, the power to buy. His two chances of advancement come from the rich Sophie, from whom he desires a romantic relationship, and his success at school. Sophie, who offers both a sexual partner and wealth, ultimately rejects Rainer and, according to many Jelinek scholars¹³, his education also fails him. Rainer becomes disillusioned and distressed because the society, in which he so desperately wants to take part, offers him no benefits. Thus, Rainer has no reason from society to accept the incest taboo.

Rainer’s situation has been exacerbated by another societal element. The Austrian society, both past and present, has weakened the familial structure so that it becomes more difficult to uphold the oedipal model. Since Rainer cannot gain power and sex within society, he is forced to look for them within his family, and, since he has no reason to accept the incest taboo at the societal level, he has no reason to accept it at the familial level either. It is the father’s duty, as oedipal ruler, to enforce the incest taboo. And, combined with the fact that his own authority has been undermined and threatened, he escalates the enforcement of his authority. This is where the element of fascism comes to play. Rainer’s father is a fascist, and he enforces his authority with brutality and the sexual domination of his wife. Rainer is forced by his father to accept the incest taboo and society offers no benefits if Rainer complies. Austrian society created fascism and allowed it to survive in the “private sphere.”¹⁴

¹³ namely Hoffmann, Lorenz and Rainer

This fascism is not limited to the Witkowski family, but serves as a general aspect of all of society. The gang's victims prove that the men in public think and act just like Herr Witkowski, given the opportunity. Fascism still exists, and even though its existence is not open and public, it can and does exist in the public sphere. Rainer is fully aware of this, yet he is still attracted to the ideal of capitalism and the hope of economic and social advancement. Rainer's society and Family have put him under too many double-binds, and the pressures from the overwhelming control inadvertently awaken him from his passive state and force him into action. The illusion of progress and change offered by the capitalist society and the phenomenon of the *Wirtschaftswunder* fail to deceive Rainer, for the discrepancy between the ideal that society has created and the reality Rainer must accept proves too great.

However, Rainer is left with a choice: he can attempt to destroy his Austrian, capitalist society or he can destroy his family. Rainer's world has been split into two antithetical poles: the dirty, physical, violent reality of his family and the ideal, idolized and exalted expectation of life indoctrinated in him by society. His family offers no hope, and even if his society ultimately fails him, it offers him an escape from it. It also offers him hope of everything that his family is not. When confronted with these two worlds, Rainer chooses the latter over the former, but in order to do this, he must wipe out the other and clean his world of the fascism, the violence and the sexual domination at its source, the family. Rainer's experiences with society on the same day and directly after he murders his family show that Rainer is capable of succeeding without his family. He accepts authority of society through his positive interaction with his priest, with an acquaintance from school, and the

¹⁴ This refers to an earlier quote from Ulrike Rainer's essay, pg. 177.

police.¹⁵ He also shares a romantic, though non-sexual, evening with a girl from his school, which shows that the chance for his sexual acceptance into society is possible. Unfortunately, the final irony is that Rainer must give up his freedom at the end of the novel for his crime.

¹⁵ Although he initially tries to deny his guilt, he quickly accepts the police's authority and turns himself in. Thus, by admitting guilt, he accepts the laws of the state.

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