Positioning Gina Kaus: a transnational career from Vienna novelist and playwright to Hollywood scriptwriter

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POSITIONING GINA KAUS: A TRANSNATIONAL CAREER
FROM VIENNA NOVELIST AND PLAYWRIGHT TO HOLLYWOOD
SCRIPTWRITER

by
Regina Christiane Range

An Abstract
Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in German
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

December 2012

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Waltraud Maierhofer
ABSTRACT

This dissertation evaluates the career and work of the underappreciated Austrian-Jewish-American novelist, dramatist, essayist and screen writer Gina Kaus (1894 – 1985). The dissertation’s approach is interdisciplinary in nature, drawing from the fields of German, American, exile, literary, feminist, performance, global, cultural as well as film studies. The unusually diverse corpus of Kaus’s work in both the literary and filmic medium makes such an interdisciplinary approach indispensable. The dissertation argues that Kaus’s specific female and little visible exile experience was shaped and accompanied by a significant, social, cultural, political, linguistic and geographical change. It reconstructs and consciously reinserts Kaus’ transatlantic accomplishments into the larger exile history.

My dissertation offers close reading of Gina Kaus’s second play Toni (1928) and positions her piece within the larger landscape of the Weimar Republic and Vienna during the 1920s. The analysis incorporates a feminist reading, which focuses on the performances of gender and the representation of femininity. It illustrates the destabilization of gender and sexual identities during the Weimar period. The analysis of Die Überfahrt (1932), Kaus’s second bestseller novel, discusses her novel as a Zeitroman (novel of the times). It contextualizes her book in terms of its readership and the literary market while examining it as a comment on the political, financial and social circumstances of 1920s Weimar culture.

A thorough investigation of two films for which Kaus invented the story and collaborated on the screenplay, namely The Wife Takes a Flyer (directed by Richard Wallace, USA, 1942), an Anti-Nazi comedy, and Three Secrets (directed by Robert Wise, USA, 1950), a melodrama, challenges the persistent idea that Kaus’s work for Hollywood was incapable to live up to her earlier literary and theatrical successes as an author of the Weimar period. My particular focus on the representation of femininity and female
agency, sheds light on how the émigrée Kaus, who had been known as an ardent feminist in Europe, successfully managed to subvert ideas of heteronormative gender and power discourses even within the restrictive limits of the Hollywood apparatus.

The dissertation further investigates the understudied text form screenplay and the practice of screenwriting. It examines for the first time various unpublished film script versions of the *The Wife Takes a Flyer* and *Three Secrets* and thus promotes the film script as a textual form worthy of investigation and integration in both literary and film studies. The script analysis pays attention to the collaborative nature, considers the various versions and revisions the script underwent, offers a comparison to the movies and evaluates it in its multi-functionality, style, and aesthetics. The scripts also give insight into the ways in which Kaus’s exilic consciousness permeates her scriptwriting.

My close analysis of Kaus’s autobiography, which was published in 1979 and targeted at a German-speaking readership, uncovers the ways in which exile is reflected in the practice of autobiographical writing. The dissertation focuses foremost on the narrative strategies as well as omissions in Kaus’s attempt to re-inscribe herself into the literary and artistic scene of Vienna and Berlin; and her effort to position herself among the prominent and predominantly male German-Jewish diaspora in Hollywood. I also shed light on her ability to adapt to the United States and her decision to remain and become a citizen. Her perception of exile as an opportunity, rather than as a limitation is an important new aspect in the existing exile research.
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Thesis Supervisor: Professor Waltraud Maierhofer
CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

PH.D. THESIS

This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

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has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in German at the December 2012 graduation.

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Sarah Fagan

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To my parents and in memory of my grandmother
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This dissertation evaluates the career and work of the underappreciated Austrian-Jewish-American novelist, dramatist, essayist and screen writer Gina Kaus (1894 – 1985). The dissertation’s approach is interdisciplinary in nature, drawing from the fields of German, American, exile, literary, feminist, performance, global, cultural as well as film studies. The unusually diverse corpus of Kaus’s work in both the literary and filmic medium makes such an interdisciplinary approach indispensable. The dissertation argues that Kaus’s specific female and little visible exile experience was shaped and accompanied by a significant, social, cultural, political, linguistic and geographical change. It reconstructs and consciously reinserts Kaus’ transatlantic accomplishments into the larger exile history.

My dissertation offers close reading of Gina Kaus’s second play *Toni* (1928) and positions her piece within the larger landscape of the Weimar Republic and Vienna during the 1920s. The analysis incorporates a feminist reading, which focuses on the performances of gender and the representation of femininity. It illustrates the destabilization of gender and sexual identities during the Weimar period. The analysis of *Die Überfahrt* (1932), Kaus’s second bestseller novel, discusses her novel as a Zeitroman (novel of the times). It contextualizes her book in terms of its readership and the literary market while examining it as a comment on the political, financial and social circumstances of 1920s Weimar culture.

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INTRODUCTION

My dissertation focuses on the re-evaluation of the underappreciated Austrian-Jewish-American novelist, dramatist, essayist and screenwriter Gina Kaus (1894 – 1985). Exile scholarship has long been dominated by the study of the male exile experience. It was not before the mid-1980s that scholars attempted to draw attention to the role of women in the context of exile and consciously began to include a few highly acclaimed German-speaking women writers such as Else Lasker-Schüler, Nelly Sachs, Vicki Baum and Anna Seghers. Lesser known writers still tend to be overlooked. The first groundbreaking work in this context was Gabriele Kreis’s Frauen im Exil (1984). Her work encompasses interviews with more than thirty women who fled National Socialism. She was therefore the first to draw attention to a particularly female experience of exile. Kreis’s work was followed by Heike Klapdor-Kops’s Heldinnen (1985), which investigated literary representation of femininity in works by well-known male exile authors. While Klapdor-Kops’s approach ignored the work of female émigrée writers, Renate Wall’s Verbrannt, verboten, vergessen (1989) accumulated over a hundred female writers who were condemned, censored and forgotten, but she excludes those who were not part of the literary circle.

My investigation of Kaus’s autobiographical narrative as well as her film scripts builds in part on the late 1980s and 90s paradigm shift in exile studies, which was undertaken to uncover lesser-known female exiles. Scholars from that period not only broadened their research scope in terms of their subjects, they also, for the first time, addressed the question of what kind of materials should be included. Examples of this particular school of thought are Andreas Lixl-Purcell’s Women of Exile (1988), which draws attention to twenty-six unpublished memoirs by women of exile, as well as two publications by the Internationales Jahrbuch der Exilforschung. Determined to increase the visibility of female émigreés and their contribution, two volumes were dedicated to
the subject. The first one was entitled *Frauen im Exil – Zwischen Anpassung und Selbstbehauptung* (1993), the subsequent volume, by Claus-Dieter Krohn, *Sprache-Identität-Kultur: Frauen im Exil* (1999). In the first volume, almost thirty years after exile studies came into being, the authors Rohlf and Rockenbach not only bemoan the “noch recht spärliche Forschungsliteratur zum Thema ‘Frauen im Exil’” (“still rather sparse research literature on the topic ‘women in exile’”), they even more revealingly feel the need to express regret for including what they then considered “‘unwissenschaftliches’ Material” (“‘non-scientific’ material”) (239). They are thereby addressing such texts as “Autobiographien … [,] Zeitungsartikel und Interviews, auch der ein oder andere vielleicht etwas kurios wirkende und schwer zugängliche Fund” (“autobiographies, newspaper articles and interviews, and a few peculiar and not easily accessible findings”) (239). In 1998, Amelie Heinrichsdorff’s dissertation ‘*Nur eine Frau?*’ still fights for the legitimacy and also necessity of including such less traditional texts.

Furthermore, Guy Stern and Julia Schöll’s anthology *Gender – Exil – Schreiben*, published in 2002, is of importance to my own research. This particular work marks, as the authors themselves points out, a significant turn in the field. This is also indicated by the subdivision of the anthology into two parts. The first part covers articles and presents studies which stem from the previous decade. The second half of the work stems from what Stern and Schöll refer to as “*Wissenschaftlerinnen der neuen Generation der Frauen Exil-Forschung*” (“scientists of the new generation in exile research”) (14). These works, they argue, complement and add to the existing research, but they also differ from it significantly. Examples for such cutting-edge work are the article by Anke Heimberg, who succeeds in deconstructing the widespread idea that female exile women writers usually deferred their career in order to support their husbands or families. Anja Schmidt-Ott’s contribution follows up on Klapdor-Kops’s work on representation of female characters and ideas of femininity. This is an area within exile studies that had been
widely neglected since the mid-1980s and only recently received a revival. My
dissertation contributes to this deficit by investigating Kaus’s representations and ideas of
femininity in her play *Toni* (1927), her bestselling novel *Die Überfahrt* (1932), and the
films and scripts *The Wife Takes a Flyer* (1942) and *Three Secrets* (1950). A last article
worth mentioning in the context of my own research project is Barbara Drescher’s “Junge
‘Girl’-Autorinnen im Exil,” in which she succeeds in deconstructing the prevailing
assumption of the “conservative turn.” Authors like Imgard Keun, Ruth-Landshoff-York,
and Dinah Nelken had long been assumed to have gone from using progressive and
emancipated gender constructions before 1933 to fully embracing the traditional gender
hierarchies in their exilic work. Drescher demonstrates that such an understanding is not
only too simplistic but also wrong. She illustrates how these writers purposefully and
productively made use of traditional gender roles in order to exploit them for their
antifascist goals. Like Drescher, I wish to debunk the existing assumptions about a
female exile. My dissertation challenges the persistent idea that Kaus’s work for
Hollywood was incapable of living up to her earlier literary and theatrical successes as an
author of the Weimar period. It further demonstrates that Kaus was still capable of
critiquing the dominant discourses on gender during her time in exile.

Scholarship concerned with both Gina Kaus’s literary as well as filmic work and
one that is interested in examining the connections between the two is non-existent. The
existing research, especially in the field of German and Austrian studies, focuses
primarily on Kaus as a novelist and playwright. The very first time Gina Kaus appears in
the field of exile studies was in the 1970s edition of Wilhelm Sternfeld and Eva
Tiedemann’s *Deutsche Exil-Literatur, 1933-1945*.1 However, six years later, John M.

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1 Neither the biographical nor the bibliographical information in Kaus’ entry is correct or even
sufficient. Besides giving an incorrect birth date, the bibliography only lists three of Gina Kaus’s
works. Hilde Atzinger also points to this issue and further draws attention to the recurrence of this
mistake in Walther Killy’s *Literaturlexikon* and Manfred Brauneck’s *Autorenlexikon* (43).
Spalek and Joseph Strelka include an article by Dagmar Malone in their first volume of *Deutsche Exilliteratur seit 1933*, the first scholarly article on Kaus. Malone’s article was the first attempt to draw attention to Gina Kaus and her exile experience. Providing insight into Kaus’s life and development as a novelist in Vienna and later career in Hollywood, Malone identifies certain themes that characterize Kaus’s work.

Besides a review of Kaus’s autobiography written by Hilde Spiel published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in 1979, which gives credit to Kaus’s work and situates her in the literary scene of Vienna and identifies her as a “Neue Frau,” Kaus did not find her way into the then booming literary feminist scholarship. Kaus was completely absent from the scholarship of female authors during the Weimar Republic or the investigation of women’s position in the field of cultural production conducted during the 1980s and 1990s. In 1993, Kaus’s name is mentioned in the “Auswahlsbibliographie” commentated by Sabine Rohlf and Susanne Rockenbach in the *Internationales Jahrbuch der Exilforschung* entitled *Frauen im Exil – Zwischen Anpassung und Selbstbehauptung*. Sibylle Mulot’s afterword in *Wien nach Hollywood. Erinnerungen*, which was a reprint of Kaus’s memoirs with a different publishing house in 1990, provides additional facts and figures in connection with Gina Kaus’s life. The publishing house Ullstein also decided to reprint three of Kaus’s novels, *Die Schwestern Kleh, Der Teufel in Seide* and *Katharina die Grosse*, and edited them with an afterword by Mulot. In these afterwords, Mulot comments on the marginal discussion of Kaus’s work in secondary literature. She further points to autobiographical connections between Kaus’s novels and her life and the reception of her work.

Andrea Capovilla’s article “Gina Kaus und Vicky Baum: Von Wien nach Hollywood. True Stories” in *Literatur als Geschichte des Ich* focuses on the
autobiographies by Gina Kaus and Vicky Baum. This as well as the latest publication by Hildegard Atzinger, published in 2008, _Gina Kaus: Schriftstellerin und Öffentlichkeit_, only focuses on the literary output of Kaus and neglects her film work. Atzinger, however, provides a very thorough bibliography and also contributes to the positioning of Kaus as a novelist during the inter-war period in Austria as well as Germany.

The only works that go beyond Kaus’s literary work are Amelie Heinrichsdorff’s dissertation, ‘Nur eine Frau?’, published in 1998 and Dagmar Malone’s article “Gina Kaus” in _Deutsche Exilliteratur seit 1933_. Heinrichsdorff and Malone are the only authors who even attempt to include Kaus’s films in their works. While Malone only gives short summaries of Kaus’s screen plays and briefly mentions the producers she worked with, Heinrichsdorff provides a few more names of collaborators and offers more insight as to how Gina Kaus managed to get some of the contracts for the screen plays. My dissertation seeks to fill this significant research gap by analyzing Kaus’s work for the Hollywood industry and by drawing attention to the ways in which her exilic experience permeates her scripts. It thus reconstructs and consciously reinserts Gina Kaus’s literary as well as filmic accomplishments into the larger exile history.

The first chapter of my dissertation analyses the play _Toni_, Kaus’s second play, written in 1928. This chapter positions Kaus’s theatrical piece within the larger landscape of the Weimar Republic and Vienna during the 1920s. The analysis incorporates a poststructuralist feminist reading which focuses on the gender performances and representation of femininity to illustrate the destabilization of gender and sexual identities during the Weimar period. I consciously insert _Toni_ as a precursor of the “Frauenroman”

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2 The connection between the Viennese author and musician Vicki Baum and Gina Kaus has also been established by other works, such as the article “Vicki Baum und Gina Kaus. Ein Porträt zweier Erfolgsschriftstellerinnen der Zwischenkriegszeit” by Hartmut Vollmer in 2001, or “Vicky Baum and Gina Kaus: Female Creativity on the Margins” by Luisa Afonso Soares in 2006.
(“women’s novel”) and “Roman der Neuen Frau” (“Novel of the New Woman”) written by female authors like Irmgard Keun, Marieluise Fleißer or Vicki Baum.

The second chapter focuses on *Die Überfahrt* (1932), Kaus’s second bestselling novel. I discuss this novel as a *Zeitroman* (novel of the times), a literary genre reflecting contemporary issues in connection with political, economic, cultural and social and cultural affairs. This chapter contextualizes the novel in terms of its readership and literary market while reading it as a comment on the political, financial and social circumstances of the 1920s and early 1930s Weimar culture.

The third chapter investigates two films for which Kaus invented the story and collaborated on the screenplay, namely *The Wife Takes a Flyer* (1942), an Anti-Nazi comedy, and *Three Secrets* (1950), a melodrama. It challenges the persistent idea that Kaus’s work for Hollywood was incapable of living up to her earlier literary and theatrical successes as an author of the Weimar period. A particular focus of this chapter is the representation of femininity and female agency. I illuminate the ways in which the exile Kaus, known as an ardent feminist in Europe, successfully managed to subvert ideas of heteronormative gender and power discourses even within the restrictive limits of Hollywood cinema.

My fourth chapter draws attention to the understudied text form screenplay and the practice of screenwriting. It examines for the first time various unpublished film script versions of the *The Wife Takes a Flyer* and *Three Secrets* and thus promotes the film script as a textual form worthy of investigation and integration in both literary and film studies. The script analysis pays attention to the collaborative nature and idea of auteurism, considers the various versions and revisions the script underwent, offers a comparison to the movies and evaluates the script in its multi-functionality, style, and aesthetics. I also utilize Kaus’s film scripts to shed light on the ways in which Kaus’s exilic consciousness permeates her scriptwriting.
The last chapter presents a close analysis of Kaus’s autobiography, which was first published in 1979 and targeted at a German-speaking readership. My analysis uncovers the ways in which exile is reflected in the practice of autobiographical writing. I focus foremost on the narrative strategies as well as omissions in Kaus’s attempt to re-inscribe herself into the literary and artistic scene of Vienna and Berlin and her effort to position herself among the prominent and predominantly male German-Jewish diaspora in Hollywood. I discuss Kaus’s ability to adapt to her new home, the United States, and her decision to remain and become a citizen. Her perception of exile as an opportunity rather than as a limitation is an important new aspect in the existing exile research.

The Life of Gina Kaus

Gina Kaus was born on October 21, 1893. She was born into a rather poor family. At the age of twenty she married the musician Josef Zirner. Despite wartime conditions, Kaus managed to visit Zirner on the front during World War I before he died in 1915. A year after Zirner died, Kaus was adopted by Joseph Kranz, an industrialist and well-known figure in Vienna circles. Kranz was 58 and married to a woman who refused to grant him a divorce. The nature of the interactions between Kranz and Kaus did not resemble a father-daughter relationship. The adoption simply helped to cover up that fact that Kranz was Kaus’s lover and enabled them to live together. At this point, Kaus no longer had to worry about her financial situation and she was now able to fully concentrate on her career as a writer. This part of her career began as early as mid-1910 when Franz Blei, who Kaus met during her numerous visits to the famous Café Herrenhof in Vienna, encouraged her to write an article about her visit to Zirner on the front. It was through the Herrenhof that Gina Kaus was able to establish connections to such people like Herman Broch, Robert Musil, Franz Werfel, Milena Jasenska, Kafka’s lover, and Ego Erwin Kisch. During her time with Kranz, Kaus wrote her first play called
“Diebe im Haus” (Thieves in the House) under the nom de plume Andreas Eckbert. This play was bought by the Vienna Burgtheater and staged in 1919. In 1920, less than four years into the adoption with Kranz, Kaus married the fellow writer Otto Kaus. Their first son Otto was born that same year and Kaus conceived her second son Peter in 1924. Gina Kaus divorced Otto Kaus in 1926 and began another relationship with Eduard Frischauer. It was also in 1926 that Kaus published her second novel Der lächerliche Dritte (The Third Ridiculous)

Kaus wrote her first novel in 1920, Der Aufstieg (The Rise), for which she received the Fontane Prize. Then in 1925 Kaus published the first edition of her magazine Die Mutter. For this magazine she constantly interviewed and collaborated with doctors, lawyers, social workers and some of Alfred Adler’s students in order to educate mothers. Kaus was a great admirer of the socialist Viennese psychologist Alfred Adler, who along with Sigmund Freud was one of co-founders of the psychoanalytic movement. During Kaus’s attempt to sell the rights of Die Mutter to the German Ullstein publishing house, Gina Kaus met the novelist Vicky Baum; Kaus and Baum would later become close friends during their time in the American exile. The Ullstein publishing house however did not buy Die Mutter but instead offered Kaus advance money for writing a novel for them. During her work on this novel, entitled Die Verliebten (Lovers) and published in 1928, Kaus also worked on her second play Toni: Eine Schulmädchen-Komödie in zehn Bildern. (Toni: A Schoolgirl Comedy in Ten Pictures). This play analyzed in the first chapter of this dissertation, was staged in Bremen, Prague and Berlin and received a prize from the Goethe Bund. Die Verliebten was quite successful on the book market. However, it presented Gina Kaus with a huge disappointment. An incident, I argue, which was just a beginning of numerous misunderstandings in connection with the perception and evaluation of her work. Ullstein published her novel in a category that Kaus did not intend it for. The novel was originally meant to end up with the same publishing house that had already printed works by writers as Bertolt Brecht, Lion
Feuchtwanger, and Heinrich Mann, to name a few. Her book was hence categorized as ‘entertainment’ and by such was denied a place among the ‘high-brow’ literary works. It is this particular divide of ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture, and not just the facts that she was a female and also an exile, that contributed to Kaus’s invisibility, as I argue. She was often underestimated and the diversity and complexity of her work is still widely ignored by scholars.

In the time between 1932 and 1935 Gina Kaus published a variety of novels. In 1932 she wrote *Die Überfahrt* (*Luxury Liner*), which was bought by Paramount and made into a film directed by Lothar Mendes a year later. She also published *Morgen um Neun* (*Tomorrow We Part*) in 1932 as well. *Die Schwestern Kleh* (*Dark Angel*) came out in 1933 and the biography *Katharina die Große* (*Catherine the Great*) was published in 1935. These novels were also received significant attention in the United States as well as in England. *Katharina die Große* actually became a bestseller in America. In 1937 Gina Kaus finished her third play *Gefängnis ohne Gitter* (*Prison without Bars*) and wrote the novel *Whisky und Soda* (*Whisky and Soda*); her last work published before her exile.

Together with her family, Kaus immediately fled Austria in March of 1938 on the same day of Austria's annexation by the Nazi regime. The Kaus family first went to Switzerland then to France. While in Paris, she wrote her last novel *Der Teufel nebenan* (*The Devil next Door*), which was not published before 1940. Like *Die Überfahrt*, discussed in chapter II, *Der Teufel nebenan* was also turned into a film titled *Teufel in Seide* or *Devil in Silk* by director Rolf Hansen in 1956. In August of 1938 Kaus and her children received visas for the United States and found themselves on the Ile de France, the last ship to leave Europe before war was declared.

Kaus spent her first two months in the United States in New York's Hotel Bedford. She wrote serialized articles for the magazine *True Story* to finance her trip to Hollywood. She arrived in Los Angeles in November of 1939 and quickly acclimated herself to Southern California. With help from her agent, George Marton, Kaus
immediately started collaborating on a play with Ladislaus Fodor, which was then sold to MGM. This was only the beginning of Gina Kaus’s career as a script and story writer for Hollywood.

Kaus further collaborated on scripts for such Hollywood productions like *The Red Danube* (directed by George Sidney, 1949), *Three Secrets* (directed by Robert Wise, 1950), *All I Desire* (directed by Douglas, Sirk, 1953), and *The Wife Takes a Flyer* (directed by Richard Wallace, 1942). Kaus also invented the stories and worked on adaptations or additional dialogues for movies like *They All Kissed the Bride* (1942, directed by Alexander Hall), *Blazing Guns* (directed by Robert (Emmett Tansey, 1943), *Whispering City* (directed by Fyodor Otsep, 1947), *Julia Misbehaves* (directed by Jack Conway, 1948), *We’re Not Married* (directed by Edmund Goulding, 1952), and *The Robe* (directed by Henry Koster, 1952). However, Kaus’s film contributions were not only reduced to her work in Hollywood. Kaus also worked transnationally and wrote the scripts for German and Austrian productions, namely *Das Schloss in Tirol (Castle in Tyrol)* (directed by Géza von Radványi, AT, 1957) and *Wie ein Sturmwind (Tempestuous Love)* (directed by Falk Harnack, DE, 1957), and the TV movie *Der Tag danach (The Day After)* (directed by Rudolf Jugert, 1965).

After leaving Austria in 1938, Gina Kaus never returned to live in Europe. Apart from smaller trips and conferences she remained in the United States. The last literary work she published was her autobiography in 1979 *Und was für ein Leben...mit Liebe und Literatur, Theater und Film*. Kaus died in Los Angeles in 1985.
CHAPTER I

TONI (1927): A PLAY WITH GENDER ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS

Sie wird hundert Männer haben und niederzwingen, sie wird leuchtend durch die Welt ziehen und eine Blutspur hinter sich zurücklassen.

Gina Kaus, *Toni: Eine Schulfmädchen-Komödie in zehn Bildern*

*Toni: Eine Schulfmädchen-Komödie in zehn Bildern* (Toni: A Schoolgirl Comedy in Ten Scenes) was Kaus’s second play and was written in 1928. It was staged in Bremen, Prague and Berlin and received a prize from the Goethe Bund. The play has only been touched upon by Andrea Capovilla, who discusses the comedy in her book *Entwürfe weiblicher Identität*, very briefly also mentioning it in combination with Kaus’s narration *Das verwunschele Land* (The Enchanted Country), published in 1925 in the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*. Capovilla’s reflections are exemplary in that they pass a derogative value judgment on Kaus’s play rather than positioning it within the literary and theatrical scene emerging at the time.³

The play consists of ten different scenes revolving around a young female protagonist named Toni, who is coming of age during the Weimar period.⁴ Toni, like most of the other characters in this play, is struggling with the blurring of traditional

³ Capovilla is particularly interested in the first and the seventh scenes, arguing that “einige der anderen Szenen ins Flache abgleiten” (“some of the other scenes slip into shallowness”) (Capovilla, 135).

⁴ Although Kaus is a native of Vienna, Austria, and not Germany, she, like so many other intellectuals, constantly traveled back and forth between Vienna and Berlin, which was considered the vibrant center of Weimar culture. Gina Kaus must be regarded as an integral and vital part of the wider German culture centered in Berlin as she interacted and wrote with and for German intellectuals. Kaus’s work, as will become more apparent in the chapters to follow, thus needs to be contextualized in a larger transnational context, including the very beginning of her career as a novelist and playwright in Vienna and her later profession as a scriptwriter and autobiographer in the United States as well as Austria and Germany.
gender roles and the arising generational conflicts of the inter-war period. What sounds like a typical foundation for a tragedy, however, is marketed as a “Komödie,” a comedy, as suggested by the play’s title: the aforementioned conflicts are—or rather seem to be—resolved in the end. The play, as expected in comedy, plays with the audience’s inhibitions, violates social conventions and is also careful not to disrupt the characteristic happy ending of a comedy. The viewers are confronted with Toni’s everyday life and struggles therein; they learn about her hopes, fears and even dreams. Kaus’s play is a compelling reflection of the promises and failures of social change. It also highlights Toni as a significant work for the study of Weimar culture, as it provides a female perspective on the emerging tensions and anxieties that both women as well as men encounter due to the blurring of the traditional gender roles and newly obtained choices and opportunities. Through her characters, Kaus’s work also engages and reflects on the literary works that shaped society’s views on gender expectations and power structures during the 1920s. She illustrates the tremendous consequences that such works and evolving discourses had on their readers.

My analysis of Toni: Eine Schulmädchen-Komödie in zehn Bildern is based on Judith Butler’s theorization and reflections on gender as performance in her book Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, which was published in 1990. My analysis also draws on Richard W. McCormick’s Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity, which illustrates the remarkable destabilization of gender, traditional social roles and sexual identities by a rereading of canonical literary texts and films. McCormick’s work functions as a model for my own approach to positioning Kaus’s theatrical piece within the larger landscape of the Weimar Republic and Vienna during the 1920s.
Boy or Girl?

Kaus’s play *Toni* traces the (sexually) precocious teenage protagonist of the same name on her path towards potentially becoming a “New Woman.” The so called “new women” were more than just a sheer construct or “bohemian minority or artistic convention” (Bridenthal et al. 11). These were women “who voted, used contraception, obtained legal abortions, and earned wages ... existed in the office, factory, bedroom, and kitchen – just as surely as – in cafe, cabaret, and film” (11).

The first scene of *Toni* takes place in a park near an all-girls school and introduces the audience to three teenage girls. Helene, Nelly and Marie are reading an article in a magazine called the “Interessantes Blatt” (“Interesting Paper”) (Kaus, *Toni*) 5. They are visibly intrigued by the story: A sixteen year old girl named Josefine G. recently showed merkwürdige Veränderungen. Ihre Stimme wurde tief und rauh, sie bekam einen deutlichen Anflug von Schnurbart. Eine ärztliche Untersuchung ergab, dass sich das junge Mädchen – in einen Knaben verwandelt hatte! Es handelt sich hier um eines der merkwürdigsten und seltensten Phänomene. Josefine G – nun mehr Josef G. – wird mit dem Beginn des nächsten Lebensjahres in eine Knabenschule eintreten.

(strange transformations. Her voice became deep and rough, she developed a clear hint of a mustache. A medical examination revealed that the young girl – had turned into a boy! This is one of the strangest and rarest of phenomena. Josephine G – now Josef G. – will transfer to an all-boys school with the onset of his next year of life) (7-8).

The young readers are fascinated by the article about the intersexed Josefine G., who is their age. They confront the possible instability of something they have previously

5 All translations are by the author.
never questioned: biological sex. The possible combination of physical features that usually distinguishes females from males and can be present at the same time perplexes the girls. Helene refuses to believe that something like that is even possible. She is convinced that “Das ist einfach ein verkleideter Junge gewesen. Er hat sich eben travestiert!” (“It is simply a boy dressed up as a girl. He just travestied!”) (8). Marie, who would enjoy being a boy but thinks she does not have the makings to be one (Kaus, 10), deems it unlikely that any boy would voluntarily run about as a girl (8). The character of Marie illustrates the simultaneous presence of both fear towards the indefinite and the desire for liberation from traditional and normative limitations of the understandings of identity. However, Nelly is convinced that a boy could have an interest in pretending to be a girl “[u]m hinter die Geheimnisse der Mädchen zu kommen” (“in order to uncover the secrets of girls”) (8). She also argues that if it really was a metamorphosis, then nobody should be to blame, as it is “ein biologisches Phänomen … Das kann doch einer jeden von uns passieren!” (“a biological phenomenon ... It could happen to anyone one of us!”) (9). Nelly is captivated by the idea that a boy could insinuate himself into their particular group with the intent to spy on them, and she immediately starts to suspect a girl named Toni, whom the audience has yet to meet. Nelly’s reasoning for her suspicion of Toni is based on her height, rambunctiousness, athleticism, competitiveness, as well as Toni’s unsociable behavior and drive to always win. Another reason that is only alluded to is that Toni has yet to begin menstruating (12). It is in this scene that Toni, who is described as being dressed in a childlike manner, comes running on stage closely followed by her friend Berta, who Kaus describes in her stage instructions as a “großes, hartknochiges, unhübsches Mädchen” (“tall raw-boned, unattractive girl”) (12), who keeps her eyes fixed on Toni. When the three girls confront Berta and Toni with the question of whether they would want to be boys, Berta admits that she disdains boys and that she is not physically attracted to them. The girls do not comment on Berta’s misandrist speech. When Toni is supposed to answer the same question, she
spontaneously announces, “‘Aber ich bin doch ein Junge!’” (“But I am a boy!”) (14). She goes on to tell the girls that her name is actually Anton Krieger and that she has ambitions of becoming a renowned poet. She has decided to disguise herself as a writer whose interests lie in unfolding the female soul. Toni finishes her speech by stating she has been studying the girls for over three years now (14-15). Helene plays along with Toni’s story and keeps mocking her “manliness” and immaturity. Marie becomes visibly uncomfortable and is worried that the others actually believe Toni is a “real” boy. Toni finally brings matters to a head when she dares Marie to kiss her if she is completely convinced that Toni is a girl. Marie draws back and Toni literally snaps out of her Anton Krieger performance, “wie erwachend” (“as if awakening”) (17).

Within the first few minutes of the production, Kaus introduces her viewers to a variety of established and also newly-emerging discourses that were relevant and also familiar to people of the interwar period. The play illustrates the impact of mass media, usually perceived as “low” culture, in the creation and also dispersion of discourses on gender and sexuality. It illustrates the varied interwar reactions to “sex-gender ambiguity” and “queerness” and the ways in which sensationalist “othering” is utilized as a powerful tool to implement fears relating to the loss of a stable sexual and moral order. Kaus stages and alludes to concepts of “queerness,” “cross-dressing,” “passing,” “homosexuality,” “transgender” and “intersexuality.” She also demonstrates the impact that such ideas have within the larger society. The three girls function as a microcosmic version of Weimar culture. Their suspicious and derogatory behavior toward Toni and Berta’s gender and sexual identities conveys the variety of ideas that were circulating at that time. Their behavior also displays the “demand for clear boundaries and distinctions … that arguably led to a more brutal ‘clarity’ on these issues in the Third Reich” (McCormick, 5).

Toni is the “Kleinste” (“smallest”) and “Jüngste” (“youngest”) of the girls (Kaus, Toni 10). Her age, delayed “physical” development and poor social circumstances keeps
Helene, Nelly and Marie from fully accepting her as one of them. The fact that Toni has yet to experience her first menstrual cycle and is dressed in a childlike manner underlines her “in-between-ness,” a being who is in the process of becoming and, therefore, difficult to determine with regard to her sexual identity. Helene states: “Bei der ist alles möglich” (“Everything is possible with her”) (13). Whereas the three girls consider themselves as unquestionably “female” due to their physique and biological features, Toni presents a problematic case to them due to her “masculine” connoted behavior. However, Berta, who is forthright in her hatred of boys and is looking for emotional support and possibly Toni’s reciprocated interest in her, is not questioned in the same manner as Toni.

Toni does not share the same hunger for clearly defined gender boundaries. Indeed, quite the opposite is the case: When confronted with the questioning of her sex, Toni immediately puts on a performance and designs a male character she sees fit for the situation. The ease with which she performs feeds into the girls’ fears of deviations from traditional norms for gendered behavior, stable identities and gender differences. Toni’s invention and enactment of a male character represents an example of what Judith Butler has called the *performativity of gender roles*. To Judith Butler, “gender identity is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo” (“Performative Acts” 520). For the post-structuralist philosopher and feminist Butler, the construction of a gendered identity is realized through stylized repetition of acts and it involves the understanding that there is no underlying *essence* to such acts:

> If gender attributes and acts, the various ways in which a body shows or produces its cultural signification, are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction. (*Gender Trouble* 192)
Toni’s performance of the “opposite sex” is not parodic enough for the girls. She clearly draws on characters from literature that used performative acts, such as Harun al Rashid, to point out the idea of performativity and disguise. The girls are not convinced that Toni is merely performing. Toni commands different roles throughout this scene. Initially she demands the role of the male poet, the “ultimate genius” in search of the “female soul” and secret. Then she takes on the role of the unfaithful debaucher and threatens to seduce, impregnate and leave Helene sometime in the future (Kaus, *Toni* 15). Through these scenes the audience starts to question whether this is a play within a play.

The first scene ends with Berta’s attempt to come out to Toni. Berta does not directly say that she is a lesbian, but rather admits to Toni that it does not take a paper to verify and state the fact that “eine Frau eine andere lieben kann, ganz und gar – wie ein Mann, besser als ein Mann” (“one woman can love another woman, entirely – like a man, even better than a man”) (17). Toni only reacts by stating, “‘So? –”” (“Really? –”) (17). Berta’s homoeroticism and love for Toni is clearly alluded to throughout the play. Even though it is never explicitly staged, it does not lessen the lesbian component of the play. Quite the contrary, it is a crucial plot element in that it remains constantly in question due to never being fully expressed visually.

The Inadequacy of Female Education

The second scene provides an insight into Toni’s home life and into her relationship with her mother. It is exemplary in illustrating the rising conflicts between

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6 This imagery thus alludes to the then still widely spread idea in Germany of women as “Empfängerinnen, as passive recipients and vessels who received and absorbed the ideas of others, who might well, as muses, nurture and stimulate others who created, but who could not create ideas of their own. In other words, women would also be expected to acknowledge the assistance of others, in all likelihood men, who would be seen as those who are really in power, who possess the knowledge” (Joeres 8).
the older and younger generations of women, in particular mothers and daughters. It sheds light on the limited social mobility of young women during the 1920s and the perception of inadequacy and inapplicability of female education.

The beginning of the scene shows the mother’s clear disdain for having given birth to a girl rather than a boy. The mother’s contempt for girls reflects some of the more conservative and traditional notions of women in Weimar culture. She is angry that Toni is not more grateful and appreciative of her mother. She tells her daughter that she works hard, “‘damit du alles lernst, ganz, als ob du ein Junge wärst!’” (“so that you learn everything, as if you were a boy!”) (19). Toni’s frustration of being able to receive education but to never be able to achieve something “Großes, Wunderbares, nichts was über die anderen hinausgeht, auch nicht für eine Stunde lang” (“Great, wonderful, nothing that reaches beyond others, not even for an hour long”) (22) expresses itself in her reflections about the family’s former tenant Fräulein Hellmann. Miss Hellmann was a teacher who spent her life educating girls – “vierzig Jahre hat sie am Katheder gesessen und hat Exerzitien diktiert und Schularbeiten verbessert und hat in möblierten Zimmern gewohnt… und dann ist sie gestorben” (“for forty years she sat at her desk and dictated exercises and corrected homework and lived in furnished rooms… and then she died”) (21). Toni does not want to live such a life and concludes, “[D]a möchte ich lieber sterben” (“I’d rather die”) (22). Kaus scratches the surface of the seemingly increasing equality and expansion of opportunities for women. Toni is aware of her societal status and continuously reflects upon it at various times throughout the play. Kaus thus provides the audience with a critical gaze and outlook on gender roles and immobility. However, Kaus’s play also illustrates just how little equality women actually gained by the 1920s. Disillusioned by examples like her mother and Fräulein Hellmann, Toni deems it pointless to apply herself in school. As a result, she is at risk of having to repeat a class. Toni’s mother intervenes and forces her daughter to take tutoring lessons with the neighbor’s son, Michael, in order to prevent this from happening.
Performance and Performativity

Even though Michael is older than Toni and acts as her teacher, it becomes evident throughout the play that he views Toni as an equal, as a “Freund” (“friend”) (109). Like Toni, Michael does not match the ideas of traditional gender roles and does not fulfill the stereotypical construction of “masculinity.” He is effeminized by Toni, who refers to him as a “Prima donna” (23), a term that usually designates the leading female singer of an opera company. Toni mocks him and her mother by saying that her mother threatened to hit Toni if she did not treat Michael like a prima donna. Since the prima donna is the person to whom the prime roles are assigned, Toni’s statement, which is a distorted repetition of her mother’s instruction, shows that both women do not perceive him as exercising, or in any way insisting, on his “male authority.” By not using the correct term, maybe due to a lack of education, and by referring to the male lead singer of an opera company, namely primo uoma, Toni challenges Michael’s masculinity.

Simultaneously she is referring to Michael playing a certain type of role by borrowing a term from the world of opera and theater performance. On the contrary, Michael believes that he is able to see right through Toni’s “game.” He believes that Toni merely acts and pretends to be and feel a certain way: “Die tut bloß so. Das ist lauter Komödie, damit man nicht merkt, dass sie ein ganz besonders zartes Herz hat. So empfindlich, dass sie sich dessen schämt, und das sie immer fürchtet, verletzt zu werden…” (“She is just pretending. This is pure comedy, so you do not realize that she has an especially tender heart. So sensitive, indeed, that she is ashamed of it and always afraid of getting hurt”) (24). Michael is aware of Toni’s complexity and multilayered-ness and believes that

7 The word comedy could also be translated as role-playing in this context. Either way the comment can be read as a meta-comment on the play itself, as it is alluding to the fact that something might appear as a comedy actually is capable of possessing a much deeper meaning. The idea that nothing is like it seems at first sight and should therefore be analyzed more closely, even questioned, is also an approach Michael passes on to Toni.
Toni is also playing a role. Therefore, both characters accuse each other of the same deed: acting. Their awareness of playing, or being assigned and reduced to certain roles, distinguishes Michael and Toni from the other characters in the play. The other characters, such as Toni’s mother or the three girls, are flat and one-dimensional. Kaus presents them as having no potential for or interest in development or growth.

As in most of Kaus’s writings and her film work, such characters are not judged or condemned, rather they aid in the representation of a variety of ideas and models of “femininity,” which all coexisted in the 1920s and the early 1930s. This simultaneity of wide-ranging ideas and concepts also applies to the coexistence of highly diverse discourses regarding gender roles. Kaus’s presentation of these notions complies with the vision of a pluralist culture which was also shared by the fathers of the Weimar constitution:

In ihrer Sicht war das Kaiserreich nicht durch eine homogene kulturelle Sphäre gekennzeichnet, sondern durch kulturelle Grabenkämpfe zwischen den einzelnen Sozialmilieus. Diese Kämpfe sollten überwunden werden, sozialdemokratische, katholische, linksliberale und konservative Kulturwerte miteinander ko-existieren. Um die staatliche Einflussnahme auf die Kultur zu begrenzen, wurde die Zensur abgeschafft.

(In their view, the Empire was not characterized by a homogeneous cultural sphere, but by grave cultural conflicts between the different social milieus. These conflicts should be overcome; social democratic, catholic, left-liberal and conservative cultural values were to co-exist with each other. To limit the state’s influence on culture, censorship was abolished) (Barndt 31).

Kaus also does not censor or dictate a certain perspective on political issues. Rather she creates moments and indicates that these are loaded with possibilities; opportunities that can be taken up or left untouched. This also offers an explanation as to why Berta’s character is not confronted with any defamation when she shares her
misandrist attitude and her sexual interest in girls. However, in order to still be respected among the other girls, she needs to be “clearly” identifiable as a girl. For these girls such identification pertains much more to a physical and outward appearance than a psychological one. It is exactly this philosophy of a pluralist and heterogenous state that the Third Reich regarded as a threat and attempted to extinguish only to replace it by its very own, uniform and hegemonic ideology a few years later.

Whereas Michael and Toni’s perception of each other is defined by a comradeship and equality, which is untainted by any misogynist or misandrist discourses, Andreas’s perception and understanding of Toni is of the exact opposite nature. Andreas is a young student, who is moving into one of the rooms Toni’s mother rents out. Kaus presents Andreas in harsh contrast to Michael. Andreas represents an example of traditional male authority. He feels that his agency and identity are threatened by the rise of the “New Woman.” Andreas is both intrigued by and angst-ridden over any blurring of traditional gender norms and behavior, in particularly female agency. Toni becomes the embodiment of his “male” anxiety.

The Power of Books and the Dissemination of Misogynist Ideas

Andreas fascinates Toni and in the beginning her intrigue centers on his readings rather than his person. While the girls encounter male authors, male protagonists and male historical figures, that is, Goethe, Franz Ferdinand of Austria and Napoleon, Andreas’s books appeal more to Toni. The young woman’s reaction does not seem too surprising that the aforementioned authors and characters belong to the canon of the Bildungsbürgertum, the intellectual middles class, which promoted and took an interest in holding on to the traditional gender roles and discourses. Such readings simply do not speak to Toni’s interests, nor do they provide answers to questions that she is so eager to find. Kaus illustrates the changing demand in literature of the Weimar period through
Toni. Her experience represents a steadily growing group of female readers during the 1920s. According to Kerstin Barndt, this time period expands the idea and understanding of literature, which previously was based on educated middle-class principles. This was now being questioned (22). Kaus demonstrates that its power and influence was visibly dwindling.

Kaus presents Andreas’s books as appealing greatly to Toni, so much so that she enters Andreas’s room while he is out in order to read Otto Weininger’s book *Geschlecht und Charakter.* While Toni is not particularly interested in her school readings, Weininger’s book causes Toni to produce an “erregter Ausruf” (“agitated outcry”) (Kaus, *Toni* 38) from time to time. Toni is visibly stirred by the book’s content. She is in fact so distracted that she does not even notice Andreas entering the room. Andreas demands to know which of the books Toni is reading, and as she hides it behind her back, she asks to borrow it. Andreas is appalled when he discovers which one it is, calls her a “Backfisch” (“bobbysoxer”) (39), and argues that “Dieses Buch gehört überhaupt nicht in Frauenhände, am wenigsten in die eines kleinen Mädchens” (“This book does not at all belong in women’s hands, especially not in those of a little girl”) (39). As Toni exclaims that she will be fifteen in the summer, Andreas suggests 19th-century historical fiction such as “Die letzten Tage von Pompeji oder den Kampf um Rom” (“The last Days of Pompeii or A Struggle for Rome”) (39). Toni explains why she is not interested in his suggestions: “Ich will etwas über das Leben erfahren” (“I want to learn something about life”) (40). Life lessons and insights are apparently not gained from the books assigned in school; something that is also illustrated in Toni’s reaction during Michael’s tutoring lessons on Franz Ferdinand and Napoleon. Toni is interested in information that

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8 His book *Geschlecht und Charakter (Sex and Character)*, first published in Vienna in 1903, “immediately goes into a second edition, becoming a best-seller in Austria and Germany… Misogynist, anti-semitic, anti-sexual, the book’s themes highlight the anxieties of the age” (Bland 27).
is not obviously to be found in these books. She is curious as to how Napoleon felt when he was by himself at their age (27). Toni displays an eagerness to overcome the discrepancy between school and life knowledge.

Andreas doubts that life will improve and be easier once one accumulates more knowledge. In order to make Toni’s decision to read even more unappealing, he informs her that Weininger took a look at the profundity of life and shot himself as a consequence (Kaus, 40). Nonetheless, Toni is not to be dissuaded from her hunger for information and interest in this particular book. Having familiarized herself with some of Weininger’s writing, Toni is curious to know whether Andreas shares the same attitudes toward women as the author. Instead of answering her question, Andreas goes on to explain to Toni that she is at a crucial point in her “female” life and provides her with unsought advice:

Nun können Sie zweierlei machen: Sie können gegen diese Tatsache protestieren – das tun heute die allermeisten Mädchen. Sie können also ihren Kopf mit allerlei Zeug vollstopfen, dass von Männern erfunden wurde, können sich im Gebrauche der Waffen üben, die von Männern geschmiedet wurden – kurz Sie können versuchen, aus sich einen Mann zu machen. Sie können Ihr wahres Selbst verkümmern lassen, um jene Fähigkeiten zu ertrotzen, mit denen die Natur den Mann ausgestattet hat. Und was wird geschehen? Sie werden niemals ganz Ihr Ziel erreichen, denn um ein kleines Stückchen werden Sie immer unbedeutender, untiefer, unschöpferischer sein als der Mann. Und dieses kleine Stück wird Ihnen die Seele verbrennen. Den Mann aber, den wirklichen Mann, wenn er einmal in Ihr Leben tritt, werden sie immer gegen sich haben, er wird Ihr Feind sein, Ihr Gegner, im Beruf, im täglichen Leben und im Bett.

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9 Weininger’s suicide and his reasons for it preoccupy Toni more than is apparent in this scene. Kaus later reuses this image of the bitterly disappointed dead man, whose ideas and principals were majorly influential beyond his death in a dream sequence. In this scene she will present Andreas as a living-dead version of Weininger determined to kill Toni.
(Now you can do two things: you can protest this fact - that is what the vast majority of girls do today. You can cram your head with all sorts of stuff that was invented by men; you can practice the use of weapons that were forged by men - in short: you can try to turn yourself into a man. You can atrophy yourself in order to extort the skills with which nature has endowed man. And what will happen? You will never quite reach your goal; by a small fraction you will always be less significant, shallower, and less creative than a man. And this little fraction will burn your soul. But the man, the real man, if he enters your life, you will always have him against you: he will be your enemy, your opponent, at work, in everyday life and in bed) (41-42).

Toni does not believe in Andreas’ prophecy and insists that everything will be completely different in her case (42). Andreas, however, carries on with his speech, continuing to paint a very limited variety of prospects for ambitious women like Toni:

Sie werden ein hässliches, streitsüchtiges Geschöpf werden, mit einer verdorren Seele und einem verkümmerten Körper. Sie werden nie Ihr eigenes persönliches Leben leben, sondern ein dummes Programm. Sie werden weder eine Frau sein noch ein Mann, werden weder Erfolg haben noch Glück.

(You will be an ugly, contentious creature, with a withered soul and a stunted body. You will never live your very own and personal life, but rather a stupid program. You will neither be a woman nor a man; you will experience neither success nor luck) (42)

Toni does not understand what Andreas means by “luck.” Andreas expands and presents her with the second choice she has as a woman. She should find an appreciation in surrendering and learn to admire males. According to Andreas, they are the only human beings that actually encompass all the things Toni so desperately wants to be – only then would she find infinite happiness and so would the man with whom she would be (42-43).
Andreas presents himself as a firm believer in an inherent and essential biologically-determined essence of men and women. Toni sees through his speech and boldly asks him whether he refers to a specific woman in his speech. Andreas answers willingly and shares with Toni his love for a married and pregnant woman. Toni is not the least impressed or empathetic. She brashly accuses Andreas of not being as consistent as Weininger in his ideas. Andreas’s reaction to her analysis is to call her a “kleiner Teufel” (“little devil”) (44) and to admit that “Die grausamste Vernichtungsfreude bricht der wildeste Triumph der Liebe” (“The cruelest joy of annihilation breaks the wildest triumph of love”) (44). He only does so in order to finally conclude with the misogynist comment that a woman will probably never be able to grasp such a thing (44). The dialogues between Toni and Andreas are staged quite differently in comparison to the dialogues between Michael and Toni. Michael pushes Toni to question the motivations behind certain behaviors and decisions and aims for a more reflective and deeper understanding of history and the underlying power relations; Andreas has no such interest. Quite the contrary, Andreas is not only disinterested in Toni’s questioning of the traditional and established gender roles, he fears such behavior, as will become apparent in the last scene of the play. Kaus shows the responsibility and consequences of teaching through the parallel structure of a “teachable moment,” where both male figures are in charge of educating a young woman. The different approaches are crucial in the development of girls and allows Toni’s character to dig deeper and question Andreas’s motives. Kaus reveals the emptiness behind the regulatory and tremendously controlling “gender” fictions and makes Andreas’s masquerade visible. Through her parallely approach, she shows the shortcomings and inadequacy with regard to the education of young women during the Weimar period.
Gender Fictions and Double Standards

Kaus debunks men’s high and “rational” ideals such as the ones repeatedly proclaimed by Andreas as rather traditional double standards. These double standards become apparent when Andreas brings home a prostitute whilst fantasizing about being with his “pure” and romantic love. When the prostitute mentions Toni as a possible and cheap substitute for herself, Andreas is reluctant and initially takes a highly moral stance. He argues that Toni is still a girl (60) and too young. The prostitute does not believe him. She shares her belief with Andreas that the “ordentlichen Mädchen von heute” (“today’s decent girls”) (61) are rather promiscuous. However, only two scenes later, Kaus presents her audience with the ever so “morally” concerned Andreas and his vigorous attempt to seduce Toni.

The seduction takes place in the eighth scene. As previously witnessed, Andreas is again incapable of explaining and defending his position of male superiority in front of Toni. He accuses her of lacking the prerequisites to understanding him (72). Andreas acts appalled when he exclaims “‘Ach, ich weiß ja was Sie wollen. Das wollt ihr ja jetzt alle. Ich soll Sie behandeln wie einen Kameraden, wie meinesgleichen!’” (“Oh, I know what you want. What all of you want now. I am supposed to treat you as a comrade, as my equal!”) – Toni: “‘Ich bin Ihresgleichen!!!’” (“I am your equal!!!”) (73). Andreas’s irritation manifests itself in the changing gender roles and expectations. It becomes clear that he views women as a homogenous group and does not distinguish between them—referring to them as “alle,” “all.” For him, the coexistence of various discourses and non-traditional realizations of gender roles is unthinkable and threatening. He simplifies and pigeonholes whenever possible. Andreas does not believe in the equality of gender and power structures and clashes with Toni, who is convinced that men and women should be equal. When Toni is still undeterred in her beliefs and tells Andreas that the equality of women will happen in the future (74), he attempts to show her what he considers to be the “ewigen Unterschied zwischen Weib und Mann” (“eternal difference between man
and woman”) (75). Andreas is incapable of convincing Toni of her supposed inferiority in a verbal manner and decides to use brute physical force. The young woman threatens to call her mother for help. Andreas is unimpressed, claiming that he could easily find another room to rent and leave Toni’s family in unstable economic circumstances. He further provokes Toni, stating that she would never call her mother—she is in love with him. Toni retorts, “Es ist nicht wahr. Ich hasse Sie! Ich könnte Sie ermorden!” (“It is not true. I hate you! I could kill you!”) (77). Andreas ignores her threats and simply complements her on her “schöne, böse Augen” (“beautiful, mean eyes”) (77). He then kisses her violently while Toni desperately tries to defend herself. This act demonstrates how Andreas forces his patriarchal expectations and longing for a heteronormative love affair onto Toni. When she inquires about his conduct, he equates his behavior with the “ABC des Lebens” (“The ABCs of life”) (78). This metaphor signifies that no woman can ever be in a room with a man at night without consequences. He presents the matter as a fact and attempts to naturalize and justify his behavior; for him it is a “given,” a rule based on society’s consent. Equating his behavior with the ABCs of life not only raises questions in regard to who consented to such an interpretation, but simultaneously prompts the question as to who is excluded from such signification processes. Andreas’s comment exemplifies how linguistic signification and social construction correlate.

Andreas epitomizes the ways in which masculinist hegemony controls language and signification and how these practices constrain the modes of thinking and perception of those being dominated (Díaz-Diocaretz 124-125). This signification process even affects Toni to the extent that she announces her reaction to it. She feels insulted by every “harmless” word (Kaus, Toni 94). The scene ends with Andreas kneeling down and kissing Toni’s hand and feet whilst telling her to be silent so as not to wake her mother.

10 Compare Myriam Díaz-Diocaretz’ discussion of Deborah Cameron’s ideas in connection with linguistic determinism and feminist studies approaches (124-126).
His statement is the exact opposite of what he tried earlier to convince Toni to believe. Andreas’s character displays inconsistencies and unpredictability. His character is also presented as violent. He embraces a violence that is sustainable only due to the predominant discourses on male superiority and female inferiority. Yet, Toni can only temporarily be silenced or repressed by such discourses as illustrated in the remaining scenes of the play.

**The Power of Assigning Meaning and the Consequences of Silence**

Toni’s character wishes to express and assign meaning to her daily surroundings. In a conversation with her friend Berta shesays. “‘Alles was ich sehe, möchte ich sagen können’” (“I would like to verbalize everything I can see”) (32). Simultaneously, Toni feels something is preventing her from doing so and even causing her pain: “‘Deshalb tut doch alles so weh, weil man es nicht sagen kann’” (“Because one cannot say it; that is why everything hurts so much”) (32). It bothers Toni that certain things are left unsaid and also troubles her that particular discourses are deemed as socially unacceptable. Her mother refers to prostitutes as “Mädchen” (“girls”) (56). Toni understands this reference quite literally. When she realizes what her mother actually means, Toni delves deeper into the historical background and meaning of the word “Hetäre” (“hetaera”) (56), a term her mother is unfamiliar with. Toni explains that the Greek word means “Genossin” (“comrade”) (56) and continues: “‘Aber hier nennt man sie Dirnen und am liebsten überhaupt nicht’” (“Here they are referred to as prostitutes or preferably not referred to at all”) (56). Here Toni not only criticizes the discursive practice of silence but also illustrates how discourses are subject to change over time. The lack of verbal representation of prostitutes speaks volumes in regard to the contemporary construction of them. These women are not only banned from everyday conversation but also robbed of what was once granted to them: competing with men intellectually (56). Toni’s
analysis vividly illuminates what Michel Foucault refers to when he argues that there is not “one but many silences, which are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses” (*The History* 27). He points to a particular silence within the public sphere and exposes it as a specific practice and strategy capable of disempowering an entire group of individuals. Moreover, alluding to the question such as “how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, [and] which type of discourse is authorized” and which is not (Foucault, *The History* 27). Kaus utilizes her different characters to clarify discourses as part and parcel of hierarchically-organized communities.

Toni screams and breaks down after peeking through Andreas’s keyhole and seeing him with the prostitute. When her mother finds her daughter, Toni does not share what she has witnessed. Instead, she attempts to have a conversation with her mother about her father. Toni wants to know whether her mother really loved her father and asks, “Hast du ihm verziehen, was er – in der Hochzeitsnacht – und später mit dir gemacht hat?”—“Toni, das geht zu weit! Über so etwas darf man nicht sprechen. Und am wenigsten mit dem eigenen Kind” (“Did you forgive him, for what he did with you on your wedding night - and later?”— “Toni, this is going too far! One must not talk about such a thing. And especially not with one’s own child”) (Kaus, *Toni* 59). The mother further elaborates that Toni’s father had the right to do as he pleased and, therefore, there was no need for forgiveness. This scene displays the result of things going unsaid. The mother’s speech reveals that all women suffer the same fate; independent of their social background, “in der Hochzeitsnacht und im Wochenbett sind alle gleiche arme Kreaturen” (“on their wedding night and during puerperium all are the same poor creatures”) (60). Once again Kaus presents the audience with an everyday experience and confronts them with the underlying power structures leaving it up to the spectators to draw their own conclusions or to take action.
Toni’s dissatisfying conversation with her mother and her observation of Andreas with a prostitute manifests itself in a dream sequence during the seventh scene. This scene foreshadows the following one in which Andreas attempts to seduce Toni. In the dream as well as in the seduction scene, Andreas harasses Toni and even kills her during the nightmare (68). In her dream, the two most traditional literary representations of women appear: the (primordial) mother and the whore. Kaus uses this paradigm of patriarchal ideology and presents it from Toni’s perspective. Toni’s dream expresses “female subjectivity” and “female anxiety” as a reaction to blurring of gender roles. It therefore represents a counter narrative to the widespread textual evidences of what McCormick refers to as the exemplification “of traditional male anxiety” (14) in Weimar culture.

Toni’s nightmare exemplifies the unease she feels about these two extreme constructs of “femininity.” Neither of them represents a possibility of identification to the young woman. The primordial mother carries features of both her own mother, who submissively gives in to “male” dominance, and Andreas’s former love interest, who is now pregnant with someone else’s child. The prostitute resembles a “female” version of Andreas, who is convinced that “‘Zwölf Männer, die man anbeißt und wegwirft, das ist nicht so viel Erniedrigung, wie einen anzubeten’” (“Taking a bite of and dumping twelve men is not as humiliating as worshipping one”) (Kaus, Toni 66). In this manner, the prostitute represents the counter narrative to romantic love and embodies the stereotype of a man-eating woman. Concurrently, the prostitute serves to demystify the role of men’s individuality and superiority, particularly in terms of their sexual performance: “‘Aber beim Kindermachen ist einer wie der andere’” (“But when it comes to making children, one is exactly like the other”) (66). She reverses what Toni’s mother said about women and applies it to men. In her dream, Toni is afraid to be noticed by the three, as she is confined to her bed wearing only a nightgown. When they finally do notice Toni, both women hold her down while Andreas threatens Toni with his spear. Kaus uses a
blunt phallic illustration of male prowess. Toni notices a wound on his forehead resembling Weininger’s. Andreas responds, “Verlass dich nicht darauf, dass ich tot bin. Das Prinzip ist unsterblich!” (“Do not count on me being dead. The principle is immortal!”) (68). Andreas then stabs Toni in her dream. It is the principal, the never-ending discourse on female inferiority that literally kills Toni.

Through a conversation with Michael, the only person she confides in, the audience learns that Andreas now seeks Toni nightly. Toni admits, “Er hat meine ganze Selbstachtung gestohlen!” (“He robbed me my entirely of my self-esteem!”) (95). As aforementioned, Michael considers Toni as an equal, as a sister (101). He is disturbed and infuriated by Andreas’s lack of respect and misogynist practices. Michael promises to free Toni from him (96). Kaus provides a sharp contrast between the two male characters and their perceptions of women.

Taking a Bullet

In the tenth and also last scene of the play Michael waits for Andreas to return home. He confronts him about his behavior toward Toni: “Sie quälen und demütigen ein wehrloses Geschöpf. Bloß um den Herren zu spielen, den ganz Überlegenen” (“You are tormenting and humiliating a defenseless creature just to play the man, the totally predominant one”) (103). Once more the idea of gender as performance resurfaces in Kaus’s play. Michael not only sees through Andreas’s masquerade, but is also determined to end it by ridding the world of Andreas (103). Andreas tries to defend his misogynist behavior, explaining that Toni is not yet aware of her power:


(Once she becomes aware of it, she will make extensive use of it. She is like a projectile that is still stuck in the barrel. Do you understand? A small, insignificant thing, but loaded with tremendous forces. I have my hand on the safety… What you call my superiority, my mastery, that is the safety. I will not allow her to become aware of her power. If I let go, the projectile is fired, and grace to those who get in its way) (105).

Andreas confesses to be captivated by Toni and is also fearful of her potential. His speech epitomizes “male anxiety” prevalent in Weimar culture. His exaggeration of her abilities illustrate the irrationality behind his seemingly composed and articulate façade: “Sie wird hundert Männer haben und niederzwingen, sie wird leuchtend durch die Welt ziehen und eine Blutspur hinter sich zurücklassen” (“She will force down a hundred men, she will go through the world shining brightly and leave a trail of blood behind her”) (105).

Even though Andreas is afraid of Toni, he does not want to let go of her either, not even when Michael threatens him with a revolver, trying to convince him to move out (107). It is in this scene that Toni literally takes a bullet for Andreas. She does this not out of love for him, but to prevent Michael from becoming a murderer (109). Toni, who had overheard the conversation between the two men, gains new insight into life and her potential, power, and possibilities: “[I]ch weiß jetzt viele Geheimnisse! Ich habe selbst einen Blick ins Leben getan. Der Mann – der gefährliche, große, unerreichbar überlegene Mann – ist mir kein Geheimnis mehr” (“Now I know many secrets! I have taken my very own view at life. The man—the dangerous, big, unreachable, superior man—is no longer a mystery to me”) (108). Toni no longer feels unhappy to be a girl, and she is convinced that no boy could ever feel stronger and more courageous than her (109). She is overjoyed to have Michael in her life even though she is uncertain as to how long she
will love him (110). She ecstatically exclaims, “Die Welt ist offen. Die Welt ist schön! Und von heut an bin ich die Erste in der Klasse!” (“The world is open. The world is beautiful! And from this day on, I will be the first in the class!”) (110). Toni finally feels equal and finally wants to work harder in school. This longing for education arises from her newly acquired idea of equality. She now knows that she has the option of breaking out of her previously assumed social and gender immobility.

**Happy Endings and Dominant Readings**

The end of the play is abrupt, which is characteristic of so many of Kaus’s later film scripts as well. In comparison to the rest of the play, the end is conciliatory and hopeful. One could interpret the sentimentalization at the end of Kaus’s progressive play and could turn it into a more consumable and less threatening text. Toni’s character transforms into something much less ambiguous. Kaus does not break with the audience’s anticipation of a comedy’s happy ending. Does the sentimentalized ending change the overall progressive and reformist ideals presented in the play and lessen its effect? McCormick belabors a similar question in regard to another text, Sternberg’s 1930 film *The Blue Angel*. His observation is helpful in regard to *Toni* as well. According to him, even a “dominant” reading—one determined by the perspectives that dominate a society—cannot not preclude other more emancipatory interpretations that might resist dominant meanings. But the existence of such subversive or resistant perspectives on a text cannot totally undo the power of what is socially “dominant” (McCormick, 125).

Kaus’s end still offers an emancipatory touch in that it seems to advertise a concept similar to that of the “companionship marriage.”

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11 For further insight into this concept see Jost Hernand and Frank Trommler’s *Die Kultur Der Weimarer Republik*. 
comradeship between man and woman as a new form of relationship provides a solution and happy ending for the “New Woman.” Kerstin Barndt’s reflections on the happy ending of Vicki Baum’s 1929 novel *Stud. Chem. Helene Willfüer* (119) is also insightful for Kaus’s conclusion of the schoolgirl comedy. Barndt cites Vicki Baum’s article “Angst for Kitsch,” in which Baum explains that comedies were obligated to present a happy ending, and even for plays that fall outside of the comedy genre a moderately happy ending was a condition. What ended badly was once and for all deemed to be a tragedy (Baum 105).

Even though marketed as a comedy, *Toni* offers a female protagonist’s perspective on the development of a potential “New Woman” and thus a rather unusual viewpoint within the literary and theatrical world concerned with the “New Woman” in Weimar culture. McCormick’s observations in regard to Irmgrad Keun’s novel *Das Kunstseidene Mädchen* (*The Artificial Silk Girl*), which was published five years after its predecessor *Toni*, displays interesting similarities in connection to Kaus’s comedy with the female protagonist. Both texts explore the modern reification of the female as well as women’s complicity in the phenomenon, critiquing the emptiness of the promises of both traditional as well as more modern, mass cultural conceptions of women’s identities … [granting the] main character an agency that is linked to her development of a critical perspective on the limitations of the choices offered within the class and gender hierarchy – at the same time it addresses a popular audience (especially its women readers) faced with similar problems and choices (McCormick 165).

Kaus’s play *Toni* can also be seen as a precursor to Keun’s novel *Gilgi, Eine Von Uns* because it provides the female protagonist with a voice. According to McCormick’s analysis of Keun’s 1931 novel *Gilgi*, the text shows the perspective of “the ‘new’ type of
woman constructed so often in the culture, giving that woman agency, wit, desire, skepticism,” whilst simultaneously providing the female protagonist with the “capacity to expose, to understand and even to revise in some ways the limitations … [of] dominant social discourses [which] shaped her” (McCormick 145).
Gina Kaus’s novel *Die Überfahrt* was published by the German publishing house Knorr & Hirth in 1932. It was Kaus’s second novel and appeared a year after *Die Verliebten*. *Die Überfahrt* was translated into English by O. F. Theis, and it was published by the London publishing house Cassell & Co and appeared the same year as the German original. Within less than a year of its publication, in 1933, *Die Überfahrt* was made into a Hollywood drama by Paramount. It was entitled *Luxury Liner*. The movie was directed by Lothar Mendes and produced by Benjamin P. Schulberg. The quick translation into English and the adaptation of her novel for Hollywood indicates Kaus’s astonishing sense of Zeitgeist and her intuition for a potential market.

Most of *Die Überfahrt* takes place on the luxury liner Columbia at the end of 1924. The main narrative is linked to a variety of subplots triggered by the socially heterogeneous group on board the ship. The group has one common goal: They all wish to immigrate to America. The motivations for their journeys as well as their biographies are highly diverse. Throughout the novel the reader mostly follows the character of Tomas Wolmut, a doctor who at the beginning of the narrative is working in the small Bavarian spa town of Bad Kissingen. Tomas adores his wife Sybil and makes her the center of his life. After receiving a farewell letter from Sybil informing him that she wants a divorce to be free to travel the world with her new love, Ralph Shortwell, Tomas

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12 All translations of titles are by the author.

13 A negative review of the film version was published in the *New York Times* the day *Luxury Liner* premiered, February 3, 1933. According to Mordaunt Hall, “Mendes was evidently not inspired by the script furnished him.” Hall’s summary of the film reveals that it differs significantly from Kaus’s novel. The character of Milli ends up with an elevator boy instead of the ship owner Stephenson, who is called Stevanson in the movie and appears to be a cross between Kaus’s characters Stephenson and Shortwell. A character named Thorndyke, who does not exist in the novel, is shot, and Stevanson is also killed during the course of the film.
is devastated. He endures every imaginable emotion a breakup entails ranging from shock, disbelief, denial, disappointment and anger to acceptance. His acceptance of his new situation develops over the course of the novel and only comes to fruition through his interaction with the other characters on board. During his initial rage, Tomas decides to confront his wife. The prospect of such an encounter seems to change with every passing minute and spans from wanting his wife back to the idea of killing her lover. When Tomas discovers that Sybil and Shortwell are on the Columbia headed to America, he spontaneously decides to leave his small town practice behind to follow them. Through a succession of coincidences, Tomas is able to obtain the necessary visa documents and switch duties with a former friend from college who holds the position as the ship doctor on board of the Columbia. Tomas’s encounters with the other characters as well as their individual ideas and dreams comprise the major part of Kaus’s novel. The novel is very timely in that it provides an understanding of the political, financial and social circumstances of 1920s Weimar culture. It spans only five days in her characters’ lives and also leaves them after the Überfahrt with the hope of beginning a new life.

Labeled as Unterhaltungsautorin—A Blessing in Disguise?

In her autobiography Von Wien nach Hollywood, Kaus remembers the writing experience of Die Überfahrt as particularly challenging:

Es war keine leichte Arbeit und sie kostete mich beinahe ein Jahr. Die Handlungen, die Erlebnisse, die Entwicklungen von beinahe dreißig Personen waren so kompliziert, daß ich mir eine Liste machen mußte, einen genauen Plan, was jeder an jedem der fünf Tage erlebt, mit wem er zusammentrifft und wo.

(It was not an easy job and it cost me almost a year. The actions, the experiences and the development of nearly thirty people were so complicated that I had to make myself a list, a detailed plan covering what everyone experienced on each of the five days, with whom they met, and where) (146).
Kaus not only thoroughly planned her novel but also had a precise idea as to the niche in which she wished to see it published. This was a reaction to the disappointment Kaus experienced with regard to her 1928 novel *Die Verliebten*, as the publisher Ullstein positioned *Die Verliebten* in the category of trivial or entertainment literature. This frustrated Kaus immensely since she had planned it for a “literarisch gebildete Leserschaft” (“a literarily sophisticated audience”) (Kaus, *Von Wien* 145). The novel was a commercial success but did not receive the critical response Kaus had longed for (145). Kaus had hoped it would appear with Propyläen Verlag, Ullstein’s imprint for more sophisticated works, and thus reach a readership accustomed to the works by eminent writers such as Bertolt Brecht, Lion Feuchtwanger, and Heinrich Mann (Soares 334). Appearing in the “light entertainment” imprint consequently denied Kaus a place among the writers of “high-brow” literary works. As Stefanie von Steinaecker points out in her dissertation “A Little Lower than the Angels”– *Vicki Baum und Gina Kaus*: “Gina Kaus fühlte sich missverstanden und plante mit Überfahrt eine Revanche am Literaturbetrieb, indem sie vorübergehend in die Rolle der ‘Unterhaltungssautorin’ schlüpfte” (“Gina Kaus felt misunderstood and was planning to exact revenge on the literary publishing apparatus with Überfahrt by temporarily slipping into the role of ‘entertainment writer’”) (Steinaecker 260).

Even though Kaus claims that she only planned to explore this genre temporarily, she was never able to rid herself of the reputation and image as an “Unterhaltungssautorin”. This particular stance and reflection of the Weimar entertainment industry and her unhappiness about her involuntary place in it differs tremendously from Kaus’s perception of her own work as a script writer throughout her time in the Hollywood exile. Whereas she wishes to be part of the literary and predominantly male intellectual circles and produce “high” and avant-garde literature during her early career in Europe, she later accuses most of these same literati of having been too snobbish and having a hidden contempt for film work in the United States.
(Kaus, Von Wien 207). This resembles Kaus’s reccuring narrative of her ability to quickly adapt to any situation she encountered, which is explored in Chapter V on the émigrée’s autobiography.

Although Kaus claims to have become cynical of her “misplacement” in Unterhaltungsliteratur (Kaus, Von Wien 145), it is important to emphasize that it was a very lucrative source of income and also enabled her to reach a much larger audience. This was something that Kaus enjoyed very much in connection with her play Toni: “Es war ein ganz grosser Moment… Mittelpunkt zu sein, innigen Kontakt mit Hunderten von – wenn auch anonymen Menschen zu haben, von ihnen bejubelt zu werden” (“It was a very big moment ... being the center, being in close contact with hundreds of—albeit anonymous—people, to be hailed by them”) (141). Receiving recognition and becoming known was imperative to Kaus (143). Participating in the Unterhaltungskultur and entertainment industry meant a possibility for Kaus to recreate this notion of being the center of attention for hundreds of readers. Kaus’s idea coincides with many other left-liberal artists sympathizing with the social agendas and causes of the far left. Such artists, according to Matijevich, “agreed with the expressionists that art had to be more accessible to a broad segment of society but wanted to dissociate themselves from both avant-garde flamboyance and the elitist ‘bourgeois’ art forms still predominant in Weimar culture” (5).

The marketing of Kaus’s work as Trivialliteratur or Unterhaltungsliteratur must also be seen in the context of the Bücherkrise. This book crisis was marked by the collapse of the reading culture, as it was known at the time, and the simultaneous restructuring of the literary market during the 1920s. In her book Sentiment und Sachlichkeit, Kerstin Barndt explains that the book crisis was on the one hand accounted for by the rise of new media and entertainment forms and on the other by the shift in the ratios of high and popular culture as well as its industrialization (21). The newly arising market forces initiated a leveling process with regard to what was perceived and
advertised to be “higher” versus “trivial” literature. Kaus was not alone in her discontent and bewilderment concerning the new conditions and circumstances for literature in the 1920s. As Beutin et al. point out in their investigation of this period,

[a]uthors became increasingly dependent on the alien and unfathomable machinery of production and distribution which was organised according to market forces and saw art strictly in terms of its own commercial interests. Even those writers who liked to see their literary creation as an act of ‘pure’ artistic creation, and themselves as ‘autonomous creators of eternal cultural values’, were now no longer able to evade this view of literature as a commodity (374).

Even though Kaus bemoans being misunderstood and miscategorized, she produced a form of literature and literary aesthetic compliant with the style of the Neue Sachlichkeit, New Objectivity, which had its finger on the pulse of time.

According to Heather Valencia, “the concept of art as the province of the privileged was being challenged by social and technological developments” (229). Lower costs and new printing methods created an increase of books, newspapers and magazines. This was a development which went hand in hand with a fast-developing mass readership (Valencia, 229). In addition, the gradual liberalization of labor laws, which led to the limitation of the workday to eight hour in 1919, generated more time that could be spent reading (King 22). Middle-class women, who much “resembled the readers or the lower
economic classes in that they were not allowed a level of education that would prepare them for intellectually demanding literature… became consumers of popular culture” (King 22). Those readers were longing for materials speaking to their concerns. Kaus thus positioned herself well in the changing literary market.

**Novel of the Times**

The plot of the novel *Die Überfahrt* is far more complex than Kaus attests to in her autobiography:

Ich wollte ein Schiff schildern, dessen drei Klassen die drei Klassen der Gesellschaft darstellten, die Erste Klasse die der Reichen, die Zweite die der Mittelbürger und die Dritte das Proletariat. Leider gab es kein Zwischendeck mehr, das immer gleich proletarisch wirkt, während die Dritte Klasse der Luxusdampfer meist kleinbürgerliches Publikum befördert…Ich fand … Dutzende von Handlungen, die alle auf der Überfahrt von Bremerhaven nach New York spielten, und die Hauptfigur sollte ein Schiffsarzt sein, den seine Tätigkeit selbstverständlich in alle Klassen bringt.

(I wanted to describe a ship and its three classes which were supposed to represent the three classes of society; the first class was that of the rich, the second was to present the average citizen and the third that of the proletariat. Unfortunately, there was no inbetween-deck, which usually appears proletarian, while the third class of the luxury liner usually transports the petit-bourgeois public... I found … dozens of plots, all taking place on the voyage from Bremerhaven to New York, and the main character should be a ship’s doctor whose work naturally encounters all classes) (Kaus, *Von Wien* 145-146).

The novelist’s summary does not provide any insight into the main themes of the novel but rather focuses on the idea of uniting three different social classes in one space: The lack of content in her recollection of the novel plays down both the novel’s potential as a contribution to the Weimar literary scene and its underlying political criticism. Kaus’s novel possesses the potential to be read as a rather accessible version of the *Zeitroman* (novel of the times), a literary genre which focuses on contemporary issues in connection
with political, economic, religious, social and cultural affairs (Schweikle and Schweikle 508).

Kaus’s *Die Überfahrt*, like so many other and more prominent authors’ versions of the *Zeitroman* such as Thomas Mann’s *Der Zauberberg*, Erich Maria Remarque’s *Im Westen nichts Neues*, Erich Kästner’s *Fabian: Die Geschichte eines Moralisten* and Hans Fallada’s *Kleiner Mann – was nun?* uses contemporary issues to persuade a wide readership of the need to criticize and reform society. According to Matijevich, the “reliance on actual current events to construct a framework for their books” (Matijevich, 12) differentiates the authors of the *Zeitroman* from conventional novelists. Kaus does not overtly engage in a sharp social and political criticism but rather uses a narrative strategy that allows her to leave it up to the reader to criticize and develop a desire to change the existing political and socio-economic situation. Furthermore, Kaus’s motivation to reach a large audience complies with the genre’s “attempt to reach beyond the usual small audience for belle-lettres to influence a much broader public and thereby effect social and political change” (Matijevich 10). Kaus can be included among those novelists who, according to Matijevich, realized that confronting their readership with a “polemic barrage” (174) could be counterproductive in achieving their goals. Kaus’s choice to fictionalize the accounts made a potential and inherent didacticism less obvious. The variety of narratives and backgrounds of the characters on board the Columbia provide her readers a certain relief and a possible escape from the unpleasant reality surrounding them in their everyday life. Her fictionalization techniques and narrative

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14 The term *Zeitroman* was first used by Clemens Brentano in the early 19th century. The *Zeitroman* is a form of the *Gesellschaftsroman* (society novel), a type of novel portraying part or all of a society. However, the *Zeitroman* goes beyond the sole description of society and its class structures. By describing people and society and also the economy of a particular time period, it portrays the era itself and captures its *Zeitgeist* (Durrani et al. 210).
style, therefore, make her writing more appealing to a readership that would otherwise have recoiled from a more overtly politically motivated literature.

Within the first few pages of Die Überfahrt, Kaus manages to incorporate topics and themes that concerned and interested the masses. The young up-and-coming novelist creates a narrative aesthetic that was adequate and appropriate to compete in the book crisis, a narrative style that documented and fictionalized at the same time (Vollmer 95). According to Vollmer, this crisis also had a liberating effect, as it blurred the boundaries of what was perceived as “high” and “low” brow literature. It allowed for a new style, a new genre and finally new approach to literature: “Die tausendgestaltige Zeit ließ hier große Freiheiten zu, sie hob veraltete Grenzen auf. Das disparate Leben war voller Geschichten, romanhafte Stoffe lagen ,auf der Straße’ und ,in der Luft’” (“The multi-faceted era allowed for great freedom, it loosened outdated boundaries. The disparate life was full of stories; novel-like substances were ‘on the road’ and ‘in the air’”) (Vollmer 95). In Kaus’s case, they were to be found “on a ship,” a luxury liner. Terms that captured, symbolized and also defined the spirit of the 1920s, often referred to as the Golden Twenties, nonetheless a crisis-ridden time, were, according to Hartmut Vollmer:


(The increasing objectification of life, depersonalization, mechanization, scientification, bureaucratization, political control, social and economic functionalization of the human being, existential disorientation, loneliness, alienation, resurgent materialism, massification) (95).

Each of these terms and notions are prevalent in Kaus’s Die Überfahrt. Her choice of a confined space, a space that nobody can leave for a certain time not only lets Kaus create a profile of a variety of classes and individual backgrounds but also forces her characters to clash, interact and intermingle. Kaus creates a microcosm of Weimar society through
the characters aboard the Columbia and uses every passenger as a representative of the various discourses, presenting them as both victims and perpetrators of the political and social tensions of the 1920s. In the narrated time, which encompasses only five days, the reader encounters over thirty characters, all from different social backgrounds. This aids Kaus in her representation of Weimar culture in its class, gender and age differentiation. The characters that the readership learns the most about are Tomas, Stephenson, Friederike, Boris and Milli. Tomas Wolmut is the ship doctor who goes on board to confront his estranged wife Sybil about having left him. The mogul Stephenson owns the luxury liner on which the characters travel to the United States. Baroness Friederike Mergentheim is an impoverished aristocrat who hopes to seduce the tycoon Stephenson with the intention that he will provide for her life in America. Baroness Mergentheim hopes that Stephenson will serve as a springboard for further male connections to the upper echelons of society. Friederike’s brother Boris von Mergentheim, who is a World War I veteran and morphine addict, is also onboard. He travels third class, whereas his sister is in the first class. Friederike paid for her brother’s ticket but does not want him to interfere with her plan to prostitute herself to Stephenson and make connections to other potential customers. Suffering from severe withdrawal symptoms and post-war trauma, Boris eventually commits suicide. Milli, another third class passenger, is a young working-class girl who is traveling with her mother and her siblings. She becomes the new love interest of Stephenson during their passage to America. Kaus offers an insight into the modern condition—from a variety of standpoints. This unique presentation of characters and their agency is possible only through Kaus’s unique use of an omniscient narrator.
A Weimar Microcosm

Die Überfahrt, much like Kaus’s play Toni, presents the reader with a fictionalized version of 1920s Weimar society. It functions similarly to a seismograph: The novel records a short historical moment and tracks its specific developments and discourses. Kaus’s novel does not portray the immediate early 1930s presence of its publication but rather takes place during October 1924; it is thus set before the economic crash of 1929. The exact time frame can easily be determined by the first trans-Atlantic Zeppelin flight that her characters witness from their luxury liner. The readership of Die Überfahrt was presented with very individualized characters. Their individual and vastly differing backgrounds as well as their past experiences lead them to very diverse understandings of the time and their specific situation. One of the main concepts and underlying didactic concepts of Die Überfahrt is that every action and decision made by an individual will affect the decision making progress of other individuals and hence influence society as a whole. Regardless of age, gender and class, the pedagogical imperative derived from such an understanding establishes a more perceptive, prescient and philanthropic behavior between human beings. Less than a year after the novel was published, this didactic approach was destroyed by the National Socialists.

Examples of this “domino effect,” especially with regard to the economic irresponsibility that led to the 1929 stock market crash, is evident in almost all characters portrayed in the novel: Sybil’s decision to leave her husband not only affects Tomas but also a majority of his decisions thereafter. When the travelers, including all social backgrounds, genders and ages, become aware of the rumor that the magnate and ship owner Stephanson is about to purchase the German Maritime-A.G., a tremendous dynamic develops on the Columbia. Everyone is affected by Stephanson’s decision: each character ranging from the first to the third class is struck by a downright stock exchange fever. Due to the rejection of his love interest, Baroness Friederike von Mergentheim, Stephenson decides against the purchase. The stock prices fall dramatically and
consequently affect the poorest of the speculators. Many are verging on bankruptcy and their hopes, dreams and plans connected to their arrival and future in America are crushed. Prior to her departure, the impoverished Baroness Friederike Mergentheim made a financial agreement with a councilor of commerce named Gulecke to gain passage on the Columbia. Once on board, she wants to seduce the tycoon Stephenson and thus prostitutes herself. By doing so, the young Baroness hopes to be able to provide for her brother Boris von Mergentheim. He is a character who even kills himself as a consequence of having experienced and becoming a victim of a variety of extrinsically motivated decisions. Boris, a World War I veteran and morphine addict, suffers from severe withdrawal symptoms and is ridden by recurring images of his near-death experiences in the World War I trenches. After overhearing part of a conversation between his sister Friederike and Wladimir, Boris becomes distraught and aware of what his sister is willing to endure for him and decides to take his life with an overdose of morphine. Friederike later leaves the ship with the man she has “really” fallen for, the poor musician and fellow aristocrat Wladimir Glebhoff, and gives up on prostituting herself.

Kaus creates a fictionalized mini-simulation of the stock market crashes in her novel. As *Die Überfahrt* is situated during 1924, it foreshadows the economic crashes of the late 1920s and thus also speaks to the concerns of her early 1930s readership. Her novel mirrored the strong pluralism and polarity in German and Austrian society and integrates common Weimar themes into her narrative. The preexisting economic climate and constant fear of financial instability is portrayed via the unpredictability of a few people in power owning tremendous amounts of financial assets. The increasing globalization and interconnectedness of Europe and America is depicted by the locations integrated into the novel. Kaus connects small town Bad Kissingen to Bremerhaven, to New York and finally to an unknown place in the West of America where Tomas hopes to start his life and career over again. The fast-paced nature of the approaching mid1920s
in terms of technology is also captured by the means of transportation, the luxury liner. By having her characters witness a Zeppelin, which flies over the Columbia, Kaus not only manages to coincide her narration with an actual event, namely the first trans-Atlantic Zeppelin flight, but also indicates that another “Wunder moderner Technik” (“a miracle of modern technology”) (Kaus, Die Überfahrt 235) is emerging and most likely going to replace the ships travelers are currently using.

Kaus utilizes an omniscient narrator through which she depicts the loneliness of various characters despite them being part of a culture that now has access to a more interconnected communication on a transnational extent. The characters caught in these feelings of solitude are Tomas, Stephanson, Boris, Luise, an aging singer and Tomas’s former love interest, and Milli. The narrator’s comparison of Tomas and a radio, a new form of communication and source of information on board, exposes Tomas as having no “antenna” that would be willing to receive any message or input from the outside world. The radio with which Tomas is contrasted appears more alive than he does (160). Stephanson experiences a deep crisis after putting all his hopes and also costly presets in his new love interest Friederike, who then leaves him for the poor musician Wladimir. Luise, on the other hand, feels abandoned by Wladimir, whom she had hoped to make her new lover and musical companion in the New World. She feels too old to compete with the beauty of other women, like that of the young Friederike. Boris’s feeling of isolation is threefold. He is an aristocrat in a time after the abolishment of aristocracy and thus part of a group that used to be influential and powerful. The change of the political situation and the replacement of aristocrats by the bourgeoisie make him a relic of an outdated empire. His participation in World War I traumatized him and pushed him to his morphine addiction. He is a burden to his sister, who feels responsible for him. Wladimir is the only other character the reader encounters who is a World War I veteran. Even though Boris is German and Wladimir is Russian, they have more in common than the other characters because they fought against each other as soldiers as their respective
sides of the trenches. This commonality is due to the idea that
“Kastenzusammengehörigkeit … tiefer [greift] als alle Vorurteile des Verstandes” (“caste
solidarity reaches much deeper than all the prejudices of the mind”) (156). This phrase is
part of the discourse and tone the narrator takes on when describing the interaction of the
two men. Another and very different attitude is voiced by a man who travels third class,
who sarcastically comments that if the doctor had any intentions of healing Boris he
would either have to give him “das alte deutsche Kaiserreich … – oder seine Spritze”
(“the old German empire or his syringe”) (169). This is not the only instance in which the
reader confronts a variety of opposing opinions and perceptions. The frequent use of this
type of narrative form is a major technique in Die Überfahrt. Nonetheless, Kaus’s novel
leaves political and moral issues unresolved, as she chooses to make use of a non-
authoritative narrator.

Attempts to Engage the Reader

The omniscient narrator in Die Überfahrt gives insight into the emotional lives of
the individual characters, their past, present and hopes for the future. This narrative
technique allows Kaus to not only position her characters in their specific development
but also their place in society at large as she simultaneously provides the reader with the
political situation of the republic. The omniscient narrator is not only all-knowing and all-
seeing with regard to Tomas, but also for each and every character that Tomas
encounters. Making all characters’ ideas and thoughts transparent, especially in terms of
their past experiences, has an interesting effect on the reader. Since there is a lack of an
authoritative and assertive narrator, readers are left to pass their own judgments on the
characters. The descriptions of the characters are either completely exaggerated,
explicitly biased and prejudiced or are so extremely plain that even their severity is
desensitized in its description. Tomas represents an example of such exaggerated and
opinionated thoughts when he judges Friederike von Mergentheim upon observing her interact with Stephanson. The narrator informs the reader that “Er empfand einen gewissen kleinbürgerlichen Ärger darüber, einen richtigen kleinbürgerlichen provinziellen Ärger über die Käuflichkeit dieses königlich schönen Geschöpfes“ (“He felt a certain petit-bourgeois irritation, a real middle-class provincial irritation about the venality of this beautiful royal creature”) (168-67) and then even continues with an increasingly misogynist comment stating that “Wenn eine stirbt ohne sich jemals verkauft zu haben – so hat sie entweder niemals Geld gebraucht, oder sie hat keinen Käufer gefunden“ (“If a woman dies without ever having sold herself, she was either never in need of money or she did not find a buyer”) (168, 169). At this point Tomas has no insight into why Friederike is trying to prostitute herself. He is also inclined to draw parallels between Friederike and his wife. His opinion changes much later in the novel both concerning the Baroness and his wife. Tomas overcomes his hatred and blind transference of the same attitude onto other women he encounters. His perception of Friederike and her “Käuflichkeit” (“venality”) represents the self-proclaimed superior petty-bourgeois stance on prostitution. The description of Milli’s backgrounds and upbringing is marked by a rather sober tone. It functions as an “insider’s” experience and shows Milli’s early realization that her only way of advancing in society is through prostitution disguised as “love”:

Milli hatte keine Angst vor Männern, schon als Kind hatte sie sich von fremden Männern in die Konditorei führen lassen, sie hatte ihre Unschuld verloren, ehe sie vierzehn Jahre alt gewesen war, niemals hatte sie verstanden, daß es die Männer waren, die sie missbrauchten. Sie war vollkommen unempfindlich gegen moralische Lehren, von welcher Seite immer solche auf sie eingedrungen. In ihrem Kopf stand ehrlich, als wäre es ihr angeboren und durch keine Worte zu erschüttern, der Grundsatz: daß man Geld haben muß, um glücklich zu sein, und daß eine Frau, um Geld zu bekommen, nichts anders tun könne, als immer wieder Frau zu sein.

(Milli was not afraid of men. Even when she was still a child she allowed male strangers to take her into the pastry
shop, she had lost her virginity before she was fourteen years old; she had never understood that it was the men who abused her. She was completely insensitive to moral teachings, from whatever side they came. As if inscribed as brazen letters in her head the principle: that one must have money to be happy, and that a woman, in order to get money, could do nothing else, but be a woman again and again) (139)

Though the content of Milli’s background and thoughts might be shocking to the reader, they are enumerated and listed in a fashion similar to an inventory.

This description reveals her limitations in her social upbringing and her determination and conscious decision to use her body for material gain. Milli’s obsession with money and commodities is representative of the discourse connected to the “New Woman” but also alludes to the emerging phenomenon and increase of casual prostitution among working-class women during the Weimar period. When Milli sees Friederike, who seems to spur every male’s fantasy on the Columbia, she immediately starts imitating her every move (169). Milli admires Friederike not only for her looks but especially for the abundance of possibilities Friederike appears to have in comparison to Millie. Friederike’s social status gains her easy admittance to almost any place, especially first-class spaces. Entrance to such areas as “elegant bars, dance halls, and restaurants” (Roos 86) were reserved for cocottes but inaccessible to low-class females like Milli.

Milli longs to become what Friederike exemplifies: “Da war eine Dame, die sah aus wie die Erfüllung aller ihrer Träume” (“There was a lady who looked like the fulfillment of all of her dreams” (Kaus, Die Überfahrt 169). Milli perceives Friederike as a lady and is, as the reader learns, “unempfindlich gegen moralische Lehren, von welcher Seite immer solche auf sie eingedrungen” (“insensitive to moral teachings, from whatever side”) (139). Milli has her very own ideas and perception of what it means to be a lady. She also does not approach prostitution as immoral. Her low-class background and young age place her outside the realm of authority of the dominant discourse to begin with; she is thus able to develop her very own understanding of prostitution. As a destitute young
woman with almost no potential for upward social mobility, Milli views sex as the only exchangeable commodity she can rely on for acquiring what she desires. Throughout the trip Milli consciously uses her body for her own financial gain.

In her article “Working Girls: White-Collar Workers and Prostitutes in Late Weimar,” Jill Susanne Smith finds similar portrayals of female characters in Vicki Baum’s 1929 Menschen im Hotel and Irmgard Keun’s 1932 novel Das kunstseidene Mädchen. Smith explores the authors’ use of the figure of the prostitute and offers a close reading of the characters Flämmchen and Doris. These bear an incredible resemblance to Kaus’s Milli and Friederike. Smith wishes to avoid the “simple trope for gendered exploitation” (Smith, “Working Girls” 452) when it comes to the authors’ portrayal of prostitution and instead views their novels as providing a “discursive space in which diverse possibilities for women’s financial and sexual autonomy are imagined and explored” (452). Smith comes to the conclusion that Baum’s and Keun’s novels do not go so far as to portray Flämmchen and Doris “as self-designated sex workers” (465), but nonetheless they “explore self-conscious commodification, pose alternative models of morality, examine possibilities for the autonomous expression of female desire, and provide a space in which prostitution can be defined as work” (465).

Smith’s observation also holds true in connection with Die Überfahrt. On the one hand, Milli and Friederike reveal that as commodities women are subject to rules of economics which men control. On the other, Kaus particularly portrays Milli as extremely self-conscious and exerting agency in her decision to prostitute herself for financial gain. Kaus’s novel does not encourage her readers to view Milli as a victim but rather presents her as very calculating and pro-active young woman, who is eager to overcome her social limitations and intentionally uses prostitution as a means to gain financial and sexual autonomy.

Milli’s agency becomes even more apparent at a moment in which she becomes the interest of two men: While the two are fighting about her possible future and business
potential, namely her capital as commodity, Milli is sitting in between the two men “als ginge sie dieses Gespräch gar nichts an” (“as if the conversation was none of her business”) (Kaus, Die Überfahrt 215). The phrase “as if” already indicates that Milli is more than a merely powerless exchange object. She cannot simply be read as being condemned to a passive role. The conversation between the two men does not matter to her, as she has indeed already decided with whom she will continue to work. Milli maneuvers herself into this position. After one of the two men, Wolzogen, proves to be an unreliable client, Milli quickly moves on to the next man. She frankly tells Wolzogen that he did not hold what he initially promised: “Und das rosa Schiffonkleid, daß du mir vorgestern versprochen hast, darauf warte ich heute noch” (“And the pink chiffon dress that you promised me the day before yesterday, I’m still waiting for that today”) (216). As Wolzogen is no longer able to pay for Milli’s services and does not live up to his promises, she perceives their “contract” as obsolete.

Kaus gives the reader an insight into the power structures lurking beneath the surface of her fictionalized presentation of the world. She also confronts her readers with the oftentimes invisible hierarchal complexities and societal double standards. Nonetheless, these interactions between characters are inspired by the realities of the 1920s—a world the readers of the times, and especially the female readers, are all too familiar with. Very much like the protagonist in Kaus’s play Toni, Milli and also Friederike are given the chance to revolt against or actively expose the limitations of the patriarchal society and social discourses surrounding them.

Die Überfahrt equips all of its characters with a voice and their own ideas, which are communicated through the omniscient narrator, a narrator who is non-authorial and refrains from moralist intrusions. Since there is no hierarchal discursive organization in Kaus’s novel, no superiority is given to a commentating discourse. There is no
There is no indication that Kaus wished to manipulate her readership.\textsuperscript{15} Kaus’s use of an omniscient narrator is thus clearly different from Vicki Baum’s, as Steinaecker has analysed in detail. As previously mentioned, presenting more than just the dominant discourse or master narrative allows for providing the sense of a multitude of voices, a multivoicedness. Instead of only gaining insight into one particular character, the reader discovers a diversity of thoughts and ideas. This strategy is similar to the one Kaus uses in her autobiographical writing. Her approach produces the effect of heteroglossia, as described by Bakhtin. It allows Kaus to present “a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships” (Bakhtin 263). Kaus uses her novel to address issues of various inequalities present not only during the 1920s, the time in which the novel is situated, but also in the 1930s, as they are a spatiotemporal continuation of that decade with very similar problems. Through using a multitude of characters and presenting their past, present ideas, attitudes and biographies, including not only their present but also their past and future, Kaus simply reduces the role of her narrator to an impartial observer. The evaluation of the variety in discourses and perspectives represented by the various characters is left to the reader. Kaus, unlike Baum, deprives the reader of any kind of guidance and refrains from offering a meta-

\textsuperscript{15} Heather Valencia observes quite the opposite in regard to the Vicki Baum’s novel \textit{Menschen im Hotel}, which was published three years prior to Kaus’s \textit{Die Überfahrt}. She argues that Baum showed a clear tendency to “too obviously guide […] the reader by her authorial comment” (246). This contradicts the assertion von Steinaecker makes: “Gina Kaus’ Roman Die Überfahrt war hingegen bewusst nach dem Vorbild von Baums Roman als ‘Unterhaltungs­literatur’ konzipiert worden” (“Gina Kaus’s novel was deliberately designed after the model of Baum’s novel as ‘trivial literature’”) (260). For that to be true, Kaus would have needed to include a crucial feature identifying it as such, namely “telling readers what to think rather than challenging them to think for themselves” (King 163).

\textsuperscript{16} A commentating discourse and a manipulation of the reader to adopt a particular attitude are features of what MacCabe refers to as the “classic realist text,” thoroughly discussed in Murphey’s \textit{Theorizing the Avant-Garde: Modernism, Expressionism, and the Problem of Postmodernity} (Murphey 230-243).
discourse. In this context, it is further important to notice that even though Kaus might have been dissatisfied with her placement in the trivial section of the literary market, it possibly triggers a more complex kind of revenge than Steinaecker indicates in her dissertation. As Kaus’s narrative strategy does not comply with the typical features associated with trivial literature, she might have aimed at a “subtle” subversion of the genre and her readers’ expectations. This again aligns with the approach Kaus employs as a Hollywood script writer. In her work for the literary as well as for the movie market, Kaus showed a tendency to speak to a large number of recipients. The spectrum ranged from those who wished to simply consume to those who felt compelled to reflect more deeply upon the unresolved issues and contradictions presented to them by the novelist, playwright and script writer.

The Liminality of the Ocean Liner

Kaus’s microcosm of 1920s German and Austrian culture is located on a ship that, as von Steinaecker stresses, is constantly moving but impossible for its passengers to leave until it reaches the New World (von Steinaecker 277). Whereas von Steinaecker argues that the Columbia is a place symbolizing the characters’ and in particular Tomas’s “Gefangensein […] in Illusionen” (“being caught in illusions”) (276), I suggest that the ship has a much broader dimension of being trapped at sea. When reading *Die Überfahrt* as a Zeitroman and thus as a means of political and social analyses, it embraces more profound implications. The fictionalization of the time period is still rooted in the actual time dimension of the reader’s present. The publication of the novel and its debut on the literary market occurred less than a year before the National Socialists came to power and after which Kaus’s books were publicly burned. The so-called *Goldenen Zwanziger Jahre*, the Golden Twenties, is the time depicted in her novel: An era which had passed
by 1932, a time during which more than six million Germans had lost their jobs due to the Great Depression starting in 1929.

Kaus chooses to set her novel on an ocean liner, a ship. In Die Überfahrt, she creates a spatial dimension of liminal quality.17 These spaces can be specific places such as larger zones or areas or entire countries and even larger regions (Thomassen 16). With regard to people, the distinct feature of liminality relies on being in an intermediate state. Society as a whole is constantly developing in an in-between phase, in composition, and forever changing. The choice of this setting for her Zeitroman coincides well with the aspiration to bring about change in the period Kaus was writing in, a period defined by extreme economic, political and social turmoil. The liminal space of the ship emphasizes that the passengers have left their familiar setting behind. The fact that Kaus creates such an opportunity for her characters, a “liminal phase” (Turner, “Dewey” 41) to use Turners term, reflects the longing for a new and fresh beginning, a highly anticipated moment loaded with a variety of possibilities and prospective outcomes, a culture in a “subjunctive mood” (41), as Turner calls it:

[A] mood of maybe, might-be, as-if, hypothesis, fantasy, conjecture, desire – depending on which of the trinity of cognition, affect, and conation is situationally dominant...
Liminality can perhaps be described as a fructile chaos, a fertile nothingness, a storehouse of possibilities, not a random assemblage but a striving after new forms and structures, a gestation process, a fotation of modes appropriate to and anticipating postliminal existence (Turner, “Dewey” 41–42)

Kaus’s characters are indeed in such a subjunctive mood. None of them know what the future on the new continent holds. All of them desire change, which manifests itself

17 The anthropologist Victor Turner borrowed and expanded upon Arnold van Gennep’s analysis of the concept in his work Rites de Passage. Turner linked social change to a ritual process; arguing that individuals are transformed from one status to another by being removed from society to a “liminal space”.
differently for each, as being reunited with relatives already in America, a new relationship, a new career, improved living conditions and social mobility, revenge and an escape from a former existence. Even though the conditions of a “fructile chaos” appear in *Die Überfahrt* and most characters anticipate a postliminal existence, the narration does not allude to a change in their overall behavior. The space the characters enter, the ship, primarily situates them in a location where they are “betwixt and between successive lodgments in jural political systems” (Turner, *Dramas* 13). Nonetheless, the ship is not simply a ship; it is a liner with three different classes perpetuating the socio-cultural environment of the 1920s. Kaus’s novel becomes the literary realization of Turner’s idea that an interim space provides those in it with a chance to stand aside not only from their “own social position but from all positions and of formulating a potentially unlimited series of alternative social arrangements” (Turner, *Dramas* 14). *Die Überfahrt* shows actual development and conceivable change in the characters: Tomas, Friederike, Boris and Milli. This change of their own position and state is not necessarily obvious to the characters themselves. Tomas, for example, views himself shortly before his arrival in the New York Harbor as follows:

Er ist der lächerlichste Mensch an Bord – er hat auf der Reise sein Ziel verloren! Er ist schiffbrüchig geworden, obwohl die ‘Columbia’ so stolz und sicher in den Hafen läuft, er, er allein “treibt auf dem Ozean”, ohne Steuer, ohne Licht, ohne zu wissen wohin.

(He is the most ridiculous person on board – he has lost sight of his destination during the trip! He is shipwrecked even though the Columbia enters the harbor so proudly and safely. He alone “is floating on the ocean,” without control, without light, without knowing where to go) (Kaus, *Die Überfahrt* 296).

Tomas, the one character who moves freely between the different classes and makes contact with everyone regardless of age, gender and social status, has the most misguided and distorted perception of himself and of the other characters’ mental states as well.
Whereas the reader constantly gains insight into the other characters’ lives, hopes, and dreams, Tomas slowly and selectively chooses to consider them. Consumed by his unexpected separation from his wife and her ongoing rejection of him, he is blind to his own transformation and rite of passage. Tomas makes various rather aggressive attempts to talk to and confront his wife, but she refuses to make contact and hides in her cabin for most of the voyage. The reader, however, is able to closely follow Tomas’s development. Most characters on board are presented as having their very own concept of the American dream. Tomas does not entertain such a fantasy or any kind of future vision for that matter. He has little ambition with regard to the New World or his home in Bad Kissingen. His intent when going on board was not an “Überfahrt.” His sole goal was to confront his wife. Unlike the other passengers, he has no anticipation of a postliminal phase. He does not consider what the consequence of the confrontation might entail. Tomas constantly envisions different scenarios of his potential encounter with his wife, only to realize that he cannot predict what will happen.

When Tomas talks to Paula Fabian, whom he considers “ein verzerrtes Widerspiel seiner Selbst” (“a distorted image of his own self”) (273), he has an epiphany. Mrs. Fabian is traveling to the United States to find her husband, who left her and started a life with another woman. She is bitter and has only one goal: to destroy her husband’s life, who she claims defaulted on their marital contract. Like Tomas, Paula: she is consumed by her longing for revenge and does not consider life beyond her destruction of her husband’s new family. Tomas observes the woman’s unwillingness “[die] verweste Vergangenheit aus den Krallen zu lassen, die sich dem Schicksal nicht beugen kann, die nicht versteht zu lassen und – weiterzugehen” (“to let her claws go from the decayed past and to submit herself to fate; a woman who does not understand how to move on”) (274). Through this picture, Tomas begins to gain more clarity. He realizes that he must act differently. Shortly after his encounter with Paula Fabian he recognizes that “für Leid und erlittenes Unrecht kann man nicht entschädigt werden. Und das ist es nicht, was man von
einem “neuen Leben” verlangen darf: dass es unbeschwert, ungetrübt und ohne bitteren Bodensatz sei, wie das alte” (“one cannot be compensated for the suffering and injustice one experienced. That is not what one may require of a “new life”: that it is unencumbered, untroubled, and without bitter dregs, like the old one”) (308). Tomas further realizes that once he decided to move on, there is no possibility of returning:

> Was er nie mehr vergessen könnte, das war der Blick in das Getriebe der großen Welt, den er getan hatte, Ihre Vielfalt, ihr Oben, ihr Unten, ihre Möglichkeiten und Aufgaben. Nein, Sybils Gesicht war nicht mehr imstande, ihm zum Inbegriff der ganzen Welt zu werden.

(What he would never be able to forget, that was the look into the workings of the great world that he had experienced, the world’s variety, its top, its bottom, its possibilities and responsibilities. No, Sybil’s face was no longer able to be the epitome of his whole world) (319).

Even though Tomas was on the ship, he was exposed to a whole macrocosm. After a chance to reflect on his feelings, an opportunity to gain closure, he is able to begin a new way of life. Tomas is ready to leave the liminal space and to take responsibility and face the tasks that lie ahead of him. Tomas’s decision to pursue a new life coincides with Krieglacher’s offer to join him and the nurse Marta in the American West as well as with his growing interest in Marta.

Whereas Tomas and other characters such as Friederike, Milli, Boris and Milli undergo a transformation and development, the other characters appear stagnant or prone to commit the same behavior over and over again: Krieglacher, a professor who Tomas thoroughly admires, is a compulsive gambler and does not appear to curtail his habit; Paula Fabian cannot be dissuaded from her plan to ruin her husband’s life—not even after

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18 This attitude resurfaces and even dominates Kaus’s autobiography first published 47 years after Die Überfahrt.
having lost all her money during the fatal stock exchange onboard; Stephenson is looking for a new woman on his side and finds her in Milli after Frederike leaves him for Wladimir; the guilt-ridden nurse Martha, who killed her children in a failed suicide attempt, never leaves the ship. Martha, however, promises Tomas to participate in his and Krieglacher’s future plan to work together in the United States. Die Überfahrt, even though potentially loaded with a multitude of possibilities, does not change the existing social or gender constraints.

In reference to gender, Kaus confronts her readers with a perspective on prostitution that strays away from moral judgment and portrays it as a self-conscious commodification and source of female agency. There is no indication of wanting to overthrow the existing system: The change that occurs is rather a change of location than a change of condition. The novel concludes with a conciliatory act on Tomas’s part and an openness to a new and rather comradely relationship with his (former) wife. At the very end of the novel Tomas helps Sybil with her emigration process at Elis Island and even gives her flowers before he lets her begin her new life with Shortwell (302). After various thoughts about a possible future, which seem very sudden and unexpected, the reader learns that “[Tomas] legte seinen Arm kameradschaftlich auf ihre (Martha’s) Schulter” (“Tomas put his arm around Martha’s shoulder in a companionable manner”) (307; 308). Kaus’s end once again seems to advertise a concept similar to that of the “companionship marriage” presented in her play Toni. Companionship and comradeship between man and woman provide an alternative to the idea of romantic love. At the very end of the novel, Sybil is no longer certain about her attraction to Shortwell, fearing that his “männliche Kraft, die sie überwältigt hatte, in deren Schutz sie sich so wohl und sicher fühlte, … sich eines Tages vielleicht gegen sie kehrte” (“male power, which had initially overpowered her and under its protection she had felt so comfortable and safe, might possibly turn against her one day”) (320).
A Typical (Not So Happy) Kaus Ending

The overall narrative receives an ending that appears “happy.” However, another liminal phase lies ahead of the characters onboard. Only those who adapt, incorporate their knowledge of their former cultural setting and are open to change are likely to succeed. Adapting to the new society is imperative. This includes a familiarization process with established social structures of the New World and a negotiation of their dreams. The view of all passengers is an anticipatory one; none of them are looking back. Only Tomas intends to go back shortly in order to get everything in order for his new life in the United States.

The construct of home is banished from Kaus’ novel. This can be read as the estrangement Kaus must have experienced in the turmoil in Germany and the approaching annexation of Austria. Home is a concept, as becomes apparent in her autobiography, which is not so much grounded in an actual space but rather in a social setting. One literally has to make oneself (t) home. The interaction and collaboration with others, the shared experiences and enduring the same fate is, as will also become clear in Kaus’s autobiographical narrative, the defining connection between emigrants. There she summarizes her later experience: “Was uns Emigranten einigt, uns unbewußt verbindet, ist das gemeinsame Erlebnis. Der große Bruch. Daß wir alle in der Mitte unseres Leben umlernen, neu anfangen mussten” (“What unites us emigrants, what unconsciously connects us, is the shared experience: The big break. It is the fact that we all had to relearn and reorient ourselves in the middle of our lives, that we had to start all over again”) (Kaus, Von Wien 235).

Not only was the exile experience a truly liminal one for Kaus but also for her literary and filmic works, which convey liminality, an aesthetic liminality, in particular with regard to their endings, which will be explored more in the following chapter. This is exemplified by the circumstance that Kaus was caught in the web of marketing strategies and genre expectations on the one hand and the liberal-leftist’s tendency and
desire for changing the status quo on the other. The development of a fast-growing mass cultural market brought about new possibilities. In order to participate and survive, artists like Kaus had to adapt or work within the liminal spaces to even try and influence it one way or the other. As so many times in Kaus’s life, she was able to adapt and find her niche, rather than completely shy away from a new genre, medium or considering herself too refined for it. Instead of attempting a complete overthrow or deconstruction of the narrative frame and literary genre she was faced with, Kaus developed a way to challenge those of her readers, who were willing to participate in such a reading. Kaus readily participated in a sector that would receive little serious attention and whose subversive potential was mostly ignored by those in favor of bourgeois understanding of literature.
CHAPTER III
WRITING FOR HOLLYWOOD IN THE 1940S AND 1950

Women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes and rhetorics, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve discourse, including the one that laughs at the very idea of pronouncing the word ‘silence,’ the one that aiming for the impossible, stops short before the word ‘impossible’ and writes it as ‘the end.’

Hélène Cixous, The Laugh of the Medusa

From Novelist and Playwright to Script Writer

Kaus’s accomplishments in the movie industry are interesting as well as extremely insightful, as they run counter to the exile experience of so many other female émigrées whom Andrea Hammel describes in her book Everyday Life as Alternative Space in Exile Writing:

Once abroad, the majority of female refugees seemed to have followed a gender-specific path. They were more willing to take on any jobs, even if they were hugely over-qualified for the position … These women … put their male relatives’ career before their own (25).

Kaus had never worked as a screenwriter before arriving in California, nor did she put a male’s career before her own. Unlike so many other female émigrées, Gina Kaus came to America as a successful author of such works as Der Aufstieg (The Rise) (1920), Der lächerliche Dritte (The Third Ridiculous) (1926), Die Verliebten (The Lovers) (1928), Toni: Eine Schulmächen-Komödie in zehn Bildern (Toni: A Schoolgirl Comedy in 10 Pictures) (1927), Morgen um Neun (Tomorrow We Part) (1932), Die Überfahrt (Luxury Liner) (1932), Die Schwestern Kleh (The Sisters Kleh) (1933) and Katharina die Große (Catherine the Great) (1935). The latter two novels and biography were also
published in English translations. She was not “simply known as the wife” of someone else, but made her own career in Hollywood.\(^{19}\)

Thus far, little research has been conducted on Gina Kaus’s work during her time in American exile, especially not in connection with her accomplishments as a screenwriter. The few scholars who do include a more serious discussion of her films are Dagmar Malone, who wrote an article published in the *Deutsche Exilliteratur seit 1933* (1976), and Amelie Heinrichsdorff, who treats her work in her dissertation “‘Nur eine Frau?’ Kritische Untersuchungen” (1998). While Malone gives only short summaries of Kaus’s screenplays and briefly mentions the producers she worked with, Heinrichsdorff provides a few more names of collaborators and offers more insight as to how Kaus managed to get some of the contracts for her screenplays. Unfortunately, neither of them considers it necessary to analyze her films or scripts closely. As a result, they involuntarily perpetuate the myth, first introduced by Roth, of Kaus as “gehemmt” (“inhibited”) (Roth, 170) with regard to representing relationships and writing in general. Roth argues as follows:

> Das Exil in Amerika bedeutete das Ende ihrer schriftstellerischen Tätigkeit als Romanschreiberin. Die Exilsituation stellt rechtlich wie psychologisch eine starke Belastung für sie dar. In Wien erfolgreich, fest etabliert und bekannt gewesen, ist sie jetzt aufgrund der Sprachbarriere und des Mangels an Kontakten gehemmt und muss sich umstellen”

(The American exile meant the end of her career as a novelist. The exile situation presents an extreme burden, both in a juridical and a psychological sense. Having been successful in Vienna, fully

\(^{19}\) Marta Feuchtwanger’s autobiography, which is provocatively entitled *Nur eine Frau: Jahre, Tage, Stunden*, draws attention to the wide-spread but often false idea that most female exiles were simply someone else’s wife. A lot of these émigrées are reduced to their role of wives and condemned to stand in the shadows of their famous husbands. Marta Feuchtwanger, for example, was much more than “nur eine Frau:” she managed Lion Feuchtwanger’s daily life and his escape from Europe, was his fiercest and most influential critic and later his editor and manager. In addition, she was an admired socialite, prominent hostess of the community of émigrés in Southern California, and a pioneer in women’s sports and was active well into her old age.
established and well-known, she then had to adjust herself due to the language barrier and her lack of contacts) (Roth, 170).

Roth is right in pointing to the psychological impact that exiles experience. However, it is questionable whether Kaus had no connections and hence had to quit her career as a novelist to become a screenwriter. According to Malone, it took Kaus less than a week after her arrival in L.A. to get a contract to write a play (754-755). The almost seamless transition from novelist to screenwriter is also alluded to in Kaus’s autobiography. Roth’s argument that she did not have any connections is simply not tenable when considering that Kaus managed to immediately sell a script and work with a medium and text form with which she was unfamiliar.

Malone, for example, attempts to argue the contrary, stating that Kaus’s “Beschäftigung mit dem Thema der Liebe und der sich daraus ergebenden Spannungen und Probleme fand … eine Fortsetzung in der Filmarbeit“ (“preoccupation with the theme of love and the resulting tensions and problems arising from it ... found a continuation in her film work”) (759). However, he then goes on to argue that Kaus’s “besonderes Talent der psychologischen Darstellung und Vertiefung einer Beziehung zwischen Mann und Frau dabei nicht zum Tragen gekommen sein dürfte” (“special talent of the psychological representation and intensification of the relationship between man and woman did no bear fruit”) (759). It becomes obvious that Malone does not regard the act of screenwriting as valuable as that of authoring novels. Rather than offering a close analysis of select films and investigating the presentation of relationships, which she argues to be Kaus’s talent and strength in novel writing, Malone is quick to pass value judgments on her film work. Malone appears willing to partake in the revaluation of Kaus’s literary work and abolition of concepts such as “high” and “low” culture. However, she does not apply such a postmodernist approach to Kaus’s film scripts. Malone’s assessment of script writing is representative of a discourse about scripts that tends to compromise the seriousness of the scripts as texts and their aesthetic (see also
Price 46). The neglect of Kaus’s screenplays becomes even more evident in Andrea Capovilla’s study, which presents a clear emphasis on Kaus’s novels in contrast to her film work.

In her 1979 autobiography *Und was für ein Leben... mit Liebe und Literatur, Theater und Film*, Kaus shares her very own account of her film work in Hollywood. She emphasizes her remarkable ability to adapt to the new situation immediately upon her arrival and underlines her astounding skill in putting her talents to practice right away. Less than a week after her arrival in Los Angeles, Kaus received a contract to write a play, for which she earned about $25,000 from MGM studios (Malone 754-55). Gina Kaus was one of the few female scriptwriters who maintained continual employment as a writer.\(^{20}\) In Kaus’s particular situation, exile is not so much perceived as a limitation but rather as an opportunity. In her autobiography, Kaus presents herself as being without any reservation toward the medium film, unlike other émigrés (Kaus, *Von Wien* 207). She further states that film work was lucrative work, and she needed the money to support her family (207). By the time Kaus came to the United States, she and Otto Kaus, a novelist, psychologist and father of their children Otto and Peter, had long been separated. Kaus had sole responsibility for their children’s upbringing and support. The former novelist is not only determined to make a living, she has to in order to secure her family’s survival. She tirelessly attempts to figure out the market demands of the Hollywood film business. Even though new opportunities for artistic production and fairly stable financial security opened up through exile, it also meant leaving another environment behind, one in which Kaus had been very successful and influential.

The Jewish-Austrian Gina Kaus showed an incredible understanding of the ways in which the Hollywood apparatus worked. It was an industry that Heinrichsdorff

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\(^{20}\) Kaus’s continuous employment is an exception to the rule According to Lizzie Francke’s book *Script Girls* 85 per cent of the film industry’s writer were men during the 1930s and 40s (45).
describes as being very different from what Kaus was used to. “Der amerikanische Kulturbetrieb basierte nicht auf den revolutionären Ideen der Moderne, die in Europa so heiß diskutiert worden waren, sondern richtete sich nach marktwirtschaftlichen Gesetzen” (“The American culture industry was not based on the revolutionary ideas of Modernity which were so eagerly discussed in Europe but rather followed economic laws”) (206), a fact that was avidly criticized by cultural theorists and fellow émigrés like Adorno and Horkheimer, who feared that art would degenerate into a mere reproduction of the economic base. Movies, they argued in Dialektik der Aufklärung (Dialectic of Enlightenment) in 1944, “need no longer pretend to be art. The truth that they are just business is made into an ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce” (121). This applies particularly to sound film, which according to the two theorists of the Frankfurt School,

far surpassing the theatre of illusion, leaves no room for imagination or reflection on the part of the audience, who is unable to respond within the structure of the film, …hence the film forces its victims to equate it directly with reality. … [N]o scope is left for the imagination. Those who are so absorbed by the world of the movie – by its images, gestures, and words – that they are unable to supply what really makes it a world, do not have to dwell on particular points of its mechanics during a screening. All the other films and products of the entertainment industry which they have seen have taught them what to expect; they react automatically (Adorno and Horkheimer 127).

Whereas Adorno and Horkheimer assume an inevitable passivity on the part of the audience, Gina Kaus finds a way to potentially subvert such unresponsive and passive consumption. Despite the film’s bad reputation in various intellectual circles, this particular medium also functioned as a vehicle for “communication and cultural production in which a woman’s role was no longer that of a “salonière,” a muse or an
aesthetic object” (Soares 324).

Even recent publications on Gina Kaus employ a distinction between of “high” and “low” or “mass” culture and show a bias toward it. Whereas Hartmut Vollmer falls into the trap of this distinction himself, Andrea Capovilla points to the problems of such categorizations reflecting on critics’ approaches to novels by Vicki Baum as trivial. Needless to say, such a differentiation is by no means productive for a serious analysis of Kaus’s artistic output as a screenwriter.

Selected Movies: The Wife Takes a Flyer and Three Secrets

In the following, I offer a brief analysis of two of Gina Kaus’s contributions to Hollywood’s film industry during the 1940s and 50s, namely The Wife Takes a Flyer (directed by Richard Wallace, USA, 1942) and Three Secrets (directed by Robert Wise, USA, 1950). It is my objective to facilitate a deeper appreciation of a female expatriate’s exilic work and accomplishments in screen writing. As film work and especially scriptwriting is a collaborative process, it is almost impossible to trace who contributed what. The two films, the following chapters concentrate on, are not an exception from the rule. However, by taking into consideration the story and script writings of Jay Dratler and Matin Rackin prior to their collaboration with Gina Kaus, it becomes apparent that

21 The idea of the woman as an aesthetic object rather than a highly independent and qualified writer is still prevalent in current research on Kaus. Several articles written on her tend to overemphasize her outward appearance. Marie Luise Roth’s article “Gina Kaus – Ein gestohlenes Leben” as well as Edda Ziegler’s “Und was für ein Leben,” to just name a few, introduce Kaus as “attraktiv” (“attractive”) (Ziegler 158) and “[w]eltoffen, schön und sich ihrer Reize bewusst” (“cosmopolitan, beautiful and aware of her charms”) (Roth 167). Such articles clearly tend to underestimate her position as a successful writer among the highly male dominated artistic elite to be found in such famous Vienna coffee houses like Café Herrenhof or Café Central.
neither of promoted progressive female characters in their works. Neither Dratler nor Rackin’s stories or scripts feature representations of femininity that deviate from Hollywood’s traditional gender representations at the time. Their female roles often only function as sidekicks, or simply add a romantic component to the plot. This changes significantly when Kaus collaborates with the two: both *The Wife Takes a Flyer* and *Three Secrets* feature self-reflective female characters that openly question and critique their position in society. The representation of femininity, the characters’ complexity as well as their degree of agency differs tremendously from any of Dratler’s and Rackin’s previous work. Kaus’s influence in the themes, characters and dialogues cannot be denied as she not only collaborated on the scriptwriting process of the selected movies but also invented the stories. The following discussion demonstrates that Kaus’s interest in issues of gender inequality, familiar from her literary endeavors, also resurfaces in her filmic work—even in collaborations with male writers.

The discussion of *The Wife Takes a Flyer* and *Three Secrets* in this chapter makes use of Hamid Naficy’s concept of an “accented cinema.” Naficy’s research is concerned foremost with the work of exiled Iranian filmmakers. He defines accented cinema as one that serves as an aesthetic response to the experience of displacement through exile, migration or diaspora. Naficy argues that this “exilic and diasporic accent permeates the film’s deep structure: its narrative, visual style, characters, subject matter, theme, and plot” (Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*, 23). Kaus’s work for Hollywood is also infused with such an accent, I argue. My analysis locates Kaus within her film work, in particular her

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22 I am referring to Dratler’s *Meet Boston Blackie* (directed by Robert Florey, USA 1940), *Where Did You Get That Girl?* (Arthur Lubin, USA, 1940), *Fly by Night* (Robert Siodmak, USA 1941), and Rackin’s *Air Raid Wardens* (Edward Sedgwick, USA, 1943); *Bombardier* (Richard Wallace, USA, 1943), *Marine Raiders* (directed by Harold Schuster, USA, 1944), *Fighting Father Dunne* (directed by Ted Tetzlaff, USA, 1948).

23 I am aware that more research needs to be conducted in this context but this would unfortunately go beyond the scope of this project.
concern with heteronormative gender and power discourses, and traces signs of what Naficy refers to as a “double consciousness” (Naficy, An Accented Cinema 22). Such a reading sheds light on the way in which the exile’s aesthetic and stylistic impulses from her home and adopted countries blend. I argue that even though Kaus wrote for the Hollywood apparatus, a different mode of production than most of the exiles Naficy focuses on, she still managed to make creative and excellent use of the multiple narrative and potential interpretative levels of the filmic medium. Both The Wife Takes a Flyer and Three Secrets demonstrate Kaus’s success in the balancing act of staying within the realm of Hollywood’s traditional format, a format “free from overt ideology or accent” (Naficy, “Situating Accented Cinema” 119), and her ability to simultaneously subvert dominant discourses that this same apparatus promoted.

In my chapter entitled “Scriptwriting and Script Analysis”, I will offer an examination of various unpublished script versions and drafts as well as a comparison to the film photographies that I discuss in the current chapter. The following examination of the film focuses primarily on the stories while simultaneously paying close attention to the dialogues, as Kaus was most influential in respect to these elements. My examination shows that Kaus, contrary to previous scholarly assumptions, managed to adapt and transfer her talent and expertise as a successful author and playwright to the medium of film and script writing. This chapter further illuminates the ways in which Kaus, who was especially known for her political involvement and progressive feminist activism during the 1920s in Vienna, found an effective way to use the rather restrictive Hollywood apparatus of the 1940s and 50s to call into question normative and dominant discourses, especially in regard to the understanding of “inherent” gender roles.

The Hollywood films The Wife Takes a Flyer and Three Secrets belong to very different genres. The Wife Takes a Flyer is an anti-Hitler comedy and Three Secrets falls into the category of the melodrama, also called “woman’s picture.” Melodramas have for a long time been perceived as mundane, “low-brow,” and have also been widely
overlooked by the research community. Even though this genre has been “a significant feature of cinema from the very beginning, it is only since the early 1970s that film scholarship has paid it serious attention” (Mercer and Shingler 4), a problem that also holds true in regard to Kaus’s literary work. Nonetheless, working in the field of melodrama presented the émigrée writer with an opportunity for female agency. The same holds true in regard to her collaboration in the anti-Nazi film genre. The methodology of this chapter is informed by cultural theory as well as a feminist approach which aims foremost to recover the contributions made by the exile Gina Kaus. The analysis of the dialogues is key to my study and informed by a post-structuralist reading, which makes use of theories introduced by the feminist Judith Butler. In order to locate Kaus and her exilic consciousness in the films, I incorporate the approach of Hamid Naficy, who argues that “filmmakers are not just textual structures or fictions within their films,” but are also “empirical subjects” (An Accented Cinema 4). This represents a rather holistic approach, as it offers a reading that understands the films as “personal and unique, like fingerprints, because they are both authorial and autobiographical” (34), and also as a “performance of identity” (4).

Undermining Hollywood’s Repressive Gender Discourse

Gina Kaus was born and raised in Vienna during the 1920s and represented, according to Edda Ziegler, the “Prototyp der Neuen Frau” (“prototype of the New Woman”) (Ziegler 158). Kaus came of age in an era that was defined by tremendous social change. It is the period of successful endeavors in terms of a “Loslösung der Frau von der aufoktroyierten Abhängigkeit und Unselbstständigkeit, von Kontrolle und Determinierung, der Wandel eines ganzen Gesellschaftssystems, das auf der Vormacht- und Vorrangstellung des Mannes begründet war” (“the female’s disengagement from the forced dependence and lack of independence, from control and determination, the change
of an entire social system based on male hegemony”) (Atzinger 50). Only a few years later did the Nazi regime destroy this process and pressure women into traditional gender roles and completely rob them of their self-determination. As an advocate for and firm believer in alternative and progressive ways of living, the exiled Kaus found a way to promote the possibility of self-determination and independence despite Hollywood’s maintenance of a highly repressive and traditional gender discourse. What is even more interesting is how Kaus manages to do so with genres that have received minimal serious attention in terms of their subversive potential because of their association with “low” culture. Through melodrama and comedy, Gina Kaus engaged with contradictory understandings of femininity that were different from the predominant ones present in the cultural imagination at the time. Melodramas offered a space in which women’s as well as men’s uncertainties concerning gender roles could be worked through. The medium film was a great way to reach both sexes, as Richard Maltby points out in his essay “A Brief Romantic Interlude,” in which he discusses the “intricate and intimate relationship between movies and their viewers in classical Hollywood cinema” (434-35). He argues that movies presupposed multiple textual levels and viewpoints and thus addressed the differing needs and provided for alternative readings as sought by spectators (436). Both films discussed in this chapter provide a variety of “contradictions, gaps and blanks [that] allowed [them] to be consumed” at various levels, by both male as well as female viewers (443).

The dialogues in Kaus’s films are worth careful attention. As a script writer, Kaus was often times hired “Stücke zu dialogisieren” (“to dialogue scenes”) (Kaus, Von Wien 161). Kaus herself highlights the significance and importance of dialogue in films and

24 For an overview concerning the changing views and approaches to melodrama within academia, see John Mercer’s and Martin Shingler’s book Melodrama: Genre, Style, Sensibility published in 2004.
plays when she argues that she was able to breathe life into the “schemenhaften Figuren” (“lifeless characters”) (161). Having control over the dialogue in a movie gave her tremendous influence. This is especially true in terms of producing narrative gaps, which create pockets of inconsistency within the narrative. Dialogue, acting and mise-en-scène are supposed to create a coherent unit. If characters are saying one thing but doing another it creates suspicion. Like so many other writers, Kaus manages to produce works “whose surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning” and hence simultaneously conforms and subverts patriarchal standards (Gilbert and Gubar 74).

*The Wife Takes a Flyer*—Playing with Identities

*The Wife Takes a Flyer* (directed by Richard Wallace, USA, 1942) is an anti-Nazi comedy and was also the first movie in which Kaus functioned in a dual capacity creating the story as well as the script. However, Kaus’s name did not appear in the credits of the movie. Kaus collaborated on the script with Jay Dratler, an American screenwriter and novelist who, like Kaus, lived in Vienna during the 1930s and had been part of the café society before the annexation of Austria. *The Wife Takes a Flyer* was not the only cooperative work between Kaus and Dratler. The two also invented the story for the comedy *We’re Not Married!* (directed by Edmund Goulding, USA, 1952).

The participation of the émigrée Gina Kaus in the anti-Nazi film genre is not surprising when taking Jan-Christopher Horak’s article “German Exile Cinema, 1933-1950” into account. According to Horak, the arrival of a large wave of émigrés from

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25 The fact that Kaus was not credited in the movie *The Wife Takes a Flyer* might have to do with the fact that many of the screenwriters were blacklisted during the McCarthy era. However, the Writers Guild of America is highly invested in restoring the lost credit information and to thus correct the cultural history of American film (Weintraub, Bernard. “For the Blacklisted, Credit Where Credit Is Due”. *New York Times*. 1 October, 1997, late ed: Section E. Print.)
Europe eager to find work in the Hollywood studios influenced and virtually created the genre of anti-Nazi films. He points to the fact that “of around 180 films, made between 1939 and 1945, which can be classified as anti-Nazi films, the émigrés contributed to sixty of them” (80). The anti-Nazi genre was not only quite lucrative for the émigrés but it also fulfilled another important aspect in the American political and cultural context. As Gerd Gemünden emphasizes in his article “Brecht in Hollywood,” the anti-Nazi film also “had to explain and justify to the American public the reasons for American participation in the war” (67). Kaus’s anti-Hitler comedy is entertaining and informative, even to a point of being didactic. Kaus’s comedic take on the current situation at the time educates her audience and shows what a possible resistance could be and in fact was like.

_The Wife Takes a Flyer_ takes place in Nazi-occupied Holland. A German National Socialist major named Zellfritz is assigned to search for a crashed Royal Air Force pilot. The major becomes sidetracked from his mission when he sees an intriguingly well shaped pair of legs in the street. These legs belong to a young Dutch woman named Anita Woverman, who is seeking a divorce from her insane husband Hendrik Woverman. In order to be closer to Anita, the smitten Zellfritz demands that the Woverman family quarter him at their house. The downed flyer Zellfritz searches for is Christopher Reynolds, an American flying with the R.A.F. While Zellfritz is making himself at home at the Wovermans’ place, Reynolds seeks refuge from the family’s butler when trying to escape a group of storm troopers who had seen him land. To prevent endangering the Wovermans and himself, Reynolds pretends to be Anita Woverman’s husband, who is soon to be released from a mental institution. The flyer plays the role convincingly enough to fool Major Zellfritz and also to convince the legal officials to grant the divorce between Hendrik and Anita. In return, Anita tries to gain military information from the German Officer for the British flyer concerning a German submarine fleet planning to attack the British. When Anita’s “real” former husband escapes from the insane-asylum, the whole charade is in danger of being exposed.
Reynolds’s hope to share his new information on the submarine fleet attack against the British seems in vain. The elderly women living at a boardinghouse for spinsters, an institution Anita started working at after her divorce, offer Reynolds their help. The spinsters assist them in exchanging Major Zellfritz’s daily propaganda leaflets for ones that contain the information about the German submarine fleet. These leaflets are then part of Zellfritz’s nightly propaganda drops over England. However, their plan fails when Anita’s actual husband, Hendrik, desecrates a poster of Adolf Hitler. Reynolds, who is still pretending to be Hendrik, then receives a death sentence for the act. Anita attempts to delay Reynolds’ death sentence and asks to remarry her “husband.” The court agrees to this last wish and thus unknowingly provides two of the boarding house spinsters with enough time to set off an air raid siren. Reynolds, Anita and the chairwomen of the spinsters’ home then climb into Zellfritz’s car. They knock him unconscious, and Reynolds steals the major’s uniform. The three abandon Zellfritz and escape with the plane intended to issue the major’s fliers.

*The Wife Takes a Flyer* is a fictionalized account of events happening in the Netherlands at the time of its release in the United States. British fliers frequently crashed in the Netherlands and had to be rescued from the Nazis by the Dutch resistance. Even though Kaus’s script is clearly situated in the comedy genre, it nonetheless attempts to create a setting and circumstances resembling actual events. This allows Kaus to educate her audience on current events whilst also introducing different forms of resistance to an oppressive regime. Simultaneously, using the genre of comedy provides the opportunity to investigate the threat and the incomprehensible cruelty of the German National Socialist from a safe distance. Although comedy and humor cannot overturn social systems, they nonetheless have the potential to indicate limitations, preconceptions and absurdities of dominant reality and discourses. They function as useful reminders of the constraints, limits and fragility of the ordered reality. Such constraints and limits had been part of Kaus’s very own experience under the Nazi regime prior to her American
exile. “Die Nationalsozialisten veränderten Kaus’ Leben langsam, aber nachhaltig” (The National Socialist’s changed Kaus’s life slowly but permanently”) (Ziegler 159). Not only were Kaus’s books burned, she had to leave everything she owned behind to secure her own as well as her family’s survival. Participating in the making of an anti-Nazi comedy allows a revisiting of the past and reveals the very discourses that brought Kaus to the United States, even if it is through a comedic lens. Furthermore, the exposed constraints point to alternative realities and possibilities, the most crucial element in Gina Kaus’s overall work.

The Wife Takes a Flyer makes deliberate use of repetition, similar to that employed by slapstick actors such as Charlie Chaplin or Laurel and Hardy. The utilization of repeated actions is limited to those characters representing the Nazis. It exaggerates the repetitiveness, rigidity and rituality of the National Socialist’s state and military apparatus. The very first scene is exemplary for the subsequent ones involving the military. Before the viewer is introduced to Major Zellfritz, a lower-ranking officer walks out of a building decorated with multiple swastika flags. He yells: “Major Zellfritz’s car!” The next shot shows the Major coming out of the building. As soon as Zellfritz hears his name, he automatically snaps to attention. When his car does not immediately appear, the officer repeats his exclamation. The car still does not appear, but Zellfritz snaps to attention in exactly the same manner he did the first time his name is announced. The same scenario in the exact sequence with the now seemingly reflexive physical reaction is repeated five more times. When Zellfritz’s car finally arrives, he walks toward it with his superior, who updates him on the latest news concerning the downed R.A.F pilot. This informational exchange is almost made impossible for the two men having to interrupt their conversation each time a fellow Nazi commander walks by. Every time they are interrupted mid-sentence to perform the National Socialist greeting, “Heil Hitler!” The physical act of raising their arms to greet is also exaggerated. Due to all the greeting, Zellfritz orders one of his subordinates to massage his arm, which is
apparently sore from the physicality of all the greetings. His supervisor reminds him to only focus on the mission and to make it his first priority. Less than five seconds later, Major Zellfritz becomes distracted from his mission by the sight of Anita Woverman’s legs. Arguing that he does “not remember seeing those legs in the last census,” the major decides to go and “investigate.” Zellfritz’s competence is questioned from the beginning moments of the film. He is easily distracted by the other sex and uses his position to pursue his love interest. Zellfritz is blinded by Anita Woverman’s beauty and is thus presented as incapable of comprehending his mission and the fact that the flyer he is looking for is right in front of him.

The Wovermans regard Zellfritz as a dangerous intruder but are not threatened enough to stifle their disapproval about the Nazis’s occupation when possible. Zellfritz’s authority does not apply in the Wovermans’ family environment. He is never in control of the situation. Anita literally locks him out when she fears he will make further advances. The major is enraged but cannot force her to open the door. He loses control and rattles the door with such intensity that his hair appears completely disarranged. When he finally realizes he will not be able to enter, he gives up and turns around. Still wrought-up, Zellfritz does not realize that there happens to be a mirror in front of him. When he turns around to go back to his room, he looks into the mirror. He believes his very own reflection to be Adolf Hitler. He immediately snaps to attention and greets. He is shocked when he realizes that the reflection is in fact of himself. Zellfritz’s immediate reaction to greet the man, who he believes to be Hitler, once more puts the non-reflective performance of rituals within the ideological apparatuses on display. At the same time, it debunks the idea of the existence of actual subjects with a consciousness of their own. The scene is an example of ridiculed authoritarian masculinity on display. Zellfritz’ unintended performance of masculinity transpires without an audience and, therefore, exposes the fact that the idea of a national socialist identity and authoritarian masculinity
are a product of reflections, performances and desires rather than a form of “inner essence”.

The idea that one merely needs to perform the same rituals as the National Socialists and participate in their discourse aids in showing the constructedness of the National Socialist identity. The émigrée Kaus once again discloses this circumstance by having the flyer Reynolds partake in the ideology as a form of diversionary tactic and thus distracts the Nazis from his activities as a spy. As *The Wife Takes a Flyer* is a comedy, the dialogue is highly exaggerated, which aids even more in displaying the performative qualities involved in political discourse formation.

When the Gestapo officer and his troops search for Reynolds, the flyer sees his mission endangered and drops one remark that immediately changes the attitude and atmosphere of the situation, namely that he had been thinking about joining the Nazi party for a long time. The Gestapo officer is instantaneously intrigued. In order to verify Reynolds’s honesty in this matter, he wants to know whether Reynolds would be willing to betray his own mother, father and wife and if he would kill his own child in the Führer’s interest. Reynolds looks at him menacingly and answers with a rhetorical question: “‘Who wouldn’t kill his child for the Führer? I would do even more, much more: I would even give my grandmother the hot foot!’” When the officer continues with his inquiries, he asks about this torture method, which is unknown to him. He is pleased to hear that it involves placing burning matches under the victim’s toe nails. The officer exclaims “‘Excellent! I shall try that myself. Give him back his clothes. He qualifies!’”

Kaus foregrounds the performativity of Nazism in this scene. Gerd Gemünden also refers to a play with identities and performances in regard to National Socialism in his article “Brecht in Hollywood”. He discusses *Hangmen also Die!* (directed by Fritz Lang, USA, 1943) and points to the movie *To Be or Not to Be* (directed by Ernst Lubitsch, USA, 1942). Gemünden comes to the conclusion that these movies emphasize “that Nazism in
general is something that relies on performance to exert its powers … that the reality of Nazism is performative, and that it is real only to the extent that it is performed” (74).

*The Wife Takes a Flyer* not only offers an insight into the degree to which ideologies rely on performance but also demonstrates that individuals have a choice in what role they wish to take on. Simultaneously it succeeds in familiarizing the audience with the subversive potential imbedded in such performative behavior. Kaus shows that such identities are “groundless” and only come into existence by repeated performance of stylized actions and thus illustrates how to transform the perception of such identities. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler names “parodic repetition” as a way to “expose […] the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction” (192). She theorizes about the possibility of transformation in regard to gender. Kaus applies such parodic repetition in *The Wife Takes a Flyer*.

According to Hamid Naficy, “plurality and performativity of identity” (“Situating an Accented Cinema” 115) are some of the main characteristics in diasporic filmmaking. Kaus incorporates them in *The Wife Takes a Flyer* via the protagonists Reynolds and Anita. Both characters deliberately play with identities. They are aware of their potential and use it to their advantage. Whereas Reynolds is trying to escape the Nazis, Anita is determined to get away from her abusive and alcoholic husband. Anita and Reynolds are very creative in their attempts to gain freedom. Reynolds goes so far as to take on another identity, which he twists and tweaks to his needs. Anita, on the other hand, feels indebted to Reynolds and takes on a Mata Hari personality, as she herself calls it. She agrees to have dinner with Zellfritz and to extract more information about the fleet that is supposed to attack the British. As a result, she not only aids Reynolds but potentially a whole country. Like Reynolds, Anita adapts quickly and is just as eager to destabilize and challenge the dominant powers. Anita, even more than Reynolds, resembles Naficy’s concept of a “shifter” (*An Accented Cinema* 32). With a character like Anita, Kaus introduced a figure that is an “amphibolic character type […] who [is] split, double
crossed, and hybridized,” a character that is at ease with performing a variety of identities. This parallels Kaus’s own experience as an exile and also as a woman. Kaus and the character Anita are “interstitial subjects within social formations”; both are (dis)located. Pursued by the Nazi, with a longing for a progressive understanding of their position and abilities as women, both are in a state of “(dis)location” (Naficy, An Accented Cinema 34).

The solidarity which Anita and Reynolds receive from the spinsters is overwhelming. These women also play with the National Socialists’ impression of them. The Nazis do not view the elderly women as a threat or regard them as remotely capable of overthrowing or interfering with any of their plans. However, the spinster home, a space inhabited and controlled solely by women, becomes the center of resistance. Again, neither Zellfritz nor the Gestapo officer and his troops view the women as potential partisans. Due to the Nazis’ narrow-mindedness, the women are able to produce innumerable amounts of fliers and help Reynolds and his mission. The fliers are meant to inform the British about the assemblage of a submarine fleet prepared to attack England in three days. The women use the back of Zellfritz’s propaganda fliers, which he drops over Britain every night, for their message. The old women are presented as very proactive; they offer their help, even though such activities could possibly cost them their lives. Zellfritz is defeated by his own means. Again resistance and subversion is performed within the system itself. The fliers are appropriated and then resignified. However, all efforts seem to have been in vain when Zellfritz announces that his plane got shot down before it could reach England. The owner of the spinster home, Countess Oldenburg, sends two women, who are twins, to find and set off the air raid sirens. When they reach the sirens, they find them guarded by Nazi officers. The seemingly helpless old ladies pretend to be afraid and curious to know whether the Nazis are “doing everything to protect” them. The Nazis are annoyed with the women and the officer in charge explains how the system works, trying to get rid of the twins as quickly as
possible. Now armed with the knowledge of how to operate the alarm, one of the twins simply sets it off. The elderly women play an exaggerated stereotype of themselves. This is also true for the other ones who remain at Anita and Reynolds’s sides throughout his trial. When the alarm goes off, each of the women grabs an officer, pretending to be scared and helpless. However, they play into these constructed stereotypes with a purpose. They hold on to the officers and prevent them from following Anita, Reynolds and the Countess while they kidnap Major Zellfritz and his car.

As in her literary work, Kaus attempts to mobilize and critically engage her audience without creating a complete rupture or employing an extreme form of self-referentiality. Such an approach would not have found approval within the restrictive parameters of the Hollywood film industry, since it would have led to a complete deconstruction and demystification of the film apparatus. As in movies like *Three Secrets* or stories she invented for the studios such as *We’re not Married!*, Kaus remains within the realm of Hollywood’s traditional format, a format “free from overt ideology or accent” (Naficy, “Situating Accented Cinema” 119), as Hamid Naficy depicts it.

*Castle in Tyrol*, like *The Wife Takes a Flyer*, can further be read as an example of what Hamid Naficy refers to as a “potent return narrative” (112). *The Wife* presents a fine counter argument to the idea that Kaus never received a chance to reflect on her exile experience. Both Reynolds and Anita Woverman are on the run, trying to escape their current situation. Kaus’s exilic consciousness and wish to return are manifest in the protagonist Reynolds, who wishes to return to England. Anita just lost her family ties through divorce and is eager to make a living. Through Anita’s character, the film

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26 *Castle in Tyrol* is part of Kaus’s transnational filmwork, an Austrian script collaboration, which can unfortunately only be mentioned in my dissertation.

27 I am referring specifically to Dagmar Malone, who writes that Kaus never had the chance “sich mit dem Exil durch das Medium Film auseinanderzusetzen” (“to deal with exile through the medium of film”) (759).
introduces the idea of having to leave everything behind and possibly having to start all over. Gina Kaus, like so many other émigrés, did the same when she first fled Vienna and finally made a home in the United States. Many of Kaus’s characters leave everything behind. Some of them are caught in moments of excitement while others are broken by it. Another example, which goes beyond the scope of this study, is the adaptation All I Desire (directed by Douglas Sirk, USA, 1953), in which the female protagonist nostalgically explains “‘You don’t know how unimportant success is until you’ve had it, or what a home means until you lost it.’”

The end of The Wife Takes a Flyer appears quite “happy” and cathartic; it only does so at first sight, though. The two protagonists, Reynolds and Anita, confess their love at the end, and thus a superficial happy ending is constructed. However, their future and the outcome of Reynolds’s operation are questionable. The old Countess, who leaves with them, exclaims, “‘At last I am going on a honeymoon; I feel goosepimplly all over again.’” She appears excited even though the honeymoon is not hers, and she just left all the women she was in charge of behind to struggle with the Nazis. Anita, on the other hand, is presented as only being concerned with what her new last name will be and appears thrilled when the answer is sealed with a kiss by her new husband. The basis of their relationship is marked by a continuous performance and enacting of marriage. What was faked before now becomes a “reality.” The question remains, what kind of a reality? This question arises as the viewer has been introduced to the fluidity of identity throughout the movie. The ending is unsatisfying despite confronting the audience with the words “‘Happy End’ in bold type. Reynolds’s operation and hence the future of all the protagonists is completely uncertain, since all three protagonists leave the country in the enemy’s plane. More complications and even death might await them. After all, when the movie ends, the audience is still faced with the reality of the war and the fact that Hitler has yet to be defeated.
The viewing experience Kaus creates leaves the audience with a certain dissatisfaction, an incomplete catharsis. The viewer is left with a disquieting feeling. Even though her films fall into the entertainment category, she inscribes into them a possibility of rethinking the normativity of the classic Hollywood ending. Although the movies visibly declare a “Happy Ending,” they do not have one. Rather than presenting a rounded and coherent closure, Kaus leaves an unsettling gap, a disruption of the traditional Hollywood format. In *The Wife Takes a Flyer* and even more so in *Three Secrets*, the viewer encounters gaps that take on the form of inconsistencies. Kaus plays with the viewers’ expectations that dialogue, acting, and mise-en-scène create a coherent unit in classic Hollywood movies. She disrupts this anticipation and creates suspicion by constantly having her characters say one thing and then do another. Kaus produces works “whose surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning” (Gilbert and Gubar 74) and hence simultaneously conforms and subverts patriarchal standards. Her particular endings are not only abrupt but oftentimes implausible. Nonetheless, they call “attention to the unsatisfactory nature of the dominant ideology’s social ‘solutions’” (Byars 93). It brings the ideological contradictions to the foreground. Such endings also “gesture back to the variety of possible solutions presented and rejected in the process of the narrative, solutions that provide entry into the text for expression of residual and emergent ideologies” (Byars, 94).

**Narrative Gaps and Fissures versus Hollywood’s Traditional Narrative Structure**

Gina Kaus succeeds in the subversion of regressive gender roles by inserting narrative gaps, fissures. The majority of Kaus’s screen plays end abruptly. This is not only true for *The Wife Takes a Flyer* and *Three Secrets*, but also for other scripts Kaus collaborated on such as *All I desire, We’re Not Married!, Julia Misbehaves* (directed by
Jack Conway, USA, 1948), and *They all Kissed the Bride* (directed by Alexander Hall, USA, 1942), to name only a few. It is this particular abruptness which marks a narrative strategy and evokes an opportunity to reconsider the probability of quick and unproblematic happy endings in actual relationships. The solution and also conclusion of Kaus’s screenplays appear as very simple, especially for someone whose strength lies in “der Psychologisierung von Charakteren und in der Zeichnung von Menschenportraits” (“the psychologization of characters and the sketching of human portraits”) (Roth 167). She thus breaks with the “Classical Hollywood narrative structure, [which] feeds its viewers … narrative redundancies and fulfillments” (Cossar 10). By no means are Kaus’s contributions as radical and transgressive as those films which Harper Cossar refers to as “twist films” such as *The Woman in the Window* (directed by Fritz Lang, USA, 1944) or *Witness for the Prosecution* (directed by Billy Wilder, USA, 1957). Nonetheless, Kaus also withholds certain information from the viewer that makes the happy ending of her screen stories questionable. In the classic Hollywood happy ending, the audience expects “a fairly neat tying-up. The ending is typically, if mechanically, a moment of integration” (Cossar 14). Kaus, on the other hand, only seemingly presents her audience with such a closure. Having to abide by the Hollywood format also meant having to work with the system in order to subvert it. The main problem lies in the fact that introducing possibilities of transforming and undermining existing gender stereotypes would need to take place in a filmic space and discourse that was and still is built foremost on the objectification of women. Kaus succeeded by making use of a variety of performances of “femininity” and unveiling ideas of “natural and innate” gender behavior as a social construct. As a feminist, Kaus understood that it was impossible to stand outside the discourse that denotes one’s experiences and that a critique and resistance to oppression would need to be formulated within the format and terms of that very oppression.
Three Secrets—Female Resistance or an Example of Female Solidarity and Autonomy

In his book *The Women of Warner Brothers*, Daniel Bubbeo comments briefly on *Three Secrets* (directed by Robert Wise, 1950), calling it “several cuts above the typical woman’s picture” (181). His reasoning is not based on the characters or story but merely refers to Robert Wise’s attempt to underscore “what even he considered ‘soap opera’ by injecting as much realism as possible” (Bubbeo 181) into the film’s scene involving the rescue team. Bubbeo’s review once again shows the lack of interest in taking a closer look at something that is considered “low brow” and a genre that was and still is foremost produced for a female audience.

*Three Secrets* was collaboratively written by Gina Kaus and Martin Rackin.28 The film that was based on Kaus’s story *The Rock Bottom* and dramatizes the story of a five-year-old boy who happens to be the only survivor of a plane crash in the mountains of California. An eager newspaper reporter digs a little deeper and reveals that the boy was originally adopted and that the crash occurred on his birthday. Since the boy’s foster parents passed away in the crash, he will once again be without parents. Three women, Phyllis, Susan and Ann, then begin to ponder if the boy, Johnny Peterson, might be the son each had given up for adoption. Each of them ventures out to the base of the mountain to find out whether Johnny’s rescue is successful. As the three wait at a mountain cabin for news of his rescue, they recognize each other from the adoption agency. The women begin to recall the circumstances under which each was forced to give up her son five years earlier. Not only do they have to confront their past decisions, they also have to decide about the boy’s and hence their own future. Still unsure as to who is the actual mother of the boy, the three women try to decide who will be the best caretaker for Johnny.

28 Martin Rackin (1918–1976) was head of production at Paramount from 1960 to 1964. He left Paramount in order to set up his own production company: Mart Rackin Productions.
These memories are particularly insightful in terms of the construction of femininity and the underlying discourses that makes it possible. Phyllis, a female journalist and war reporter, stands out in *Three Secrets*. As with M.J. in *They all Kissed the Bride*, her femininity is questioned and constructed as ambiguous. Whereas *They all Kissed the Bride* presents this within the genre of comedy, *Three Secrets* paints a rather serious picture of the same circumstance. The cabin becomes a therapeutic place. They all come to terms with the part of their past that they so eagerly wished to suppress.

By means of a flashback, the viewer learns that Phyllis, also called Phil, was married to a man who wished to divorce her. The abbreviation of Phyllis to “Phil” has a noticeable effect on gender expectations associated with names. Phil sounds like the shortened version of the name Phillip and therefore masculine. The frequent use of this abbreviated name feeds into the perception of Phyllis as a rather “unfeminine” woman. As Phyllis returns from the war, where she worked as a war correspondent, she is welcomed by her boss rather than her husband. When she meets her husband at a bar, he is very silent and shows no affection or excitement that his wife is back. When he finally starts talking, he says, “I am getting a divorce. I happen to be a sentimental guy that comes from a big family of 12 kids. I get lonely when the other 11 are not around. – Or even one.” Phyllis reacts quickly and rather harshly: “What do you want me to do? Stay home and cook for you? Wash the dishes? No, Duffy. I am not that type. You knew that from the beginning.” Rather than discussing the matter with his wife, he hands her a pile of checks. It is money, he says, that she slipped into his monthly pay and that he never cashed to pay the maid or any of the weekly extras. The idea of the working woman as undesirable plays out in this scene. Not only does Phyllis work in what is thought of as a male dominated and extremely dangerous work environment, she also uses the money she makes to support her husband. Being a “manly man,” her husband resists such progressive and non-conformist behavior.
This echoes Kaus’s own experience with her partner and later husband, Eduard Frischauer, during her first years in America. Kaus frequently supported Frischauer’s continuous gambling, even on the new continent. In her autobiography she ridicules him for his “lächerlichen Stolz” (“absurd ideas about ‘honor’”) (Kaus, Von Wien 192) by simultaneously applauding those émigrés who were willing to take any job and tried to make the best of their new situation.

Phyllis does not understand her husband’s anger, nor does he understand hers, as becomes clear in their conversation. He even feels betrayed by her and argues, “I don’t understand you either. Seven years ago, you had me fooled for a while. Long enough to get a license and marry you.” He concludes his speech by saying, “Just for a moment there, I thought you were a human being. Ever since then, in a hundred ways did you prove me differently. Well, it’s all over.” He does not even regard his wife as a human being, as becomes apparent from his rhetoric. The fact that she does not fulfill her wifely duties and does not fit the picture of the stereotypical image of a woman makes her undesirable and unacceptable in this particular discourse. Her husband is caught in the 1930s discourse about women, in which, according to Gourley, films, “radio programs, magazines, books comic strips, and even government posters advised a woman how to dress, please her husband, raise her children, and cook her food” (13).

After reflecting on what she wants, Phyllis rushes to her husband once more, attempting to explain herself. “I am scared – I mean it, Duffy… Ever since I sold my first script for 5 dollars. I have been trying to get to the top. I have been ruthless and conniving… Stepped all over people.” This scene reiterates Kaus’s own experiences as a novelist, playwright, and exile as well as scriptwriter, which are all part of what Naficy refers to as “journeys of identity” (“Situating Accented Cinema” 6), a course during “which old identities are sometimes shed and new ones refashioned” (Naficy, 2006, 6). The scene allegorizes Kaus’s own “process of becoming, even a performance of identity” (“Situating Accented Cinema”6). Kaus as an exile and scriptwriter was also repressed in
the Hollywood system. She not only wanted to work and be successful, she also had no other choice, as she had to provide for her family. This scene also alludes to the ruthlessness and predominately male environment of Hollywood. It simultaneously points to the commercialization of art that many exiles with high ambitions encountered. However, this scene is not only self-reflexive, it also serves to produce “ambiguity and doubt about the taken-for-granted values of their home and host societies” (Naficy, “Situating Accented Cinema”113) in general.

This manner of business conduct in the scene between Phil and her husband is typically associated with men working in the field of media at that particular time. However, Phyllis feels the need to apologize for a behavior and strategy that unquestionably brought her to the top. “I worked like a man in a man’s world. And I made it. But I don’t want to lose you…. If I lose you I will roam around like an alley cat with no place to come back to. Don’t throw me out.” Phyllis goes from being rational to highly emotional during the course of their conversation. Her husband clearly welcomes that and wonders, “Why is it that the only time you sound like a woman is in this room?” Now that Phyllis is sensitive and appears highly vulnerable, her husband’s behavior toward her is much more accepting. Continuing to fulfill her husband’s expectations she adds, “I’d rather give my writing up or work from here.” The scene concludes with the two kissing and embracing each other and her husband’s exclamation, “Welcome home, Mrs. Horn.” By calling her “Mrs. Horn,” her husband rhetorically returns her to a position and place that is regarded as “appropriate” for a married woman post-1945.

This scene operates an example of Althusser’s idea in connection with the interpellation of individuals. Phil’s husband categorizes her as his wife, which is a “ritual, a practice of recognition” (Althusser 698). This particular address as “Mrs. Horn” attempts to undo any of the prior questioning of femininity and serves to fully embrace Phil into the quintessential discourse about women and her assumed role in society at the
time. By not resisting and even giving into the interpellation, Phil affirms the discourse on gender hierarchies as unquestionable and natural. The acceptance of such oppositions also brings along with it the belief that “there is an asymmetry in which one member of each dyad is privileged, valued and dominant, and the other is rejected, devalued and debased” (Drob 30).

During the next sequence, the viewer encounters an image that is rather disruptive in comparison to how the reporter was presented beforehand. Phyllis is at home in the kitchen wearing an apron. Her appearance resembles the stereotypical images of a housewife during the 1950s. She now represents the ideal women her husband wishes to be married to. The kitchen scene is a great illustration of Judith Butler’s idea that gender or a specific idea thereof needs to be performed repeatedly in order to establish the same and to reinforce the dominant discourse: “This repetition is at once a re-enactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; … with the strategic aim of maintaining gender within its binary frame” (Gender Trouble, 191). However, as Butler further explains:

[G]ender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity, instituted through a stylized repetition of acts. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self (191).

Kaus’s character Phil is presented as a woman too progressive for the 1950s. She is staged as the quintessential product of the government’s 1940s discourse and political agenda which convinced white middle-class housewives as well as their husbands to work outside the home for the nation’s sake. Women’s magazines in the early 1940s hence depicted women operating heavy machinery and portrayed them as bus drivers and farmers (Gourley 102-107). Phil’s job as a war correspondent fits into the same realm.
The 1950s discourses once more mirrored the 1930s in that they expected women to return to the domestic sphere.

When her boss enters the apartment, Phil is taking a meatloaf out of the oven. When he offers her an important job that will make her “the biggest newspaper woman,” she is visibly torn. She puts the meatloaf down and says that she would love to go and work as a war correspondent once more, but does not want to lose her husband. She thus refuses to partake in the repetition and to consent to the current gender expectations. She wishes to break out of the binary opposition. This behavior will not be without consequence. As Judith Butler points out, “those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished” (Gender Trouble 191). This is also true for Phil.

Unbeknownst to her boss and Phyllis, her husband is in the living room listening to the whole conversation. When she asks for his understanding concerning her inner conflict, he calmly answers “I do understand. I am sorry for you, Phil. You tried very hard to be a woman. You just couldn’t make it.” Many of Kaus’s other film collaborations such as All I Desire, We’re Not Married!, Julia Misbehaves, and They all Kissed the Bride include similar scenes in which a woman’s femininity is questioned due to being part of the working world, one that was reclaimed by men after the war. Phyllis is not only challenged in terms of her femininity but also in terms of her humanity. The scene exposes the psychological abuse involved in the reinforcement of traditional gender roles. Phil’s husband is unwilling to remain married to Phil if she returns to her position as a reporter. The conversations with her husband illustrate how ideas of the normative are constantly reinforced at home. As Butler argues, the word “normative” can mean various things. First and foremost it is “to describe the mundane violence performed by certain kinds of gender ideals” (Gender Trouble 98).

Butler generally uses the term
“normative” in a way that is synonymous with “pertaining to the norms that govern gender”. But the term ‘normative’ also pertains to ethical justification, how it is established, and what concrete consequences proceed therefrom (98).

The severity of her husband’s behavior and the struggle a working woman faces is presented in the subsequent scene. Phyllis is at a doctor’s hut at a war camp and finds out that she is pregnant. When the doctor inquires about the father, she sarcastically states, “He divorced me two weeks ago… Is he going to be surprised … You know what his grounds were? He said I wasn’t a woman.” This rather short comment exemplifies a much more complex idea. It deconstructs the idea of the relationship between the biological sex and gender as a “natural” one. It is exposed as a social construct. The narrative thus confronts the viewer with an idea that Judith Butler presents her readership with decades later, namely that “there is nothing given about gender, nor is there any pre-cultural or pre-discursive sex that provides the basis for its cultural construction” (Jagger 2). As a consequence of her earlier feminine behavior and return “home,” Phil shows her anatomical ability to give birth to a child, something that is only possible for women. The fact that Phil is pregnant, however, does not automatically make her more feminine in her behavior or make her return to her expected role as housewife and mother. Therefore, this scene reveals that ideas as to what is “feminine” or “masculine” are discursive constructions and even exposes them as part of a patriarchal ideology. Moreover, it exposes the uneven power structures present at this particular time. The child she gave away became her secret and allows her to return to a masculine role.

Susan, the second of the three possible mothers in *Three Secrets*, is also presented as being threatened and subdued by social expectations. The first time the audience meets her is when she is packing a suitcase for her husband. When he comes home, he asks Susan whether there was anything new in connection with the Johnny Peterson case. His wife is completely oblivious to it. As a reaction to that, her husband Bill immediately states, “Oh, you disappoint me. A good American housewife loves her radio first and her
husband second.”’” Susan responds by telling him she was busy getting him packed for his trip and that she did not have time to hear anything. He sarcastically replies, “‘You poor overworked slave,’” and then moves on to kiss her. Susan’s character is representative of the dominant discourse on women at the time the movie was released, the 1950s. Women were still thought of as “homemakers”; a term that was relatively new back then. The homemaker-discourse promoted women as responsible for making a home, managing the household, caring for children, and promoting the happiness and well-being of their families.

The couple’s verbal interactions appear extremely shallow. There is no depth to them; they appear like a ventriloquist’s lines. Their words seem informed by or even directly quoted from slogans of the 1950s. It calls “attention to the unsatisfactory nature of the dominant ideology’s social ‘solutions’” (Byars 93). It brings the ideological contradictions to the foreground. These dialogues once more exhibit Kaus’s exilic double consciousness. One can locate the exile rehearsing her discontent with discourses that assume females as “natural” caretakers. This reflects Kaus’s various encounters with gender discourses, nationally as well as transnationally. Kaus came of age in the Weimar Republic, an era that was extremely progressive in comparison to gender discourses in the United States and in particular Hollywood at that time. Even though The Weimar Republic had a lot of progressive potential, Kaus knew that she had to actively fight for equal rights and access to education. Hollywood’s conservative outlook and heteronormative presentations of women must have provided a challenging work environment for the feminist Kaus. Nonetheless, the female émigrée manages to subtly subvert and expose the backwardness of such female representations through her particular style of dialogue.

Susan seemingly fits the idea of the “perfect housewife” considering herself “happier than any girl deserves to be.” However, she struggles with her past and tries to cope with it by suppressing any memory of having given her child away. Susan had fallen
in love with a soldier who impregnated her. When she meets him at the base to inform him of her pregnancy, she finds out that he is about to leave for another deployment. Before Susan can even tell him that she is pregnant, he confesses to her that he is a married man and he has no desire to leave his wife for Susan. “The past is the past. We’ve decided that five years ago. I locked away my girlish grief, tied it in a ribbon and locked it away for good,” Susan tells her mother who is worried that she might get upset on the day that happens to be her son’s birthday. It becomes clear that the past reaches into the present and haunts her.

The third woman, Ann Lawrence, a former dancer, reveals that she murdered her boyfriend by whom she was pregnant. When convicted and imprisoned, she was forced to give up her son for adoption. In a flashback the viewer is presented with the events that led to the murder. The audience learns that Ann’s boyfriend, Gordon Crosley, hired his associate to explain to Ann that Crosley no longer wanted to be in a relationship with her. Ann, however, was convinced that the hired man was trying to keep her away from Crosley because she was only a chorus girl. When Ann tells the associate that she is pregnant, he asks her to return that evening. Upon her arrival she is introduced to a man named Bobby Lynch, who claims to be a former lover of hers. Ann finally realizes that the associate has been telling the truth about Crosley all along and that she is part of a huge farce. Outraged by this realization, she walks straight into Crosley’s office and kills him. The presentation of the killing is quite interesting. The actual murder is not shown, only narrated, and visually begins with a dissolved picture and Ann looking as if she has just awoken from unconsciousness. The idea of her having been dragged down and swallowed whole by her emotion is realized visually quite well. This subconsciousness underlines her lack of awareness and shock when she finally realizes what kind of a man Crosely actually is or had been all along. Unlike the other women, who gave up a child for “selfish” reasons, this woman was forced to by social rules. Her crime overrides her “natural” role as a mother.
Shortly before Ann’s baby is due, she is called to the prison warden, who informs her that “The state has no quarrel with your child. It is the right of each citizen to be born without prejudice and without stain. We made arrangements for you to have your baby outside of these walls.” The superintendent’s voice changes quickly to a much harsher tone when Ann inquires about a possible future of the child. “[R]egarding the future of the baby… Have you any relatives or friends, no one to whom you would entrust the child?” When Ann does not answer right away, the woman continues: “Well, then I recommend you turn your baby over to an accredited agency, which will care for it and plan its future.” We are confronted with another recurring theme in Kaus’s work: the power of the state apparatus. It becomes apparent individuals are helpless when institutions decide over their lives or those of their children. Not even the individual’s body is owned by him or herself. In the intimate space of the cabin, Ann feels comfortable enough to share her traumatic experiences. The “menless” space allows her to speak freely and without being judged. The cabin is free of the dominant male discourses. In this particular space, the women can celebrate female solidarity and enjoy their autonomy.

Toward the end of the film, Phyllis uses her connections as a reporter to determine that Johnny is actually Ann’s child. She wants to convey this information to Susan, who, in contrast to Phyllis and Ann, is a married woman with a rich husband and also one of the possible mothers. Ann discourages Phyllis from sharing the news with Susan. Ann, who as a former convict is well aware of the power of the state apparatus, unexpectedly states that of the three possible mothers, Susan is the best suited to adopt Johnny. When Susan argues that Phyllis and Ann are not being fair to themselves in making such a decision, Ann responds that “no court would turn you down.” Once again, Kaus’s dialogue alludes to class and social conditions. Ann is portrayed as very cognizant in terms of the role of the state and its institutions. She recognizes that they will need a backup plan in case the institutions will once more interfere with what she
understands to be her decision. *Three Secrets* shows resistance to the cruelty of the state apparatus and the institutions associated with it. Moreover, it creates an awareness of the social prejudices and behavior toward children of unwed and criminal mothers. Instead of letting the bureaucracy decide the fate of the boy, the women become active and make a decision, creating another “secret.” Simultaneously, the three women reinforce what is considered the proper role for women and the idea that childrearing is reserved for them.

Kaus succeeds in the balancing act of staying within the realm of Hollywood’s traditional format, “free from overt ideology or accent” (Naficy, “Situating Accented Cinema”119), and simultaneously managing to make creative and excellent use of the multiple narrative and potential interpretative levels of the filmic medium. Kaus managed to produce works “whose surface designs conceal or obscure deeper, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning” (Gilbert and Gubar 74) and hence to concurrently conform and subvert patriarchal and traditional standards. Kaus mobilizes and critically engages her audience without creating a complete rupture or employing an extreme form of self-referentiality: This is an approach that would not have found approval with the restrictive Hollywood film industry since it would have led to a complete deconstruction and demystification of the film apparatus.

*Three Secrets* is marked by an extensive use of narrative gaps, disruptions and as a result a deviation from usual Hollywood style narration. More clearly, Kaus offers a solution as to the boy’s final home. She does not, however, provide an answer as to what is going to happen to Phil, the war correspondent, who is constantly battling gender stereotypes in order to succeed in a patriarchal society. Neither does Kaus allude to a possible future for Ann, a former dancer and now alcoholic due to her imprisonment for manslaughter. In the dominant discourse and the Hollywood logic of the 1950s, neither Phil nor Ann could take on the role of the mother for Johnny. Phil is not “feminine” enough, and she is single. Even though her work is not problematized outside her marriage, the movie shows that she cannot be successful in the business world and be a
mother at the same time. Ann, on the other hand is “too feminine”. She is not successful and is even less integrated socially. She is an outcast at a time when the only socially acceptable place for women was in the home, and women who did not choose to marry were socially ostracized even more. Susan, however, complies perfectly with the agenda for women at the time: She plays her “proper role,” has a successful husband and thus represents a desirable role model for the audience. My analysis presents a challenge to Malone’s assumption that Kaus’s talent for psychological intensification did not surface in her film work.

Kaus’s concern with the social construction of gender, difference and inequality is not too surprising. As a progressive feminist and promoter of gender equality in Europe, Kaus as an activist found herself in an environment, America, which had much more conservative ideas about women and women’s rights. Her use of flashbacks and personal recollections of these characters make them even more personal than the third protagonist Susan. Susan, however, fits the gender expectations of the patriarchal society and Hollywood discourse of the 1950s much better: In contrast to Phyllis and Ann, Susan is a married woman with a rich husband and as such is a stereotypical housewife.
CHAPTER IV
SCRIPTWRITING AND SCRIPT ANALYSIS

Four factors – industrial; production, multiple authorship, the *politique des auteurs* and a denial of the author’s literary recognition—have determined the role of the American screenwriter.

Claudia Sternberg, *Written for the Screen*

An Understudied Textual Form

The film script has been largely neglected in film, literary and cultural studies. The negligence of the script in film studies is generated by the particular perspective this academic discipline has of this text form.29 Rather than considering the script as central, film studies make the movie or film photography and its analysis the center of its attention. Film studies still tend to “privilege the director as the primary creative agent in film production” (Allen and Lincoln 871), not the script writer. Furthermore, the screenplay has also been overlooked as a text worthy of investigation in the field of literary and cultural studies. This chapter explores the problematic inclusion of scripts in literary and film studies as products of collaborative work, proposes a close reading of selected scripts by Gina Kaus and also provides an example of a praxis-oriented evaluation and assessment of this “literature in flux” (Sternberg 28).

The reading of various script versions for *Three Secrets* and *The Wife Takes a Flyer* is, as in the previous chapter, guided by Naficy’s concept of accented cinema. Whereas Naficy only investigates the works of exiled Iranian filmmakers and thus

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29 The choice of the term “text” or “textual form” is a deliberate one. As Price so rightly points out in his discussion of screenplays, the problem of defining and evaluating the script “lies not with the screenplay as literature, but in the persistent failure to recognise it even as a text, in the broadest cultural sense of the word” (41-42). By referring to the script as a text, I wish to further the postmodernist school of thought that, according to Price, “has ostensibly led to … rethinking, if not outright abolition, of distinctions between “high” and “low” culture … but had little effect on the status of the screenplay” (42).
focuses on the film photography, I apply his concept to the practice of scriptwriting in this chapter. Furthermore, I add to and simultaneously increase the complexity of Naficy’s approach, which is based on a binary opposition between the dominant “Hollywood cinemas, whose films are realistic and intended for entertainment only, and thus free from overt ideology or accent” and the “alternative or marginalized cinemas,” which “derive [...] [their] accent from [their] artisanal and collective production modes and from the filmmakers’ and audiences’ deterritorialized locations” (Naficy, “Situating Accented Cinema”119). By focusing on the Austrian-Jewish Gina Kaus, I not only apply the concept to a female accented screenwriter instead of a filmmaker, but I also demonstrate that the inscription of accent is a possibility even within the dominant and popular cinema of Hollywood. Gina Kaus, unlike the Iranian filmmakers Naficy refers to, did not long “to move out of marginal cinema niches into the world of art cinema or even popular cinema” (“Situating Accented Cinema”126), as she was hired immediately to work for the industry upon her arrival in the United States. Nonetheless, I demonstrate that Kaus’s “double consciousness” constituted both “by the structures of feeling ... as displaced subject” and by the “exilic and diasporic traditions” (Naficy An Accented Cinema 22) permeates her writing for Hollywood. The close reading of her work exemplifies how aesthetic and stylistic impulses from traditions of her home and adopted countries blend. Even though Kaus wrote for the Hollywood apparatus, she still managed to make creative and excellent use of the multiple narrative and potential interpretative levels of the filmic medium. My goal is thus threefold: Firstly, I hope to increase the visibility of the émigrée Kaus as a scriptwriter and to locate her within her writing. Secondly, I aim to encourage an inclusion of the understudied text form film script into the teaching and discussion of film in literary, cultural and film studies. Thirdly, my actual comparison of the various scripts and inclusion of the films in my discussion seeks to make the screenplay in its various stages, versions and revisions visible.
A brief overview of the existing literature in connection with screenwriting and script culture verifies Kevin Alexander Boon’s statement arguing that it “can be classified into three general types: books on the business of screenwriting, how-to books on screenwriting, and books on the structure of storytelling” (Boon vii). These books undoubtedly attract two utterly different types of readers. The how-to books as well as the ones covering the business of screenwriting provide an insight into the ways in which scripts are written and how to successfully place them in the film industry. The other fraction of publications consists of a small number of scholarly works interested in the history and theory behind scriptwriting. A third and fast-growing segment of the book market are scripts themselves. Beginning with the late 1990s, more and more scripts appeared in published form such as Anthony Minghella’s The English Patient: A Screenplay (1996), Robert Towne’s Chinatown and The Last Detail (1998), and Roberto Benigni and Vincenzo Cerami’s Life Is Beautiful, which appeared in 1998, targeting an English-speaking readership. At the same time, the so-called “Filmbücher” such as Wenders’s Der Himmel über Berlin (1990), Henckel’s et al. Das Leben der Anderen (2007), or Dörrie’s Kirschblüten – Hanami (2008) are gaining increased visibility and popularity on the German-speaking book market. However, these scripts in published form do not reflect the various revisions and stages a script undergoes throughout its development. They also do not offer insight into the personal comments and notes that are included in many scripts that can be found in archives. Published scripts reduce the scripts to one final version and thus rob it of its versatility.

The following overview of the historical development in the writing on scripts and screenwriters provides an understanding of the growing complexity, continuous deficiencies and shifts in this particular field. An example of the growing interest in writing for television during the late 1950s and 60s surfaces in an early version of a how-to book written by Charles Curran entitled Screen Writing and Production Techniques (1958). His book focuses on the production process, rather than on the practice of
scriptwriting, without distinguishing scriptwriting for motion pictures, television, or commercials. A continuous bestseller in the area of how-to books is Syd Field’s *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting* (1979). Field, who draws on examples from Hollywood classics, demonstrates the principles of dramatic structures and provides instructions for a successful and convincing storyline. How-to books are not interested in the history of screenwriting, the role of women screenwriters, studio practices or hierarchies, nor do they explain how to analyze screen scripts. The German-speaking book market is highly influenced by the American instructional literature on the topic of scriptwriting (Eick 33-34).

An example of a historical account of screenwriting is Tom Stempel’s *Framework: A History* (1988), which covers the development of the script and screenwriter in Hollywood during the 1920s to the 50s. According to him, screenwriters continuously lost control over their work and “had very little control over the final film” (Stempel 123). He distances himself from the discourse that emphasizes and values the “end product” more than the production process and its various stages. His focus is on producers, and he is not interested in making the lesser-known screenwriters visible;

30 An earlier example is Janet Dunbar’s *Script-Writing for Television*, published in 1966. It focuses solely on television, which at that point represented the “newest form of mass communication and entertainment” (Dunbar 7).


33 My investigation of Kaus’s scripts shows that this statement is too general to be applicable to her particular case. The scripts for *The Wife Takes a Flyer* and *Three Secrets* clearly vary in the amount of control the scriptwriters had over the final product.
neither do female writers receive serious attention. Richard Corliss takes a similar approach in *Talking Pictures* (1974) by only concentrating on well-established Hollywood screenwriters such as Billy Wilder and Norman Krasna. Even though he highlights the collaborative nature of screenwriting, he does not discuss how to categorize or evaluate scripts. He thus ignores the problem of stylistic or aesthetic evaluation of film scripts and the specific contributions writers make to films.

In 1997, Cari Beauchamp finally brought attention to an early Hollywood female scriptwriter. In *Without Lying Down: Frances Marion*, she devotes her attention to Frances Marion. However the biography’s focus is rather narrow in that it focuses on Frances Marion’s life and her circle only. Lizzie Francke’s *Script Girls* (1994) points to a variety of often forgotten female screenwriters. She makes extensive use of archival resources reaching back to 1900. By integrating interviews, she actually gives voice to some women in the business, thus offering a counter history, which highlights the diversity of female contributions. Francke also considers more recent female screenwriters like Nora Ephron, Callie Khouri, and Caroline Thompson. She also lists Gina Kaus in her select filmography of the sound period 1928-94 and associates the movies *The Wife Takes a Flyer, The Red Danube, The Robe, All I Desire,* and *Tempestuous Love* with her. Unfortunately, Francke only lists the films but does not explore Kaus’s contributions any further.

Not only the German-speaking market demonstrates a “Mangel an wissenschaftlicher Literatur” (“a lack of scientific literature”) (Eick 33-34).

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34 Frances Marion was a successful and also well-known screenwriter, author and journalist of the 20th century.

35 *Tempestuous Love* was the English title for the German movie called *Wie ein Sturmwind* based on Klaus Hellmer’s novel with the same name.
Scholarly and theoretical approaches to the script are rare.36 Claudia Sternberg’s *Written for the Screen* (1997) should be mentioned here, as she offers an invaluable critical assessment of screenplays. Her work might have been largely ignored on the American market due to its German publisher. Her structuralist approach identifies a variety of categories and properties inherent in over 43 Hollywood screenplays.37 The two most recent and significant theoretical contribution are Steven Price’s *The Screenplay* (2010) and Steven Maras’s *Screenwriting* (2009). Price’s book, like my dissertation, is interested in promoting the screenplay as a text that deserves critical attention. He provides a hands-on analysis of the theory and practice of screenwriting and also reflects on the “troublesome ghostliness in relation to film” (xi). Maras’s main interest lies in discourses in and around scriptwriting. He offers insights into the politics behind the practice and historically contextualizes scripts. Maras also reflects on the consequence of auteurism and auteur theory. His approach aids in my very own endeavor to assess Gina Kaus’s work for the film industry, to emphasize the role of the script and the scriptwriter in the production process, and to reinset and locate Kaus in Hollywood’s studio history.

**Script as “Pre-Work”, as “Raw Material”**

The widespread idea of scripts as some sort of less valuable pre-work or

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36 The German scholar Dennis Eick, the author of *Drehbuchtheorien: Eine vergleichende Analyse* (2006), who is interested in theories in connection with scriptwriting and screenplays, only points to two works in his discussion of theoretical works on film scripts: Holger Ellermann’s *Das Drehbuchschreiben als Handwerk* (1995) and Jens Eder’s *Dramaturgie des populären Films* (1999).

37 Kevin Boon’s *Script Culture* (2008) and Sternberg’s research overlap widely. Boon, whose book appeared almost ten years later, does not mention Sternberg’s research (Steven Price makes the same observation [Price 26]). Boon approaches the script as a literary work in its own right. However, he distances the script texts from film photography, thus refraining from a holistic approach, which I am embracing.
“derivative and intermediary work” (Maras, “The Status” 32), in comparison to the “actual” or photographed film, presents extensive consequences. While auteur theory elevated the medium of film and promoted the idea of film as text, it simultaneously “supplanted the literary significance of the screenplay” (Boon 34) and with it the scriptwriter. As Boon points out, the problem that arises is one of a semantic nature: “If the film proper is defined as the text of the film, how do we define the screenplay?” (34). With regard to my project, the devaluation of the script and its authors led to difficulties when attempting to find scripts created by Gina Kaus. Not all of her work is associated with her name or filed under it. According to the entry in the International Movie Database on Gina Kaus, the scriptwriter originally was not credited for having invented and written the stories for Three Secrets (directed by Robert Wise, USA, 1950), Western Mail (directed by Robert Emmett Tansey, USA, 1942), or for Blazing Guns (directed by Robert Emmett Tansey, USA, 1943). One can only speculate as to whether there might be more work Kaus produced and simply did not receive proper credit for. Nonetheless, it is important to understand that Kaus is not a unique example but rather a victim of a common practice. These studio practices, however, were and are still quite threatening to screenwriters. Attribution is of such relevance “because of the way credit operates as a key form of ‘currency’ or symbolic capital within the industry” (Maras, Screenwriting 99).

The problem of accreditation and ownership is inextricably linked to the understanding of authorship. As Claudia Sternberg argues, “The reduction of the screenplay’s importance is accompanied by stripping the screenwriter of their artistic authority” (Sternberg 16). Bringing the screenplay and its writers into focus thus means questioning and threatening the prevalent assumption of the director as author of the film.

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38 International Movie Database. Web. 4 November 2010.
However, even the prevailing idea of the director as author is easily deconstructed by the fact that directors are also working collaboratively and are part of a much larger team. Such a crew could include but is by no means limited to the director, the editor, the producer, the production designer, the actor, the cameraman, the writer, the composer and the make-up artist or special-effects engineer, to name a few (Goldman 102). Nonetheless, it is the screenplay’s collaborative nature that poses a serious challenge for the field of literary, cultural as well as film studies. Sternberg argues similarly when she writes that from a literary studies perspective, “it is generally acknowledged that established literary genres have a single, known author. This is not the case with the screenplay” (Sternberg 7). Taking the various people into account who are involved in making a movie makes the application of auteur theory, which elevates “the director to the status of the creator solely responsible for a film’s content, form and style” (Sternberg 15), obsolete.

Michel Foucault’s 1969 essay “What is an Author?” proves particularly useful to critically reflect on the futility of ascribing a certain text to one author understood as a “real individual” (113). Foucault debunks the idea of the author as “the genial creator of a work” (118) and argues that he instead is a “certain functional principle by which in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short by which one impedes the free circulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction” (118-19). Foucault thus understands the author only as a function of a written work, as a part of its structure. The author is not part of the interpretive process. Nonetheless, the idea of the author has persisted in film culture and studies mostly in the figure of the film director who, according to Bordwell and Thompson, “puts the script on film by co-ordinating the various aspects of the film medium” (13). In the Hollywood industry and its film marketing strategies the name of the director still functions “as a ‘brand name,’ a means of labelling and selling a film and of orienting expectations and channelling meaning and pleasure in the absence of generic boundaries and categories” (Neale 36).
Understanding the author as a genieous and only creator of a text exposes auteur theory as a discourse and practice to legitimize and further the power and privileged position of the director. The theory is not only reductionist in its focus but also aids in the mystification of the film-making processes involved in filmmaking and the hierarchal studio structures of Hollywood. Furthermore, its focus and approach completely conceals the underlying text. Such a discourse simply refuses to take the script’s existence into consideration.

In 1997, Claudia Sternberg introduced an alternative to previous research endeavors, which, as she states, had up to her publication “been dominated by the search for the screenplay ‘author’ ... and thus thwarted any further occupation with the screenplay text and its recipients” (1). Like Sternberg, I am also interested in the “multi-functionality of the screenplay as both a commercial and an aesthetic product” (1) and will thus also be concerned with the deconstruction of the Romantic conceptualization of the author as a single creative artist. Sternberg’s wish to “go beyond the limitations of instruction literature” (59) also serves as a guide for my research on and analysis of the available versions of Gina Kaus’s scripts for _The Wife Takes a Flyer_ and _Three Secrets_. My attempt to consider various scripts and stages of scripts by the émigrée exemplifies the wish to view and read scripts as legitimate texts worthy of study. Furthermore, I assess the various textual products throughout the screen play production as texts in and of themselves and regard them as part of a larger processuality and collaborative effort.

**Gina Kaus’s Scripts**

My own research project, which included a thorough search for actual scripts by Gina Kaus, proved to be extremely difficult. Searches for scripts offered meager results: The Writers Guild Foundation in Los Angeles, California, holds two scripts: _Julia Misbehaves_ (directed by Jack Conway, USA, 1948) and _The Robe_ (directed by Henry
Koster, USA, 1953). The film *Julia Misbehaves* is based on a novel written by Margery Sharp entitled *The Nutmeg Tree*. *The Robe* was based on the novel with the same name by Lloyd C. Douglas. Both movies derive from novels that were not written by Kaus and fall outside the scope of this dissertation.39

The scripts *All I Desire* (working title *You Belong to Me*) and *Three Secrets* are located in the Special Collections at the University of Iowa under the title *The Children*.40 They are both part of the Robert Blees Papers.41 The Special Collections information on the *Three Secrets* folder claims to include several treatments of script and screen story by Martin Rackin and Gina Kaus. This early treatment of the film script has the working title *The Children*. It was written on April 15, 1949. This particular version has almost nothing in common with the story the movie depicts. *The Children* only shares the theme of adoption with the later scripts; not even the setting or characters bear any resemblance to those depicted in the actual film *Three Secrets*. Another revised and final version of *Three Secrets* is held at the University of Princeton Manuscript Division under the title *Rock Bottom* and dates to November 10, 1949.42 A final script, which is only four days older than the version located in New Jersey, is located at the Margaret Herrick

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39 These scripts will prove rather useful for future research, in which I intend to investigate adaptations by Gina Kaus and adaptations of her original writings by others. Such a project will include a close reading and comparison of the original novels and the screen adaptations.

40 The script for *All I Desire* will not be considered at this stage of my research, as Kaus is not mentioned as a scriptwriter but is noted as having been responsible for the adaptation process of Carol Ryrie Brink’s novel *Stopover*.

41 The Special Collections at the University of Iowa hold the Robert Blees Productions Archive, which consists of papers dating from 1925 to 1965 and includes photos, pressbooks, drawings and written material, such as produced and unproduced television episodes, short stories and a novelette, business correspondence, and articles of the American film and television script-writer and producer. Blees was born June 9, 1918 in Lathrop, Montana, studied at Dartmouth College and held among other occupations a position as scenarist for Warner Brothers in 1940.

42 This version (http://library.princeton.edu/libraries/firestone/rbsc/aids/tc099.html) could not be considered in my dissertation research.
Library in Los Angeles. The Margaret Herrick Library also possesses a final script of *The Wife Takes a Flyer* under the title *Highly Irregular*, with revisions covering the time span between December 31, 1941 and January 22, 1942 as well as a slightly annotated version in the Mary Pickford collection dating back to May 1, 1941. The revisions in the Mary Pickford collection were added on June 3, 1941. These script findings at the University of Iowa Special Collections and the various script versions of *Three Secrets* and *The Wife Takes a Flyer* provide the core materials for the present study.

*Three Secret: Earliest Scripts*

The first script discussed here is located in The Special Collections at The University of Iowa among the Robert Blees Production Papers. The early treatment of *Three Secrets* is filed under the working title *All Children*. It dates back to April 15, 1949. The folder with this title also contains a number of loose pages that contain a different story or presumably a “continuity” called *Illegitimate*. A continuity, according to Boon, is a type of text which “shapes the story complete with characters, settings, and emotional context. It is the first film document to fully articulate what is to be found performed and the earliest literary form of the screenplay” (10).

*Illegitimate* also concerns itself with the topic of adoption but takes place in a different setting featuring different characters and content than *All Children*. It appears to be a continuity that represents a previous idea for *Illegitimate*. This seems logical, as *Illegitimate* dates back to December 19, 1948. It represents a short narrative, which does not encompass any suggestions for camera angles or subdivisions in interior or exterior

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43 Mary Pickford (April 8, 1892 – May 29, 1979) was a Canadian-born motion picture actress and considered an influential figure in the development of Hollywood film acting.

44 The reason for Kaus’s script being located in this particular collection remains unclear but once again illustrates how unpredictable the search for screenplays can be.
settings. Most importantly, this text completely lacks dialogue. *All Children*, on the other hand, represents a completely different text form. It looks like an actual screenplay, as it provides dialogue, includes character descriptions and perspective and makes mention of setting and design.

The story of *All Children* revolves around two female protagonists: Virginia and Celeste. Virginia is a young woman who intends to give up her child for adoption at the Children’s Aid Society in Philadelphia, where Celeste Fisher works as an adoption agent. Virginia pretends to be a married woman wishing to maintain a superior position over the numerous girls, who are also in the home to deliver their illegitimate children. As in the majority of Kaus’s narratives, *All Children* also shows society’s reaction to unmarried and in this case even single mothers. Virginia is not only unmarried with a child, she is also physically and psychologically deterritorialized and displaced. There is no space in which she could live like this and be fully integrated into society. She cannot return home, nor can she be with the child’s father. Working and being a mother at the same time proves impossible in this narrative as well. *All Children* bears what Naficy refers to as “frequent themes” of accented cinema, namely “[s]adness, loneliness and alienation” (Naficy, “Situating Accented Cinema”122). Furthermore, its protagonist Virginia fits the character description of being “sad, lonely, and alienated,” which, according to Naficy, are traits of “favorite characters in the accented films” (122). *All Children* allegorizes Kaus’s experience as an actual exile, as a single parent of two, her insights as an editor of the magazine “Die Mutter” (“The Mother”) and someone who worked in counseling centers for mothers during the 1920s. Kaus’s exilic consciousness appears to permeate *All Children* on a variety of levels. It finds its expression in “its narrative, visual style, characters, subject matter, theme, and plot” (Naficy, *An Accented Cinema* 23).

The narrative of *All Children* illustrates the various phases Virginia faces in her ever-changing decision to keep the child and bring it up by herself or give it up for adoption. The father of the child, Dan Talerton, does not know of the child’s existence
and also decides to elope with another, much richer and rather influential society woman. Two thirds of the plot is dedicated to retrospectives illustrating Virginia’s memories of her upbringing, which consist mostly of her father, who seemingly took care of Virginia after her mother committed suicide. Additional memories give insight into the way Virginia’s relationship developed with Dan. These recollections in connection with the approaching birth of Virginia’s baby Betsy and the necessity of giving Celeste a clearer idea of the father. They also contribute a vital role in Celeste’s goal to find the right adoptive family for the child.

The story is not narrated in chronological order but rather begins with Virginia running aimlessly through the streets of Philadelphia. The police pick her up and take her to the precinct where she calls Celeste. The reader only finds out later that this incident was triggered by Virginia’s father, who refused to take her in with an illegitimate child. The father’s concern about his own reputation in town causes Virginia to analyze her relationship to her father anew and to realize the actual circumstances of her mother’s death. Virginia’s mother had betrayed her husband with another man and thus, according to Virginia’s father, ruined his reputation in town; her mother killed herself out of guilt. Virginia decides to return to Philadelphia and to take Betsy back to the Society after this encounter. After Virginia has second thoughts about giving up her child, the police find her. The story ends with Virginia’s realization that she does not want Betsy to be bound to the past any more than she is and her wish to provide Betsy with a family that can take care of her. As for so many deterritorialized characters, Virginia realizes that a return home is impossible. Her former life is in ruins and her memories of the past are based on misconceptions, even lies. Virginia’s character and development is exemplary in terms of Naficy’s concept of a “deterritorializing and reterritorializing journey” (An Accented Cinema, 6) found in accented cinema. According to him, such journeys can take on a form of “home-seeking journeys, journeys of homelessness, and homecoming journeys” (6). All three are already present in the script text of All Children: Virginia wishes to
return home and to be reunited with her father. In the process she undergoes a state of homelessness, in which she wanders aimlessly, searching for a solution to her new identity as a single mother in a society that does not accept this way of life. The homecoming journey is more complex and does not include an actual physical and final return home. The main protagonist finds her way home by concentrating on what is best for everybody involved, her child and herself. This solution is not based on ideas of belonging and nostalgia for a past, but rather based on a notion of a possible future. It is based on the understanding that her feelings of home and belonging are constructs chaining and restraining the individual. Virginia’s homecoming is therefore rather one of a “psychological and philosophical” (Naficy, *An Accented Cinema*) nature and she is determined to free herself and Betsy of such constraints. Virginia’s experience is a journey of identity, of becoming. Some of the most important kinds of accented films, as Naficy argues, are the ones in which “old identities are sometimes shed and new ones refashioned. In the best of the accented films,” Naficy points out, “identity is not a fixed essence but a process of becoming, even a performance of identity. Indeed, each accented film may be thought of as a performance of its author’s identity” (6). The accent in accented cinema is thus inscribed much earlier than Naficy anticipated. It is already present at the script level, and even more apparent in my discussion of the films *The Wife Takes a Flyer* and *Three Secrets*, even remains visible and permeates the final film.

The script consists of 71 pages and contains both dialogue texts and elaborate screen texts. The screen text gives hints for the mise-en-scène and also provides instructions in terms of camera movement and angle the writer has in mind for each scene, for example, close shots, closeups and dissolving shots, voiceovers, and shifts to silent film mode, which are supposed to illustrate Virginia’s retrospect. The screen text also names each of the settings and informs the reader as to whether these are interior or exterior locations.
Three Secrets: Final Script Version

The script for Three Secrets located in the Margaret Herrick Library stems from November 14, 1949 and differs quite drastically from both the previously discussed continuity Illegitimate and the script entitled All Children, which date back to April 15, 1949. However, the final scripts in the Margaret Herrick Library in Los Angeles differ only slightly from the movie in regard to characters, dialogue, scenes and settings. No immediately noticeable changes occur between this final script and the photography of the movie. In fact, the inclusion of a revised cast list in the beginning of the script, script writers’ insight into existing stock shots, i.e. of Los Angeles (Kaus und Rackin, Three Secrets 76) or scenes already shot, and specific uses of the sound track hint at a high level of involvement of Kaus and Rackin in and throughout the actual production.45 The inclusion of such material also allows speculation about the various formal steps through which scripts proceed until they reach their final version. Price’s description of these various developmental stages makes these processes more transparent:

The initial idea will be pitched, more or less informally, to a producer or executive; a treatment may be developed to tell the story in the form of a prose narrative; the script will then proceed through however many drafts are necessary to produce the ‘final’ version; a shooting script will be prepared to include additional technical detail required by the director and others working on the production; further material will be written or edited during filming in response to the inevitable discrepancies between conception and execution; a post-production cutting continuity, essentially a description of the final cut, is drawn up by editorial assistance or other studio staff (63).

Kaus and Rackin’s knowledge concerning the filmic materials clearly underscores the collaborative nature of screenwriting and collective effort of a variety of people, as the

45 A reference to the sound track can be found, for example, in connection with the flashback scene, in which Ann kills her lover. The instructions state, “ROAR ON the sound track subsides. As the screen slowly comes back INTO FOCUS” (104), or “On the SOUND TRACK, the MUSIC crashes into dramatic ballet music” (188).
aforementioned information needs to be obtained from the director, camera man, the editors and so on. Furthermore, it draws attention to the fact that “multiple versions of screenplay texts are in part created to meet the needs of different readerships” (49).

The script provides more insight into the characters than the viewer of the film encounters. The following character descriptions concerning the reporter Hardin illustrates this circumstance well: “[Another character] hangs up as HARDIN, thirty-five, thin, sharp-faced comes up to desk” (Kaus and Rackin, Three Secrets 6). The description of Hardin in the script and the character’s appearance in the movie coincide neatly. His exact age is not stated in the film, but the information here does, however, aid in casting the appropriate person for this role. Casting is not included in the responsibilities of a scriptwriter, and why such an exact number ended up in the script must remain speculation. It could hint at the way Rackin and Kaus worked in regard to character development. Hardin’s character is presented continuously throughout the film script. Descriptions of Hardin’s interactions with other characters as well as his reaction to particular kinds of news require the reader to have a certain amount of empathy and imagination as well as a high level of script literacy to receive a thorough image of his traits. Short sentences like “Hardin is on his toes now smelling a good story” (Kaus and Rackin Three Secrets 8) show a resemblance to the literary style most commonly associated with the tradition of the American hardboiled detective genre from the mid-1920s and 1930s. The approach to writing appears minimalist, but a closer look reveals its dense and rich qualities. The sentence structure is kept simple and clearly indicates that it is intended for quick consumption. Little bracketed insertions right after character names give an understanding as to how the writers would like them to be perceived by

46 Hardin is a reporter who is looking for a sensational story in connection with Johnny Peterson. Phyllis will later ask Hardin who is a former colleague of hers, to refrain from digging any farther into the circumstances of the boy’s adoption. She thus gives herself, Susan, and Ann the time and space they need to come up with a decision as to who should apply for custody.
their respective readers. In Hardin’s case, for example, they write “(the ferret that he is)” (Kaus and Rackin *Three Secrets* 8).

The final script of *Three Secrets* not only includes photographs from the set, but it also contains a hand-written thank-you-note from the producer, Milton Sterling, who identifies the script as “the best script [he] ever had.” This thank-you note is located among the first few unnumbered pages of the script. Milton addresses Martin Rackin in his note but does not extend his thanks to Gina Kaus. Handwritten notes like this allow some insights into the inner politics of studios, hierarchal structures, personal relations and gender inequalities and give possible insights into the position, recognition and appreciation of scriptwriters and their work. Reading the descriptions of the female characters in comparison to the movie scenes illuminates why Sterling thought so highly of the script. With the exception of a few words, which do not change the meaning, the dialogue present in the final script is identical to that of the movie. The descriptions of movement sequences for the characters contain clear directions for the actors. They even go so far as to instruct them where to look in a certain scene. It is apparent from the movie that the film crew did not feel the need to make major changes. The following text passage, in which Phyllis goes into her office after having been rejected by her husband, provides an example of such a movement sequence:

She leans back in it, thinking for a moment. Then she leans forward and idly opens the top drawer. It is under the accumulated litter of her past in this office. She reaches into the drawer, takes out some papers, thumbs through them, puts them back; reaches in again, pulls out a half-eaten sandwich, crusty, stale, molded. She looks at it a minute, then drops it in the wastebasket. She fishes around a little more, comes out with a nylon stocking. She sticks her hand into it. There is a big run in it. She drops it in the basket, too. Then she takes an old bend cigarette. She rummages for a match, finds one, strikes it on the side of the desk, and lights the cigarette. It doesn’t taste good. She drops it on the floor, grinds it out. Her eyes stray down to the bottom drawer. She looks at it as though trying to make up her mind and leans over, pulls it open, takes out a framed photograph. She looks at it, then sets it up on the desk. She leans on her elbows, examines it (Kaus and Rackin, *Three Secrets* 67).
Although there is no mention of the sound track in the script, this scene is accompanied by melancholic music in the movie. Phyllis’s character follows the above instructions in large part. Nonetheless, there are no papers she thumbs through, nor are there nylon stockings. The sequence of lighting the cigarette and looking at the framed image are reversed. Nonetheless, these deviations from the script do not differ from the overall idea the writers indicated for the scene. This demonstrates that Kaus’s scriptwriting and especially her dialogues were adopted as they stand, and also that her ideas of presentation made their way onto the screen. This is only one example of many As the following analysis shows, the scriptwriters’ ideas found their way almost unchanged into the film.

_The Wife Takes a Flyer: Two Script Versions_

The final script of _The Wife Takes a Flyer_ can be found under the title _Highly Irregular_ and is held in the script collection of The Margaret Herrick Library. This latest version of the script by Gina Kaus and Jay Dratler includes revisions covering the time span between December 31, 1941 and January 22, 1942. A second and earlier version, which is slightly annotated, is located among the Mary Pickford Papers. This particular script dates back to May 1, 1941, with revisions of June 3, 1941. These two script versions are of particular interest to me, as they differ significantly from the film photography. They provide an idea as to the process of script revision, allow for assumptions as to why scripts are changed and also shed light on the collaborative work and power relations of director and scriptwriters for this production.

In the following, I closely analyze the differences between the older and the final versions of the script whilst also considering the film. The appendix of my dissertation includes transcripts of excerpts taken from the various scripts. I also provide a quick overview of some of the abbreviations and general formal aspects of screenplays.
(Appendix H) in order to help potential non-professional readers to quickly decipher the script text format, if necessary. These guides provide insight into the format of the various scripts. The readers themselves can thus follow my references to the changes that occurred throughout the scriptwriting process. Such an approach seems appropriate as these scripts are not available outside the aforementioned libraries and collections and may not be copied. It is my belief, however, that script literacy can easily be acquired and is very intuitive to most readers.

The beginning of the older version (Appendix A), which was still entitled *Highly Irregular*, is not only different from the newer version (Appendix B), it is missing from the movie completely.47 The final script got rid of the first 18 scenes, which the older version had originally provided, and simply offered the following note instead: “A new, exciting prologue will be devised showing Chris being shot down and escaping in Holland. It will also establish him as an American flyer in the R.A.F., who, when his present mission is completed, will be going back to Pearl Harbor” (Appendix B). The “new, exciting prologue” was either never invented or never made it into the movie. By not considering the screenplay’s suggestions in regard to the beginning, the film loses its suggested action-packed beginning.48 It also provides less information about the British flyer’s character and background. The viewer is thus deprived of insights into Reynolds multi-tasking talents and his rather unwavering and reckless actions as a pilot who even finds humor in life-threatening situations. Furthermore, the viewer never learns of any other mission after Chris leaves the Netherlands. The movie only focuses on the war situation in the Netherlands and makes no reference to his future mission involving Pearl

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47 In the following I will refer to the older version as MPPC (referring to their location in the Mary Pickford Paper collection) and to the final version as MHLC (referring to their location in the Margaret Herrick Library catalog).

48 The MPPC script ends in an explosion of Reynolds’s plane, while he is gliding down with a parachute.
Harbor. A possible reason for leaving these scenes unfilmed might have been the high costs associated with such action scenes. This is likely, as the script does not state any stock footage for images of the planes, nor does it make reference to any preexisting plane models.

Nonetheless, the way in which both the MPPC and the MHCL were originally planned to end shows that some of the materials that would have been used in the beginning scenes of the MPCP could have been reused for the final scenes of the movie. The final sequence of the movie is similar in both script versions but did not end up in the film. The differences between the planned last scenes in the MPPC and MHLC version are minimal; they vary slightly in punctuation and their choice of words, which does not however affect the overall meaning. Whereas the film ends with Chris, Anita and the Countess boarding the enemy’s plane to then take off before anyone can stop them, the script (Appendix C) has soldiers come running toward the plane, firing guns and pistols. Furthermore, the script provides an additional ten scenes in which Chris’s getaway plane is attacked by two British flyers who cannot believe that the passengers are not enemies. This part, like the beginning of the MHLC, which never ended up in the film, creates a frame structure on the narrative level. It provides a seemingly happy ending on the surface level. It therefore complies with the standard Hollywood format. The script reveals similarities to Kaus’s technique as a writer and playwright of creating endings that appear cathartic at first sight but tend to be unsettling and disturbing for those who think about them more closely. The film The Wife Takes a Flyer changed the ending but did not destroy the various interpretative levels inherent in the narrative structure.

The MHLC stages various shots (Appendix C) and conversations between the two British flyers and Chris in which Chris convinces them that their Major is a friend of his who is known to repeatedly say the phrase “highly irregular.” Somewhat convinced that Chris is telling the truth, the two allow him to land in England. There, Chris reports to the aforementioned Major, updating him on the location of the Germans’ plan to assemble a
fleet. The Major gives an order to bomb it at once. When Chris introduces the Countess and Anita and attempts to explain how he met his new wife, the Major is confused: “[He] looks at the Countess, shaking his head in bewilderment. He begins to splutter and simply can’t get the words out of his mouth” (Appendix C). The Countess finally helps out by saying, “‘Yes, Major, highly irregular,’” and thus connects the ending back to the original title of the movie. As the end scene on British ground never found its way into the film, the title was obsolete and was replaced by The Wife Takes a Flyer.

After the beginning sequence, in which Chris is shot down by German flyers, the MPPC script has the Major (referred to as Captain Zettwitz) enter the scene in a military car and describes him as being “as pleasant an officer as we could imagine. Before he became Nazified, he might have made an agreeable fourth at bridge” (Appendix D). The use of the personal pronoun “we” already indicates that the scriptwriters developed a filmic eye and envisioned a future audience whilst writing. Moreover, the script exposes an interesting variety of “accent,” The term “Nazified” is capitalized and can be traced back to the German capitalization of nouns. Moreover, the scriptwriters’ image accompanying and explaining the term also shows a specific exilic experience: The idea of Zettwitz having made an agreeable fourth at bridge parallels Kaus’s autobiographical memories of the war, in which people acted “as if under a spell, suddenly ... standing either right or left” (Kaus, Von Wien 58). The image of the bridge player allegorizes the émigré’s interactions with former friends and neighbors before fleeing Austria. In addition to the capitalization of the aforementioned noun, the script also includes actual German words, such as “nein” or “nicht wahr” or a hybrid version of a word such as “yawohl” or “oh, yah,” which stems from the German expressions “jawohl” and “oh, ja” but is written phonetically so that the American actor would know how to pronounce it.

The names and titles of some of the characters change from the MPPC to the MHLC script; for example, Captain Zettwitz becomes Major Zellfritz. The MHLC version entirely complies with the names used in the movie. The way that Zettwitz or
Zellfritz encounters Anita is very similar in both scripts and portrayed the same way in
the movie. The focus on Anita’s legs, which basically fragments her body, is another
indicator for the scriptwriters’ command and insight into the possibilities provided by the
medium of film. Only film is capable of such object and body fragmentations. The huge
difference in the MPCP (Appendix D) in comparison to the final draft lies in the
way the major meets the flyer Chris. In the earlier version, Zellfritz, then called Zettwitz,
is stationed at the Woverman house (Appendix D). In the final script he decides to kick
out an officer who is already stationed there to give himself more of an opportunity to be
around Anita (Appendix E).

In the MPCP Anita does not even stay at the Woverman house; she refuses to stay
and leaves right away for the Wilhelmina House of Gentlewoman. Anita and Chris
randomly meet at a bar, just minutes before the trial in which Chris is supposed to act as
Hendrik. Neither of them knows who the other person is or that they will be seeing each
other again in court. This changes the whole dynamic, as the bar scene already indicates
that Anita and Chris are attracted to each other when they are shown flirting over a
cigarette. The cigarette also suggests that Anita knows that Chris might be an English
flyer when she comments on the cigarette brand being British. Naficy’s concept of the
“shifter,” as pointed to in the previous chapter, was already inscribed in the script. Anita
fits the idea of the border shifter (Naficy, An Accented Cinema 32). Her existence is
indeed “situationist” and she is familiar “with the cultural and legal codes of interacting
cultures” (32). She knows how to navigate her own (Dutch) culture but also has insights
into the workings of the British and German culture, including their traditions, politics
and cultural artifacts. She is an in-between figure that knows how to adapt and

49 For a more thorough discussion of fragmentation in scriptwriting, see Sternberg (115) and
Price (127-129).
“manipulate [her own] identity and the asymmetrical power situations” in which she finds herself (32). She crosses these borders easily and even uses them to her advantage.50

The conversation about the approaching divorce trial in the Woverman house (Appendix F and G) includes the same characters in both scripts but does differ in conversation dynamics and in the role that Maria, Anita’s sister-in-law, plays. The earlier version has more information in regard to mise-en-scène (Appendix F). Even though it is absent from the final version, the cinematic realization of the mise-en-scène described in Kaus’s and Rackin’s earlier draft was apparently incorporated into the interior design depicted in the room. The tone is less judgmental and harsh in regards to Maria and simultaneously provides more information about her outward appearance. Maria’s dialogue lines are also tremendously reduced in the later script. Throughout her writing career, Kaus was interested in showing a variety of female characters. The reduction of Maria’s role suggests traces of collaborative work and the renegotiation of the importance of the characters. This is also true in connection with the character of Mrs. Woverman, who is presented a more motherly figure in the earlier script. In fact, Anita continuously refers to her as “Mama Woverman.”

Anita Woverman’s lines underwent various changes in the two scripts. Both scripts make her appear as rather reflective of her social situation as a woman and the expectations that are linked to her role. When Chris pretends to want to pay her alimony in the presence of the German Major, the MHLC has her say the following: “I really need the work. After all, a woman who’s just been divorced - -” (75; scene 87 continued; not in Appendix). However, she also lost lines that might have appeared too offensive or aggressive in a Hollywood context, such as the moment in which she tells Chris not to inform the Wovermans that they plan on meeting each other after the fake divorce is

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50 She uses Reynolds to receive her divorce and to get away from the restraining environment she is confronted with at the Woverman’s and, finally, even from her annexed country.
finalized. The following lines were eliminated from the final script: “‘You know how old-fashioned they are. They would not approve of this sort of thing’” (88; not in Appendix) as well as “‘I’m not ashamed this isn’t the Middle Ages. Nowadays, women have a right to earn their own living’” (89; not in Appendix). This dialogue can be read as a moment in which “[m]ultiple sites, cultures, and time zones inform the feeling structures” (Naficy, An Accented Cinema 26). This simultaneity and multiplicity touches on a feminine experience and transnational discourses on generational conflicts concerned with gender expectations and the “appropriate” behavior of women. This very moment could have been “capable of producing ambiguity and doubt about the taken-for-granted values of [both the] home and host societ[y]” (Naficy, “Situating Accented Cinema” 113) and in particular the Hollywood discourse. A statement on women’s rights would have been too overt of a critique and thus silenced in the Hollywood film. More apparent in regard to the reduction of female roles and agency from the first to the second script and even to the movie are the lines of the old women living in the Wilhelmina House of Gentlewoman. Whereas the MPCP version attempts to individualize them by providing character traits, background information and foremost a large portion of dialogue, the old women are presented as less unique in the final draft. The movie gives less visibility to the old lady characters and does not even provide the women with names or individualize them the way both scripts do. The representation of the old women is simply reduced to stereotypes in the movie. As a novelist and playwright, Kaus tended to construct a variety of characters and offered insights into their motives for certain actions. By the film’s reduction of the elderly women, such an introspection or at least closer observation is lost. The scripts clearly favored a reading of the women as valuable and important members of society, who even in their old age has the ability to participate in overtraining the dominant system.

Another major difference between both scripts and the movie lies in the absence in the scripts of the slapstick that was incorporated into the movie version. The following
examples illustrate the explicitness in which the movie makes fun of the Nazi regime.

The newer script describes the scene in the Café Savoy as such:

As Chris shoves the sandwich in his pocket the officer grabs him. Chris wallops him – and as the officer staggers from the blow, two Gestapo men leap at Chris. Somebody blows a whistle and almost immediately the entire café is engaged in a first-rate blitzkrieg! – fists, men, furniture, and feet fly – shots are fired – general bedlam reigns (67; scene 74; not in Appendix).

The movie, on the other hand, portrays this scene in a far more comedic manner, as slapstick. The officer continuously gets hit on the head, almost in robotic fashion, by the surrounding officers who all constantly say “Heil Hitler!” The German soldiers’ inability to think for themselves or follow simple orders is also part of the very first scene of the movie. Here, due to the mandatory formulaic greeting, Zellfritz and his superior are constantly hindered from having a conversation. The constant lifting of the arm, which accompanies the “Heil Hitler!” greeting, is exaggerated to an extent where Zellfritz asks Mueller to massage his arm.

Another example of more overt humor in the film in comparison to the scripts is the scene in which Zellfritz criticizes Thomas for his smoking. He says, “You smoke too much - the Führer never smokes,” to which Raynolds calmly responds, “He will someday.” Another very brief but witty exchange between Anita and Zellfritz, who continuously functions as the representative of the German Army and hence is constantly the target of Dutch hatred, is the following: “We’ll see a great deal of each other. You cannot hide from Major Zellfritz,” says the Major after Anita gets her divorce. Anita, who is portrayed as being annoyed with Zellfritz’s constant advances, responds: “Where I will go, it would take a blood hound to find me.” The Major ignores the rejection and says, “I smell good!,” trying to express that he has a good sense of smell, just like a dog. Anita says, “Yeah, just like a dog!” and thus puts the Major on the same level as a dog.
A last scene worth mentioning in the context of the incompetence that the Dutch characters ascribe to the Nazis is again only part of the movie: Zellfritz once again tries to impress Anita and surprises her with a dinner. While he takes various items out of a basket, he explains their origin, which he associates to the successful conquests of the German Army. He says, “Port from Belgium, cheese from Yugoslavia, wine from France, fish from Norway – Heaven protect the Führer! He certainly gets together a wonderful table!” Anita interrupts and asks in exaggerated disbelief, “No caviar?” Zellfritz looks ashamed and mumbles, “No, unfortunately, no caviar…” Anita continues: “I thought the Führer promised you caviar by fall?” Zellfritz continues to stammer: “But when the caviar was coming… we were going… we expect it now in the spring.” Anita does not give up and bluntly asks him, “What year?” Zellfritz has no answer but “Well, that’s … eeeehm…” Anita interrupts his stuttering with a final question: “Where did you get that beautiful bird?” Zellritz’s answer once more puts the joke back on him and the incompetency and unpopularity of the Nazis: “We get the bird from all the countries.” The film illustrates the Germans’ conquest and mocks it at the same time. The comedy reduces the conquest to a material and object-driven invasion of countries and thus silences and simplifies the impact such annexations had on the inhabitants of those countries.

Before concluding the script analysis and comparison of the script to the film version, I would like to mention two instances in which the film made changes that updated the script, adapted it to current politics and also adapted it to a specifically American audience. During the first night that Zellfritz spends at the Woverman’s house, Chris attempts to knock out the Major when he leaves the room to see who is at the door. The scripts suggested a beer mug as a prop, which, according to the script, would have been part of a whole mug collection. When Chris does not manage to hit Zellfritz over the head, he pretends that his movements were part of a story he just told: Holding a lamp stand in the movie, Chris explains that he was just telling the Wovermans about the
Statue of Liberty: “And there she stands, right in New York Harbor. All lit up like this... The Statue of Liberty.” Zellfritz is visibly irritated by this and screams, “Liberty? Bah! Overrated!” Exchanging a beer mug, which is associated with European beer culture, for a less loaded prop like a lamp stand allowed for a less culturally loaded viewing experience on the part of the American audience. Another probably more politically motivated change was made from the older to the newer version of the script and was then also kept for the film. In this scene, Chris, who is believed to be Hendrik Woverman, is accused of having desecrated a poster of Adolf Hitler. In the older script version, Hendrik supposedly drew the mustache of Stalin (145; scene 173 continued 2; not in Appendix). In the newer version, he is blamed for having penciled the teeth of the Mikado on the face of the Führer (137, scene 170 continued; not in Appendix). In the film version, it is not only the teeth but also the spectacles of the Mikado that he supposedly drew on the poster. Having both features on the poster adds to the visual impact of the scene. Changing the image from features of Stalin to that of the Mikado alludes to Pearl Harbor and the American perception of a bitter defeat. The Pearl Harbor allusion of the movie clearly triggered a more cultural and emotional response, as the attack had unified the American population unlike any other earlier event.
CHAPTER V
VON WIEN NACH HOLLYWOOD. ERINNERUNGEN—EXILE AS OPPORTUNITY

Meine Familie, mein kleines Haus, meine Freunde – das ist mein Daheim.

Gina Kaus, Von Wien nach Hollywood. Erinnerungen

Autobiographical Writing

When Gina Kaus’s autobiography Und was für ein Leben… mit Liebe und Literatur, Theater und Film made its debut in the German-speaking countries in 1979, it did not receive much critical attention. Besides a brief review written by Hilde Spiel published in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung in 1979, it remained unnoticed. Even though Hilde Spiel’s discussion gives credit to Kaus’s work, it aims to situate her in the literary scene of Vienna and identifies her as a “Neue Frau.” Astonishingly, Kaus did not find her way into the then booming literary feminist scholarship interested in particularly these kinds of female examples. Kaus also remained completely absent from the scholarship on female authors during the Weimar Republic or the investigation of women’s position in the field of cultural production conducted during the 1980s and 1990s. In 1993, however, Kaus was mentioned in the annotated “Auswahlbibliographie” by Sabine Rohlf and Susanne Rockenbach in the Internationales Jahrbuch der Exilforschung entitled Frauen im Exil – Zwischen Anpassung und Selbstbehauptung.

Sibylle Mulot’s afterword in Von Wien nach Hollywood. Erinnerungen, a reprint of Kaus’s memoirs with a different publishing house in 1990, however, does provide additional facts and figures in connection with Gina Kaus’s life. The same applies to Mulot’s afterwords in the Ullstein reprints of Kaus’s novels, Die Schwestern Kleh and Der Teufel in Seide. Aside from commenting on Kaus’s marginal discussion in secondary literature, Mulot is also keen on pointing to the connections between the author’s novels and her autobiography.
In 2000, Andrea Capovilla offered a re-reading of her autobiography along with that of Vicky Baum51 in her article “Gina Kaus und Vicky Baum: Von Wien nach Hollywood. True Stories” in Literatur als Geschichte des Ich. In her 2004 book Entwürfe weiblicher Identität in der Moderne, Capovilla discussed Kaus along with other female émigrées such as Milena Jesenska, Vicki Baum, and Alice Rühle-Gerstel, giving insights into these writers’ lives and works. The latest publication by Hildegard Atzinger in 2008, Gina Kaus: Schriftstellerin und Öffentlichkeit, focuses mainly on the fictional output of Kaus and utilizes her autobiography only as a source of information to shed light on the last years of Kaus’s life.

Method

A close analysis of Kaus’s narrative strategies as well as a focus on omissions in her 1979 autobiography Und was für ein Leben (1979) opens up larger questions about nationality, identity and the idea of belonging. I seek to uncover the ways in which exile is reflected in the practice of autobiographical writing. I shed light on Kaus’s ability to adapt in the United States and her decision to remain and become a citizen. I am especially interested in the discourses Kaus mobilizes to portray herself as a flexible and nationless being. As this chapter shows, Kaus’s autobiography can be understood as the last and deliberate attempt of a marginalized author to compete for recognition and to re-imagine her identity in America as well as in Europe. Over the course of six years, a lively correspondence between Gina Kaus and Robert Neumann, a fellow writer, developed concerning the style and content of her autobiography. I will utilize this

51 The connection between the Viennese author and musician Vicki Baum and Gina Kaus has also been established by other recent scholarship, such as the article “Vicki Baum und Gina Kaus. Ein Porträt zweier Erfolgsschriftstellerinnen der Zwischenkriegszeit” by Hartmut Vollmer in 2001, or “Vicky Baum and Gina Kaus: Female Creativity on the Margins” by Luisa Afonso Soares in 2006.
invaluable communication to give insight into the readership, literary market and its demands during the late 1960s and 70s. The letters between Neumann and Kaus provide answers as to what provoked Kaus to tell her life story, and they also aid in situating her autobiographical act in its specific time.

Kaus’s practice of re-imagining herself through her autobiographical writing, I argue, is an effort to claim her position and legitimacy as a writer amongst well-known male colleagues such as Hermann Broch, Franz Blei, Karl Kraus, Carl Sternheim and Robert Musil. Kaus does not only try to re-inscribe herself into the literary and artistic scene of Vienna and Berlin, she also attempts to position herself autobiographically among the German-Jewish diaspora in Hollywood and the predominantly male exiles such as Thomas Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger, Franz Werfel, and the musicians Schönberg and Strawinsky, whom she calls Nobelemigranten. My dissertation intervenes in the existing exile research and positions Gina Kaus’s career and work in the larger Jewish-German exile community.

Kaus’s Autobiographical Narrative

Gina Kaus’s autobiography Und was für ein Leben was the first book Kaus published after 39 years. By altering the title, the emphasis shifted. The 1990 title stresses the transnational aspect of Kaus’s career and the addition of the subtitle Erinnerungen, meaning “memories,” underscored the highly subjective nature of the text.

Kaus’s autobiography was written in German and aimed at a German-speaking readership. Robert Neumann, Gina Kaus’s friend and successful writer colleague, functioned as a helpful advisor and contact in regards to the German-speaking literary
He helped Kaus with her search for publishers, offered criticism and persistent encouragement during a time when Kaus was convinced that nobody was interested in her writing or person anymore. It was a time in which Kaus, according to Neumann, was suffering from a depression caused by “einer Art innerer Emigration” (“a kind of inner emigration”) (Neumann letter – 8 February 1969). As early as 1966, Neumann suggested that Kaus should write an autobiography. It was the only genre that Neumann thought would help Kaus reestablishing herself as a writer in the “Nachnazon” (sic), the post-Nazi and postwar era (Neumann letter – 8 February 1969). Only Neumann’s letters are preserved in the Frankfurt Exile Archives. Even though this correspondence only offers a very one-sided perspective, it is invaluable in terms of the insights it provides into the readership, literary market and its demands during the late 1960s and 70s.

Kaus autobiography is divided into four chapters. All of them are named after the respective cities and countries she visited or lived in at the time. The first chapter is called “Wien.” It covers the time of World War I until the end of the Habsburg monarchy. The second chapter, entitled “Berlin,” describes the beginning of her writing career and concludes with her flight from the Nazi regime. The following chapter, “Paris und USA,” begins with her rather short exile period in Paris and discusses in great detail Kaus’s emigration to the United States. The final chapter is the shortest one and is an account of the émigrée’s brief visit to the cities of Vienna and Berlin where she attempts to (re)connect with German publishing houses and film production companies. It is also a reflection of her exile experiences and an evaluation of which country she considers her home.

Robert Neumann was part of what Harold B. Segel refers to as “the Vienna coffee house wits” in his book of the same name. Neumann was a writer and knew Gina Kaus from Café Herrenhaus, where such other famous authors like “Vicky Baum, Hermann Broch, Willy Haas, … Robert Musil, Alfred Polgar, and Joseph Roth would meet” (Segel 27).
Kaus’s autobiography deals with a large variety of topics. The female émigrée’s autobiography reflects upon questions of identity, nationality, belonging, relationships, friendships, networking, exclusion as well as the Hollywood émigré class system, to name only a few. However, her major topoi are the following: memory, forgetting, and how these two affect her narrative style, her own presentation and take on her career as a female writer and playwright in a literary scene dominated by men and foremost Kaus’s recurring narrative of being able to quickly adapt to any situation she encounters. Her ability to adapt is threefold: First, it is the ability to flexibly adapt her life to the new circumstances, geographically, politically and socially. Secondly, it is her talent and readiness to analyze and meet the market demands during her time in Austria, Germany and France and thus to secure her employment as a writer and playwright. Lastly, the adaption to a completely new industry and principally unfamiliar medium: the movies and in particular the Hollywood style.

Structure and Memory

Most of the female exile autobiographies were published during the early 1970s and 1980s. This means that they occurred thirty to forty years after the end of World War II. Kaus like many other exiles was faced with being completely reliant on her memory skills. She had to leave all of her belongings behind (Kaus, Von Wien 11; 45): notes and texts she had accumulated during the then 45 years of her life.

Kaus writes that she was only able to take a valise with her when she fled Vienna on May 14, 1938. She states: “Ich musste alles zurücklassen, was ich besaß. Es tut mir heute noch leid um ein halbes Duzend Bilder von Faistauer und um ein paar sehr hübsche Möbelstücke. Aber weitaus am meisten bedaure ich den Verlust von Pepis Briefen” (“I had to leave everything behind that I owned. I am still upset about the loss of half a dozen
paintings by Faistauer and a few beautiful pieces of furniture. However, I am mostly sad about the loss of Pepi’s letters”) (11).

The fact that Kaus had no personal correspondences or notes to return to in order to verify dates of certain events noticeably interfered with her narrative style. Her autobiography resembles the tradition of an oral history account. Kaus’s presentation of her life is often dialogic rather than purely retrospective. She often makes use of direct speech. The autobiographer seems eager to let her readers know whether a person she mentions has now been forgotten or not. Kaus tries to provide these forgotten ones with a voice, thus literally (re)animating them, but she also ensures that these people are interacting with each other. Her dialogical narrative style stresses the communal nature of Kaus’s experience, instead of using a narrative that draws back on a tradition of introspection and in depth self-analysis. This complies with her extensive use of and insight into her networking abilities.

Kaus’s use of a dialogic structure allows for a multivoicedness. Instead of only hearing one voice namely that of the author, the reader experiences a diversity of voices and opinions. This set of voices, a heteroglossia to use Bakhtin’s term, “permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships” (Bakhtin 263). Kaus, who used to be known as an ardent advocate of women’s rights back in Austria and someone who has always shown an interest in issues of gender inequalities in her literary as well as in her filmic work, once again succeeds in using a genre and visibly turning it into “a site for the contestation of meaning” (Smith and Watson 35). Kaus effectively utilizes her autobiography to demonstrate that it is possible to subvert the traditional autobiographical form and the reader’s expectation. By using multivoicedness, Kaus is capable to assert agency and uses it to escape “the paralyzing polarization of the total determination of the subject, on the one hand, or the total freedom of the subject to make meaning on the other” (Smith, and Watson 35). The
emphasis is also not surprising keeping in mind Kaus had been working as a script writer for decades by then and was oftentimes hired to create or rewrite dialogues for movies.

Kaus’s autobiographical narrative is rather driven by memories of personal encounters and experiences than by a strict temporal linearity. Only a few pages into the autobiographical narrative Kaus openly admits to her memory lapses. She freely acknowledges having forgotten in which city people lived or bluntly states that even whole months escape her memory (Kaus, von Wien 11, 22). The fact that Kaus points to her unreliability as a narrator creates a rather unusual reading experience. Her life narrative and the dialogic presentation of it deconstruct any idea of truth or objectivity. Her autobiography is not and does not try to appear as a unified and unquestionable but rather as a work and thought in progress, in flow. This provides the narrative with an unusual dynamic and breaks with the traditional format.

Subsequently, Kaus’s memories are not necessarily linked to exact dates but rather to the nature of interactions with others and very specific situations. For most of the autobiography, the where and how are at the forefront rather than the when. The tremendous importance which Kaus attributes to place is apparent in the chapter titles she chose. Just as her narrative is an ongoing process, very flexible and marked by omissions and jumps, Kaus’s places change quickly as well. Neither her narration nor life map is marked by a very linear structure. The reader follows her on an unpredictable trip not knowing where the narration might take them next. This notion of traveling constant change and adjustability is also encouraged by the way Kaus begins her autobiography.

Rather than offering a retrospect into her childhood or family background, Kaus starts her narrative with a trip: Her very first trip as a twenty-year-old. Kaus presents her young self as a very mobile, adventurous person with very little needs. This presentation of the self as constantly on the move is exemplary and constitutive for Kaus’s autobiography. The reason of her trip: “Ich hatte einen Geliebten, den ich nicht liebte” (“I had a lover I did not love”) (9). Only a few sentences before this statement, the reader
learns that Kaus is married to Pepi, who is fighting at the front of World War I. Kaus narrative style simply narrates without reflecting or pausing over the ambivalences in her life. She thus normalizes her actions.

The ability to find humor in almost every situation is also linked to Kaus’s construction of a quickly adapting self. The writer seeks every opportunity to make her readers aware of her extraordinary skills to work any new system she encounters and her ability to adapt to any situation or environment she is confronted with. Her narrative style is episodic and spontaneous and thus complies with the autobiographical self Kaus construes.

Nationality and Identity—The Autobiographical Self as Nationless

Nowhere does the exile Kaus present her views on nationality and power discourses more clearly than in her “Wien” chapter. Words such as “Vaterland” (“fatherland”), “groß und mächtig” (“big and powerful”), “Staat” (“state”), “Verfassung” (“constitution”) recur frequently and serve to illustrate the discourses circulating shortly before the end of the Habsburg monarchy in Austria.

The autobiographical self oftentimes points to its political naïveté in this chapter and incorporates a variety of voices and opinions by her contemporaries. A significant amount of space is dedicated to conversations between Kaus and Joseph Kranz, her lover and adoptive father. Kaus thus enters her young inexperienced and supposedly politically naïve self into dialogue with a very affluent industrialist and politically a “right by nature” (59) man. She argues that the distance between her and Kranz, who was an influential and well-known figure in Vienna circles, grew significantly when “die Bolschewiken in Moskau die Macht ergriffen” (“the Bolsheviks had taken over power in Moscow”) (58). She observes: “wie durch einen Zauber standen plötzlich alle Menschen entweder rechts oder links. Es war das Ende des unpolitischen Menschen” (“as if under a
spell, suddenly people were standing either right or left. It was the end of the apolitical person”) (58). While Kaus clearly identifies Kranz as being on the political Right, she excludes herself from such a positioning. Furthermore, she refrains from directly placing the people surrounding her along the political spectrum. The autobiographer debunks the idea that any of her friends, mostly intellectuals, were Communists or affiliated with the Communist Party (Kaus, 58). Yet, she lets them speak directly at various occasions throughout her “Wien” chapter and thus leaves it to the reader to decide where to locate them. The political as well as the interpersonal differences between Kranz and Kaus grow extensively and even cause them to stop communicating for an extended period of time.

Kaus’s realization that nations are made and supported by men is prompted by her very first encounters and conversations with Joseph Kranz. Upon reflecting on the war, she remarks:

Ich hatte bis dahin niemals richtig darüber nachgedacht, wer am Krieg schuld sei, außer Serbien und Russland, das in Österreich eingefallen war, als es sich der serbischen Provokation widersetzte. Ich begriff plötzlich, daß mächtige Männer wie dieser Kranz hinter ihren Regierungen standen und ihre Macht stützten. (Until then I had never really thought about who was responsible for the war; besides Serbia and Russia, that had invaded Austria, when it resisted the Serbian provocation I suddenly realized that powerful men like this Kranz stood behind their governments supported its power) (27).

The fact that only a few people, in particular males, are in power and are to decide how to perceive and interpret certain historical events and their political implications deters Kaus from participating in such discourses. Rather than siding with Kranz, whose wealth allowed for Kaus’s material comfort and thus for her writing, the young woman creates a counter-idea: that of the nationless being. A nationless being is one that is free of nationalistic notions, indifferent toward the size of the inhabited state but more focused on whether it provides a constitution that fits the personal needs of its members. Kaus
voices these ideas to Milena Jesenska, one of Franz Kafka’s great loves, during an uprising by workers in the streets of Vienna. Not only does Kaus cite the German Socialists that give speeches that day but also makes the voice of her Jewish friend Werfel heard. Nationalistic, anti-Semitic, Socialist and Marxist ideas are all present at the same time and in the same place. The autobiographer thus gives voice to the main political spectrum of Austria shortly before the end of the monarchy. However, Kaus takes sides with the protesting workers and marches with them in solidarity, not without describing the class difference that also results in a spatial demarcation during this march. Whereas the workers marched in the middle of the street, the bourgeoisie who shared the workers’ ideas accompanied them on the sidewalk.

When Jesenska and Kaus find out about the emperor’s resignation, the atmosphere between the two women changes significantly: Milena is extremely happy and tries to hide her good mood from her friend. Kaus lets her know “Tu dir keinen Zwang an. Ich habe kein Gefühl für Nationalität. Ich will in einem Staat leben, dessen Verfassung mir zusagt, aber es ist mir ganz gleichgültig, ob er groß oder klein ist” (“Knock yourself out. I have no notion of nationality. I want to live in a state whose constitution suites me; but it does not matter to me whether it is big or small”) (64).

Again Kaus’s autobiography allows insight into various discourses and opinions from people of different class backgrounds and political affiliations. Additionally, her statement reflects on a more general attitude exiles have in terms of belonging, according to Edward Said. In his essay “Reflections on Exile”, Said argues that the “exile jealously insists on his or her right to refuse to belong” (182). Kaus portrays her early autobiographical self as having embraced this attitude long before it actually finds itself confronted with the circumstances of being an expatriate.

Jesenska is not impressed with Kaus’s indifference towards nationality and responds: “Du warst nie unterdrückt” (“You have never been oppressed”) (Kaus, Von Wien 64). The tension between the two women reaches a climax when Kaus airs her
opinion and exacerbation about a group of young men, who tear off officers’ shoulder straps. Whereas Kaus sides with the officers arguing that they probably had not enlisted voluntarily and possibly hated the war even more than those men who were now attacking them, Milena Jesenska sides with the young men. Jesenska even goes so far as to deny Kaus to be part of “the people” or even being in any position to fully grasp the idea of “the people” and impugns Kaus’s competence as well as the position to identify with them: “[D]as Volk. Davon verstehst du nichts, du Demokratin. Du weißt alles nur aus Büchern. Ich bin aus dem Volk” (“The people. You have no understanding of that, you democrat. Everything you know stems from books. I am the people”) (64). After this short exchange, Kaus uses the term Bohemian and gets corrected by Jesenka, who wants her to use the term Czech from now on. Kaus reacts with a lack of understanding, even insults Jesenka and leaves.

Toward the end of the “Wien” chapter, Kaus recounts one more political exchange, this time with Joseph Kranz. He is eager to hear Kaus’s opinion on whether he should switch to the Socialist Party, which he believes to gain extensive power in the future. The account of this conversation clearly constructs Kranz’ motivation for the switch as economical: “Meine Geschäfte – nicht nur das Spirituskartell – haben immer die ganze Monarchie umspannt, und jetzt ist die Monarchie auseinandergefallen, aber die Sozialisten sind international, sie werden die Grenzen überbrücken“ (“My businesses – not only the spiritus cartel – have always embraced the whole monarchy, and now the socialists are international, they will bridge and overcome the borders”) (66). Kranz’ wish to switch parties and to quickly give up everything Kaus had known him to believe in is construed as being the moment in which she realized that the country she had known came to an end: “Das war für mich der Tag, an dem Österreich zusammenbrach.“ (“This, for me marked the day, on which Austria collapsed”) (66). The end of the monarchy also marks the end of this chapter.
Paris and USA—Kaus’s exile experience

In her “Paris und USA” chapter, the dialogic nature of Kaus’s autobiography surfaces again and the topoi of flexibility and adaptation in even life-threatening situations receives emphasis as well as the recurring narrative of having the talent to contact the right people at the right point in time. Kaus portrays herself as never too shy to ask for help and as very proactive: “Ich hatte eine gute Bekannte …, sie telephonierte herum, und eine Stunde später nannte sie mir die École Saint Joseph. Eine weitere Stunde später war ich mit Peter dort” (“I had a good friend…, she made several phone calls and an hour later she named Ecole Saint Joseph. An hour after that I went there with Peter.”) (176). Kaus praises her son Peter, for example, for his change in character and mind since they had left Austria. “Ich glaube, die Flucht, die Notwendigkeit, sich in einer fremden Sprache durchzusetzen, hatten ihn aufgeweckt. Er war in Wien ein verträumter Junge gewesen; aber jetzt hatte er sich verändert” (“I think the necessity of negotiating in a foreign language had woken him up. He used to be a dreamy boy”) (Kaus, 176). Kaus’s positive attitude toward exile as a possibility for change rather than as a limiting or traumatic experience that paralyzes is hence also a characteristic that she applies favorably to others. Consequently, the mother rhetorically transfers her own approach to exile and shows how successful and even fruitful it can be when embraced by others. Kaus does the same in connection with her mother, Ida Wiener. She had moved Ida Wiender, eventhough sick and elderly to Berlin and later to the United States (178; 211).

During her time in France, Kaus was extremely productive. Kaus started working with and for Arnold Pressburger, an Austrian film producer, who later produced *Hangman also Die* (Fritz Lang & Arnold Pressburger, USA, 1943). Along with the brothers Eis, Otto and Egon, Kaus developed the story to *Prison sans Barreaux* (Léonide Moguy, F, 1938) and also provided Pressburger with the story to his film *Conflit* (Léonide Moguy, F, 1938), which was based on her novel *Die Schwestern Kleh*. Gina Kaus was further hired by Pressburger to write “the big scene” when he had given up
working with other emigrants in order not to be labeled and categorized as an emigrant himself (180). In addition to her film work, Kaus also succeeded in writing a new novel, *Der Teufel nebenan*, for her publisher in the Netherlands.

Kaus’s accomplishments during her time in Paris appear even more exceptional, taking into consideration that she also had to arrange for Eduard Frischauer, her partner, to be released from imprisonment in Zurich by getting him a new visa. It was inevitable, according to Kaus, that Frischauer would have faced death if her attempts to aid him had failed. Even under this tremendous pressure, she never appears as paralyzed. She presents herself as remaining flexible and mobile and depicts her autobiographical self as proactive and innovative. She contacts people she knows might be able to help. When the situation appears entirely hopeless, Kaus shares her sorrows with a colleague and succeeds with this approach. However, it is noteworthy that this colleague was none other than Charles Gombault, editor in chief and publisher of the *France Soir* at the time.

Kaus’s strategic talent in contacting important and powerful people serves to save lives. The same is true for a situation in which Frischauer gambled Kaus’s money for her flight from Paris. Kaus once again succeeds in connecting with the right person, in this case a partner of Pressburger, who had helped her before and who gives her a check for over a thousand dollars without further ado to purchase the tickets for the ship to America, thus allowing her to save her family’s and her own life.

Kaus’s talent for creating tension and excellent narrative timing in her novels, plays and movies also is apparent in her autobiography. The author’s style noticeably changes when she reconstructs the life-threatening situations in her life. Her sentences become shorter, thus creating a quicker pace. Oftentimes she will repeat significant and loaded terms in short succession to emphasize her point. Her last night in Paris illustrates this recurring style: “Paris hatte aufgehört, eine Touristenstadt zu sein. Paris war eine Stadt der Angst. Wir alle waren voller Angst” (“Paris stopped being a tourist city. Paris was a city of fear. We all were filled with fear”) (Kaus, 184). The parallelly structured
sentences show the abruptly occurring changes in the city of Paris. The pronoun “we” not only includes her closest family and friends but also the countless emigrants that Kaus said to have envied her for her visa and tickets for the passage to the United States (184).

The Big Scene—Surfacing of Kaus’s Movie Experience in her Descriptions of Ellis Island

Once Kaus makes it the United States, she and her sons are faced with another fatal situation: imprisonment on Ellis Island. Despite her desperate situation and uncertain future, Kaus presents herself as very calm. The writer contrasts her tranquility with that of “ein paar Dutzend unbeschreiblich aufgeregt, verzweifelt fluchenden oder weinenden Juden” (“a dozen indescribably excited, cussing or crying Jews”) (187). Not only does Kaus distinguish herself from the other Jews on Ellis Island by stressing their different emotional experience, but also by pointing to the disparity in their geographic and linguistic background: “most of them were Polish and only spoke Yiddish” (187). Kaus does not identify with them at all. Whereas most of the inmates are fear-ridden, the writer portrays herself as rather worried about her sleep (Kaus suffered from an addiction to sleeping pills) and anxious about being interrupted in her gin rummy games with a fellow inmate. The autobiographer’s depiction of her time on Ellis Island appears almost comical. Kaus paints a rather exceptional picture of herself in comparison to the masses of other émigré interned on Ellis Island. This representation of herself is based on her connections. Even though Ellis Island is a confined space, Kaus’s relations to other émigrés, who were already established in the New World and had connections to the press, and her former success on the American book market with her biographical novel Katharina die Große (Catherine the Great) provided a powerful link to the outside world and also a way out. The publication of various articles that described Kaus’s incarceration made an impression on the head of Ellis Island and granted Kaus a rather exceptional and also powerful role. Kaus presents herself as becoming a link between the administration
and her fellow inmates and thus capable of improving the situation for the interned children.

The account of Kaus’s imprisonment is less dialogical than other parts of her autobiography. The only voice the reader is confronted with is that of the administration represented by a man Kaus formally refers to as Herr König, Mr. König. Kaus only lets him speak directly twice. The first time after she receives her special status due to the newspaper articles and later when she is allowed to leave Ellis Island. König tries to explain the island and the policy behind it to Kaus: “‘We have to keep this country clean as our fathers made it’” (189). She quotes him in English, consequently granting greater authenticity to his character but also othering him. He becomes the voice of the American authorities. Nonetheless, Kaus does not comment on or criticize his statement but uses it to illustrate the discourse on America’s immigration policies to her German-speaking readership. The last encounter with König will also be left uncommented by Kaus. Yet again it is portrayed in a manner that leaves it up to the audience to decide as they would like to interpret it.

Kaus’s release from Ellis Island is once again presented as an unexpected turn caused by a connection to the outside world. Just when her hearing reaches a point of seemingly no return and she, usually resourceful, admits to being “vollkommen niedergeschlagen” (“completely despondent”) (190), a benefactor arrives to rescue Kaus. The author’s talent for the “big scene” clearly surfaces in such moments. Kaus plays with the reader’s anticipation, creates tension by narrating herself into an ostensibly hopeless situation, impossible to escape. In this particular situation, Kaus lets the representative of the Viking Press walk right into her hearing and offer the committee any bond (190) they would want. Kaus’s descriptions infused with snippets of direct speech are quick-paced, nearly documentary-like in nature.

The film-like quality also becomes apparent when Kaus recounts her departure from Ellis Island: Unbeknownst to Kaus and her sons, commissioner König is also on
board the ferry that takes them over to New York. König’s actions appear exaggerated and too intimate in comparison to Kaus’s other encounters with him. The administrator shakes hands with all three and once again is quoted in English when he says, “I wanted to be the first one to greet you in the USA” (191). Then, whilst putting his hands on each of the sons’ shoulders he exclaims, “One day you will say the best way to come to America is over Ellis Island” (191). Kaus adds to his statement, “Damit übergab er uns den Reportern” (“With that he delivered us to the reporters”) (191), hence surprising her readers, who were up to that point unaware of the presence of the media and at the same time contextualizing König’s gestures. König’s actions, therefore, appear even more staged and geared toward the media rather than the people concerned. The autobiographical narration plays with the narrated space in a manner comparable to a movie camera. By zooming in on the action and only later panning back to present the whole picture, Kaus demonstrates her control over the narration.

In the United States

Whereas Kaus praises her son Peter and her mother at various times throughout the autobiography (176, 178, 211) for their ability to adapt and perceive exile as a chance rather than as a limitation, Kaus has no understanding for her partner’s, Eduard Frischauer’s, continued gambling on the new continent. She looks down on his “lächerlichen Stolz” (“absurd ideas about pride”) (192) and ideas about honor but applauds those émigrés who made the best of their new situation. In comparison to Eduard, she argues, they were more flexible. Kaus enumerates some of the career changes illustrating the tremendous adjustments émigrés had to make. She recalls a former lawyer who became a driving instructor, someone who became an amateur photographer, and finally a formerly rich man who failed to transfer his money to the United States and used all his finely tailored suits to work as a waiter (192). Kaus has no
sympathy for Eduard’s behavior and inflexibility. She presents herself as far more realistic in regard to her financial situation and her limited options for making a living as a writer. “[I]ch war mit meiner Familie in einer fremden Stadt, wo ich kaum jemanden kannte und keine Ahnung hatte, wovon ich am Ende der Woche meine Hotelrechnung bezahlen sollte” (“I found myself with my family in an unfamiliar city in which I did not know anybody and did not know how I was going to pay the hotel bill by the end of the week”) (193). Eduard’s attitude toward playing bridge as a reasonable source of income drove Kaus away from him. The autobiographer makes it appear as a very rational decision to leave him behind while she was already establishing new work connections and securing her future in Hollywood. “Es fiel mir nicht schwer Abschied zu nehmen. Ich liebte ihn nicht mehr, und ich wollte mit den unausbleiblichen Katastrophen nichts mehr zu tun haben” (“It was not hard for me to leave. I did not love him anymore and I did not want to be around for the inevitable catastrophes”) (195). Even though Kaus leaves Frischauer in New York and claims to be done and no t understanding in regard to his gambling addiction, Kaus will not only help him pay off his gambling debts but also marry him a few months later. This represents another instance for Kaus’s inconsequential behavior presented as logical and rational. Nonetheless, Kaus also gained a huge advantage from this marriage: her sons and Kaus herself could switch from their expiring visitor visa to an application for American citizenship.

Kaus puts special emphasis on the network of friendships and connections she established during her beginnings in Hollywood. She draws clear parallels to the coffee house culture she had become so used to in Vienna. About a befriended couple, Ernst Deutsch, a famous Austrian actor, and his wife, Kaus gushes “Zu ihnen konnte man jederzeit hingehen ohne eingeladen zu sein oder sich anzusagen; es war wie ein Kaffeehaus” (“You could visit them anytime without being formally invited or giving prior notification; it was like a coffee house”) (201). Kaus finds the familiar in the new. She appropriates and acquires the new place and makes it her own.
Kaus’s recollections about her time in Hollywood are further marked by detailed descriptions of her connections and friendships with fellow émigrés and what they were working on at the time. These descriptions include anecdotes about Salka Viertel, Bertolt Brecht, Hanns Eisler, and Jay Dratler. However, Kaus clearly distinguishes between them and those émigrés she refers to as “Nobelemigration” (205). Kaus herself coins this expression and uses it to refer to the “distinguished” and predominately male émigrés. Her term also carries the meaning of “gentry.” Kaus thus hints at the existence of a class system among the German-Jewish community in Hollywood. According to Kaus, this particular group consisted of “Thomas Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger, Franz Werfel, die Musiker Schönberg, Strawinsky und Dutzender anderer berühmter Leute” (“Thomas Mann, Lion Feuchtwanger, Franz Werfel, the musicians Schönberg, Strawinsky and dozens of other famous people”) (205). According to Kaus, they would not mingle with the less fortunate émigrés and would only speak German (206). One of the most important factors that distinguished the Nobelemigranten from the rest of the émigrés was that “Nobelemigranten arbeiteten nicht in den Studios” (“Nobelemigranten did not work in the studios”) (206). She also stresses the huge difference in financial backgrounds of the two emigrant groups. Kaus’s tone becomes sarcastic and slightly bitter when she wonders whether any producer ever had the idea of offering Thomas Mann a job in the film business (206).

By recounting conversations between herself, Friedrich Torberg, Leonhard Frank and Alfred Neumann about their failure to establish themselves in the Hollywood studios, Kaus presents herself not only as being without any reservation toward the medium film but also as rather talented in adapting by switching from writing books and plays to writing for the movies. “Es war herzzerbrechend, wie hilflos diese hochbegabten Männer der ihnen fremden Aufgabe gegenüberstanden… Auch die verkappte Verachtung, die diese Literaten für die Filmarbeit hatten, mag bei ihrem Mißerfolg eine Rolle gespielt haben” (“It was heartbreaking to see how these highly talented men faced this unfamiliar
challenge…The hidden contempt which these literati had for film work might have played a role in their failure”) (207). She makes it very clear that these men not only viewed such work as undesirable but also as dishonorable. Kaus thus gives voice to the then prominent discourse among novelists afraid to sacrifice their literary talent and artistic integrity for money.53

Kaus’s narrative of the ever adapting and adjusting woman, who was not only trying to survive but also proved to be successful in whatever she did, surfaces once again. Male émigrés, on the other hand, are portrayed as stubborn and uncompromising. The Nobelmigranten were capable of doing so due to their fortunate financial independence, and the other ones seemed just as proud but were less fortunate with their attitude. Kaus, in contrast, has little understanding for either of the groups, claiming that “Ich konnte es mir nicht leisten, darüber nachzudenken, ob es ehrenvoll sei, für den Film zu arbeiten. Ich brauchte das Geld und zwar sofort” (“I could not afford to question whether it was honorable or not to work for the movies. I needed the money, and I needed it immediately”) (207).

Kaus is persistent and determined in her attempt to make a decent living in Hollywood. However, the formerly successful, well-known author and playwright also fails at her first attempt at working for the studios (207). Yet, Kaus does not give up; she is tireless in figuring out the market demands of the Hollywood film business. She succeeds quickly and manages to come up with an anti-Hitler story and also receives a contract to write the film script for a former novel of hers, Überfahrt. Gina Kaus was the one who had to support her family. There was no breadwinner, which was a very unusual situation in comparison to those described in the autobiographies or more well-known

53 Richard Fine summarizes the experience of other male Hollywood writers similarly: “[V]irtually every writer was disquieted or unnerved by the [studio] experience,” even though “not all writers came to a sad end in Hollywood” (13).
female émigrés. She was aware that taking every possible job in the film industry might ruin her standing within the business, but she still continued to do so: “Es war sicherlich nicht gut für meine Reputation, dass ich jeden Job annahm, auch wenn mir die Geschichte nicht gefiel, oder wenn ich das Gefühl hatte, dass sie mir nicht lag, aber ich brauchte das Geld” (“It was probably not good for my reputation that I accepted every job, even if I disliked the story, or if I had the feeling that it did not suit me, but I needed the money”) (209). Kaus’s reflections as a female exile script writer not only offer a counter narrative to the traditional male-connoted exile experience but also serve to inscribe and position herself as Hollywood’s artistic German-Jewish diaspora and also present us with a rather unusual outlook on working in the film business. It deconstructs the myths of artistic freedom and self-realization as prime motivators; financial pressure played a major role.

The chapter about her time in Paris and the United States ends with her recollections of the end of World War II and the McCarthy era. Interestingly enough, Kaus does not discuss her own or Eduard Frischauer’s encounters with or hearings before the Committee on Un-American Activities. However, she discusses other émigrés’ encounters with the Committee, such as those of Hanns Eisler and Bertolt Brecht (216, 217). Kaus claims that McCarthy’s influence on Hollywood was rather unimportant. Kaus, who constantly draws parallels between fascism and the McCarthy era, claims that America was saved from fascism by means of TV. Kaus perceives TV as a “Gegner” (“enemy”) (219) and a worthy opponent for Hitler. According to Kaus, it is a medium that should have broadcasted the Reichstag speeches from 1930 to 1932.

“Berlin und Wien” Chapter—Kaus back in Vienna and Berlin

The last chapter of Kaus’s autobiography, “Berlin und Wien,” ends with a journey, like her first. This time her trip takes her back to Europe. This chapter is
contrary to the previous ones characterized by Kaus’s growing unwillingness to (re)adapt to her former home country. Her descriptions of her native city, Vienna, are marked by estrangement and feelings of alienation.

First, Kaus recounts her visit to Switzerland, where her son studied at the time. She mentions that she met with Berthold Viertel und Bertolt Brecht during her stay. From there, Kaus quickly moves on to her memories of her visit to her hometown, Vienna. Her description of 1948 Vienna is marked by a portrayal of rubble and destruction. The émigré decides to revisit the place where her house used to be. “Dort gab es jetzt überhaupt kein Haus mehr, nur Schutt, nur einen kleinen Rasenplatz” (“There was no house there whatsoever anymore, only rubble, only a little piece of lawn”) (223). Kaus goes into great detail recollecting the house’s history starting with its first owner, Graf Montenuevo, in the mid 1800s, to Kaus’s time, to its function as an air-raid shelter, in which almost four hundred people died during World War II, up to its current purpose: “Wer immer das Grundstück jetzt besaß, hatte beschlossen, keinen Neuaufbau darauf zu errichten, sondern es als ein Art Grabstätte für die vierhundert Toten zu belassen” (“Whoever now owned the property had decided to not construct a new building, but rather to keep it as a kind of gravesite for the four hundred dead people”) (224).

Kaus feels estranged from Vienna. Nothing is like it used to be anymore:

Vienna was dirty in a way that I could have never imagined. It was calm. Only a few and outdated cars were driving on Kärntner street, once the most elegant and busiest street in the city. One hardly saw pedestrians, they were dressed shabbily. And I barely ran into friends—of course not. Most of my friends were Jews and had emigrated somewhere. The coffee houses where I used to meet my friends—‘Café Central’ and the ‘Café Herrenhaus’—didn’t exist anymore… Now Vienna is supposed to have become an elegant, lively city once again; however, back when I saw it again after ten years, it was bleak) (224).

The area around the Prater, Vienna’s fair grounds and its famous ferris wheel, were still intact. However, Kaus perceives them as different: “[E]s war anders als früher” (“It was different from the past”) (225).

In this last chapter, Kaus also reflects on her film work in Germany. All producers enjoy her work and one of Germany’s most successful actresses at the time, Lilli Palmer, pushes for Kaus to write a script for her. Even though Kaus’s visit to Germany is quite productive in terms of her profession and also opens up more possibilities in regard to potential future appointments and contracts, the émigrée does not want to stay. She reflects:

Ich hätte leicht einen neuen Auftrag von der Herzog oder von Brauner bekommen können, zu ausgezeichneten Bedingungen, ich war eine hochbezahlte Schriftstellerin, aber ich wollte nicht mehr. Weder in München noch in Berlin hatte ich Freunde. Die Emigranten hatten sich in verschiedenen Städte verloren oder waren enttäuscht nach Amerika zurückgekehrt

(I could have easily gotten a new contract, I was a highly paid writer, but I had simply had enough. I had no friends, neither in Munich nor in Berlin. The emigrants had dispersed into different cities or had returned disappointedly to America) (233).

Kaus had no network to rely on anymore. Everyone was gone. Working and being successful were not enough anymore for Kaus to convince herself that Vienna or Berlin could be her potential home again. Kaus’s feeling of estrangement grows more and more apparent. She says, “Ich wurde entsetzlich einsam und fuhr heim” (“I became incredibly
lonely and went home”) (234). Kaus literally makes her narrative-self stop by inserting a paragraph followed by a reassured “Jawohl – heim” (“Yes indeed – home”) (234). The autobiography now takes on a sudden and rather unexpected meta-level, a moment of clear self-reflexivity: “Ich habe das so hingeschrieben, aber gleichzeitig empfinde ich, wie richtig das ist. Ich war Amerika natürlich sehr dankbar, weil es mich aufgenommen hatte, als mein Vaterland mich verstoßen hatte. Aber das allein ist es nicht. Es waren – und sind – viele große und kleine Dinge” (“I wrote it down like this, but at the same time I feel how right that is. I was very indebted to America, of course, that it took me in when my fatherland abandoned me. But that is not the only reason. There were—and still are—many big and little things”) (234). Kaus’s narrative style once again appears as unpredictable. Not only does she switch to a self-reflexive mode, but she also jumps back and forth in between the past and the present tense. This time the aforementioned multivoicedness also appears as a link between her former and current self.

Kaus concludes her autobiography in the present tense, thus putting emphasis on her total acceptance of America, specifically Los Angeles, as her home. “Meine Familie, mein kleines Haus, meine Freunde – das ist mein Daheim” (“My family, my house, my friends—that is my home”) (235).

Women and Autobiography

Kaus’s autobiographical narrative was published in the late 1970s, a time in which, as Katharina Gesternberger points out in her book *Truth to Tell: German Women’s Autobiographies and Turn-of-the-Century Culture*, “women wrote autobiography to explore the meanings of femininity and female sexuality. These confessional narratives no longer caused the scandal stirred up by their turn-of-the-century counterparts, but they, too, aimed to hold a critical mirror up to patriarchal society” (Gerstenberger 181). This also holds true for Kaus’s autobiography. However, the fact that Kaus was an exile and
wrote her narrative in America for a German-speaking market after a more than four decades long absence from that particular culture had more complex implications than Gerstenberger’s quote suggests. Kaus’s narrative aims to accomplish more than to hold up the mirror to a patriarchal society; it wishes, as I have argued above, to liberate herself from the position of a forgotten, marginalized and undervalued author. She attempted to compete for recognition and to re-imagine her identity in America as well as in Europe.

Kaus’s participation in the autobiographical genre is not an exception, as females, “like many other marginalized groups, often produce many representations that assign new meaning to their positions to counter the fictions that affix them in an asymmetrical binary system” (Kosta 13). Attempting to escape the fate of so many other exiles, namely that of being forgotten in their home countries, Kaus tried to not only re-inscribe herself in history and to give herself a voice but also to provide those, who had already fallen to oblivion, with a voice. The loss of voice in Kaus’s case not only stems from being a female but also from belonging to another marginalized group, namely that of the exile, the exiled, who left and never returned. The absence from the literary market was a seemingly insurmountable obstacle, as becomes apparent from the Neumann correspondence. The only way to find her way back into this market was by participating in a genre that would allow Kaus to remind the members of the German-speaking community of her existence and in doing so by positioning herself amongst well-known male writer colleagues whom readers already knew. This also applies to her description of her time in Hollywood. Again, the female screenwriter situates herself among the Hollywood émigré society consisting of famous, mostly male novelists, musicians, dramatists, and directors, many of whom were well-known to her readership in Europe.

Kaus’s conscious resuscitation of the past creates a literary manifestation of cultural memory, a link between the present and the past, in particular a past of a community that had mostly disappeared at the time she was writing her life narrative. Her use of a dialogical structure allowed her not only to make herself and others heard but
also to undo the exclusion from official discourses. Her autobiography can be seen as a way to “talk back” as well as to inhabit and inflect a range of subjective I’s, as Sidonie Smith has pointed out so rightly in regard to other female autobiographies in her book *Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body*. This idea of talking back was not what Kaus’s writer colleague Robert Neumann had in mind when considering his statements in his correspondence with Kaus. Her use of a multivoicedness, a heteroglossia, also complies with her understanding of herself as a nationless being. Kaus’s ideas of power and power discourses go hand in hand with such an approach, as it undermines one-dimensionality and uniformity. When Kaus’s autobiographical self argues, “Ich habe gar kein Gefühl für Nationalität” (“I have no notion of nationality”) (Kaus, *Von Wien* 64), Kaus identifies herself as being free of the wish to belong to a certain nation. This allows her to create a distance, a perspective of an outsider, who claims to not be entangled with the nation. Kaus strategically places this detachment during the time before the end of the Habsburg monarchy. She thus places her concern with nationality, power and authoritative discourses, chronologically speaking, decades before she herself will be forced into the existence of a nationless being. The writer thus claims a theoretical engagement and comes to terms with this circumstance before she even experiences it first-hand.

**Correspondences between Gina Kaus and Robert Neumann**

In the following I would like to shed light on the circumstances and possible reasons that motivated the exiled Kaus to write an autobiography, as partaking in this particular genre was not her idea in the first place. It was Robert Neumann who suggested exploring this literary form. The correspondence between Kaus and Neumann also vividly illustrates the patriarchal expectations in connection with female autobiographical narratives.
He strongly advised her against attempting to write novels as she used to, arguing that “Du fändest zunächst nicht den Anschluß” (“At first, you might not be able to continue where you left off”) (Neumann letters page 14 – February 8th, 1966). At the same time Robert Neumann was eager to show Kaus that she was still present in and part of the literary market. He would send Kaus catalogues which proved that she was still read and that her books were still available (Neumann letters page 15 – July 7th, 1966). Neumann predicted that it was impossible for her to live up to her earlier successes under the contemporary circumstances. Nonetheless, Neumann was certain that an autobiography by Kaus would be very successful on the German-speaking market.

Robert Neumann had very concrete ideas as to how Gina Kaus should write it. He imagined a “Rousseau in weiblich” (“a female Rousseau”) (Neumann letters page 16 – September 12th, 1966). He imagined Kaus’s autobiographical writing to appear as confessions of a successful woman who does not love herself (Neumann letters page 16 – September 12th, 1966). Furthermore, Neumann wanted Kaus to include eroticism in her life writings, believing that such a style would easily be marketable: “Wegen des Verlegers eines solchen Buches (besonders, wenn Du das Erotische mitleidslos einbeziehst), mach dir keine Sorgen, da helfe ich Dir gerne” (“Don’t worry about a publisher for such a book, it will be my pleasure to help you [especially, if you recklessly include eroticism]” (Neumann, “To Kaus” – September 12th, 1966). As becomes apparent throughout Neumann’s part of the correspondence, Kaus did not feel comfortable with such a style. She did not believe that she had met enough important people or that her life would interest anyone. Nonetheless, her male colleague unwaveringly attempts to convince Kaus that she would need to be erotically indiscreet.

In September 1969, after having shown part of Kaus’s autobiographical script to their mutual friend Marton, Neumann tells Kaus that the success of her book would depend highly on how indiscrete and anecdotal she could write. Neumann was convinced that Kaus presented a female type that had not been presented in an autobiography yet: A
woman with a great erotic reputation, who was refreshingly “undemonic” and surprisingly resolute. Neumann was imagining a Du Barry who is secretly modest (Neumann letters page 21 – September 5th, 1969).

After the Frankfurt book fair in October 1970, Neumann contacts Gina Kaus again to tell her that her autobiography would not be publishable if Kaus could not manage to rid herself of her private inhibitions. Neumann wants Kaus to write an Alma-Mahler-autobiography including delicate erotic details and presenting a romantically emancipated woman of the 1920s. He urged her to be more exhibitionistic and wanted her to produce poetry on the basis of personal and historical truth. He argued that the potential publishers still remembered Gina Kaus’s name but had a rather vague recollection of her overall image and character. Vague enough, Neumann argued, that the inclusion of intimate anecdotes would appear plausible and considered worth publishing (Neumann letters page 23 – October 6th, 1970). Moreover, Robert Neumann suggested that Kaus should present herself as a woman with a falsely bad reputation, who is rather idyllic, romantic and monogamous. She should present herself as a woman, who, with or without her own doing, spread the idea that she was a Messalina (Neumann letters page 24 letter – October 20th, 1970).

As the final version of the autobiography shows, Kaus did not follow Neumann’s suggestions when it came to including delicate erotic details. Neumann’s ideas clearly did not comply with Kaus’s ideas. Her male colleague’s letters repetitively suggest an objectification of Kaus and his wish for her to employ a “confessional” writing style. This would have meant an identification as well as internalization of stereotypes linked to females and an embracement of male fantasies, in short, everything Kaus had been known to consequently fight and deconstruct in her works for the German literary market. Kaus’s autobiography does not show traces of Neumann’s insistence on a “hemmungslos ins Fiktive vordringenden Überaufrichtigkeit in sexialibus” (“a sexual uber-sincerity which would scrupulously advance into fiction”) (Neumann “To Kaus” – October 6th
Reading Kaus’s autobiography with Neumann’s suggestions in mind makes it seem as if Kaus plays with exactly these expectations. Rather than feeding into male sexual fantasies, she chooses to refrain from describing erotic or sexual encounters. Her narrative choice in regards to her reunion with her husband Pepi at the front represents one of the most obvious examples of this argument. She writes: “Über das Wiedersehen nach sechs Monaten kann ich nicht schreiben” (“I cannot write about this reunion after six months”) (Kaus, Von Wien 17). The autobiographer uses a very self-reflexive style. Kaus presents herself as very conscious in terms of what information she feels comfortable sharing and demonstrates her control over the narrative. This moment further illustrates what Sidonie Smith explored in her work Poetics of Women’s Autobiographies. Smith’s theory is concerned with the double-voiced structure of women’s narratives, which according to her reveals the tensions between women’s desire for narrative authority and their concern about excessive self-exposure. Kaus resists reinforcing the patriarchal culture’s fictionalization of women and thus counteracts Neumann’s ideas. Kaus’s autobiographical style, like many other female autobiographies and feminist writing published in the 1970s and 1980s, attempts to challenge the gender ideologies surrounding women.
CONCLUSION

As this dissertation demonstrates, Austrian-Jewish novelist, playwright and screenwriter Gina Kaus has been exiled and marginalized in numerous ways: As a woman in the Vienna and Berlin literary circles, she had to fight for recognition as a female writer among the male-dominated literati circles. Once Kaus received attention as a writer, she was marginalized by being labeled as an “Unterhaltungsautorin” and thus relegated to the ranks of writers of women’s literature. Nonetheless, Kaus continued her fight against the prevailing heteronormative gender discourses by publishing articles, addressing issues of inequality in her novels and by actively educating and counseling women. Once the National Socialists annexed Austria, the Jewish Kaus had to flee the country, and her books were burned. She was soon forgotten by the German-speaking public. Her arrival on the continent was marked by her indefatigable desire and determination to make the best of her circumstances. As a scriptwriter for Hollywood, Kaus once again found herself in a male-dominated environment and this time undoubtedly in the heart of the entertainment industry. Kaus not only switched to an unfamiliar medium but she also managed to pursue her feminist endeavors in the Hollywood productions as well. Less than a decade before her death, the émigrée makes a last attempt to step out of her marginalized position as a female exile and to find her way back into the German-speaking literary market.

My analysis of Toni illustrates how Kaus used the theater as a space to candidly question and address controversial women’s issues and to simultaneously transform the audience’s genre expectations. Her play deserves to be included in the study of Weimar culture and in particular in regard to the theater and performance of gender during the 1920s and 1930s. Toni should be read as a precursor for the literary genre “Frauenroman” (“women’s novel”) and “Roman der Neuen Frau” (“novel of the New Woman”) written by such female authors as Irmgard Keun, Marieluise Fleißer or Vicki Baum. The main
protagonist Toni gives insight into a young women’s perception of modernity and Weimar culture and thus a counter narrative to the predominant “male perspective.” The female protagonist offers a unique perspective of the emerging tensions and anxieties and even serves as a model of how to negotiate misogynist and limiting gender discourses at the time. Kaus demonstrates how to maneuver a society which is shaken by the blurring of traditional gender roles and give voice to the inadequacy of female education and women’s social immobility. My analysis of Toni shows that Kaus’s works went beyond entertaining her audience, regardless of genre or medium. She presents those who are willing to engage and reflect more deeply on the presented topics and discourses with the necessary tools to interrogate the emerging social reality and the unrealized possibilities to change them. What Richard McCormick finds to be exceptional about Keun’s Gilgi is already inherent in Toni, which was premiered two years earlier. McCormick’s observation concerning Gilgi are true for Kaus’s play as well: The text that shows the perspective of “the ‘new’ type of woman constructed so often in the culture, giving that woman agency, wit, desire, skepticism,” whilst simultaneously providing the female protagonist with the “capacity to expose, to understand and even to revise in some ways the limitations [of] dominant social discourses [which] shaped her” (145).

The wish to expose the limitations and to speak to the strong pluralism and polarity that people experienced daily in Weimar culture also surfaces in Kaus’s Die Überfahrt. Her writing style, her choice of time in addition to the setting for her novel was in sync with and tapped into the quintessential narrative genre of the time. Again, Kaus manages to offer a non-moralist perspective on the limitations of the class and gender hierarchies at the time. Despite her “erroneous” categorization of her first novel as “popular” literature, Kaus worked with the limited possibilities presented to her. Rather than revolting against the literary market, she decided to embrace it and use it to her advantage. Her wish to reach a larger audience, stemming from the playwright’s success with Toni, came true for her career as a novelist. Kaus actively participated in the
formation and creation of a literary aesthetic and was thus able to compete with the fast-emerging media of the early 20th century. She stayed within conventional limits of the genre but nonetheless managed to speak to a variety of readers at different levels.

The American exile presented Kaus with the challenge of adapting to a new country, which had a less progressive outlook on gender roles than her previous environment, while also forcing her to reorient and reinvent herself in a new medium and literary genre. My investigation of the films *The Wife Takes a Flyer* and *Three Secrets* as well as my close reading of her film scripts demonstrates that Kaus was, despite previous beliefs, able to live up to her earlier literary and theatrical successes. Kaus managed the balancing act of staying within the realm of Hollywood’s limited and traditional format but succeeded in making creative use of its multiple narrative and interpretative levels.

As in her previous works, she mobilized and critically engaged her audience without creating a complete rupture or employing an extreme form of self-referentiality. She was keen to avoid such an approach, as it would have led to a complete deconstruction and demystification of Hollywood’s restrictive mode of presentation. As this dissertation shows, Kaus’s use of fissures and dissatisfactory endings proves subversive potential. Her choice of narrative strategy allowed for a reflection of the fragility and, even more so, the unpredictability of human relationships. It thus offered the potential to question the longing for closure, the bizarre yearning for normativity, to comply with the socially desired concept of living “happily ever after.” She subtly subverted the Hollywood apparatus and opened up possibilities to reflect upon well-established discourses and practices. The dissertation highlights that Kaus’s exilic experience and continuous concern with inequality and heteronormative gender constructions permeated her film work. This concerns her choice of characters, narrative and visual style, even the plot and theme of *The Wife Takes a Flyer* and *Three Secrets*.

My analysis of Kaus’s autobiography as well as the Neumann correspondence serves multiple purposes: It adds to the existing research on female autobiographies
published in the 1970s in general and more specifically to the female exile experience. It illustrates the struggle women had to face who chose to engage in a traditionally male connoted genre but also shows the possibilities such an endeavor offered. Kaus’s autobiography becomes the site of complex acts and attempts to subvert the dominant patriarchal construction of female subjectivity as well as discourses of gender, class, nationality, identity, belonging and specifically the exilic experience. My investigation demonstrates how Kaus made a deliberate attempt to (re)inscribe herself into the history of Vienna and Berlin. She uses her function as a witness and uses her agency as a writer to intervene in established systems of meaning (compare Smith and Watson, Getting a Life 15). I show how she undermined privileged cultural narratives to (re)claim her position and legitimacy as a writer amongst such well-known male colleagues, whose narratives dominated the literary markets at that time. The inclusion and analysis of Kaus’s perception of her work in Hollywood also sheds new light on the Hollywood film industry. It provides invaluable insights into the female émigreé’s perspective on the studio system and in particular on the relationships among the German-Jewish diaspora in Hollywood. It illuminates the reasons for Kaus’s choice to remain in the United States and her perception of exile not as a limitation but rather as an opportunity.

My focus on Kaus’s film work demonstrates that both literary and film studies would benefit greatly from interrogating the screenplay as a textual form and investigating the role of the screenwriter in the overall production process. Continuous ignorance of both will further contribute to the marginalized position of this textual form and its authors. Thus, the collaborative nature of scriptwriting, the various stages of scripts in and of themselves, the practice of scriptwriting in the overall production process still need more scholarly attention in their entirety and complexity. The intersection and interplay of people as well as the texts produced through the film photography and scriptwriting have much to offer to future studies. Strengthening the idea of film scripts as an aesthetic product and valuable text form, demands the
reevaluation of approaches to authorship as well as the deliberate acquisition of script literacy. Then, and only then, can the scholarship on this topic guarantee a full evaluation of the script in its multi-functionality, style, and aesthetics. This also provides the possibility of integrating the innumerable film scripts that have been written but never realized in the form of a film text into a variety of scholarly fields. My dissertation project can only be viewed as a starting point for future discussion of film scripts, writing practices, script writers (may they be female, male, exiles or non-exiles) and the complexities involved in discussing collaborative work.
APPENDIX A
BEGINNING OF MPPC VERSION

Highly Irregular

CREDITS
The credits are superimposed (check notes – blue note book)

FADE IN:

EXT. SKY – LATE AFTERNOON
1   LONG Shot   BRITISH PLANE
The Sun has gone down and it’s almost dark. Through the gathering dusk we see
the plane speeding through some clouds. Over scene we hear the hum of its
powerful motors.

2   MED. LONG SHOT   PLANE
We can barely make out the R.A.F. on the wings and tail.

INT. COCKPIT OF THE PLANE
3   MED. CMOSE SHOT CAPT. CHRISTOPHER BRYAN
at the controls of the plane. He wears the padded RAF helmet with built-in
earphones and a small microphone beneath his chin, right beside his oxygen tube.
Even in the severe helmet he doesn’t look especially formidable. There is a
careless air about him and he handles the plane with the deftness of a kid driving a
jalopy. He has the oxygen tube in his mouth and by the light of the instrument
panel he is examining the map strapped to his thigh.

INSERT: CLOSEUP MAP
As Chris’ finger move along the map to the position a short distance outside of
Amsterdam – where there is a large pencilled (sic) X.

4   MED CLOSE SHOT CHRIS
as, evidently satisfied with his position on the map, he leans forward and cuts out
the monitor to idling speed, then pulls back on the stick and the plane tilts
forward, descending.

EXT. SKY.
5   FULL SHOT   PLANE
as it glides smoothly downward.

INT. COCKPIT OF PLANE
6   CLOSE SHOT   TOWARDS ALTIMETER
- angling past Chris – It is quivering downward from 20,000 feet to 18- 17-16 –

EXT. SKY
7   FULL SHOT PLANE
as it continues downward. We are full on it as it descends and we follow it.
CAMERA STOPS and the plane moves down out of sight and we are suddenly
aware of three black specks moving toward Camera, growing larger. They are
black and hawk-like, with the unmistakably squarish outlines of German planes. As we watch, they peel off – singly – following each other downward.

INT. COCKPIT OF PLANE
8 close shot towards altimeter
-angling past Chris. He is down to 6,000 feet - going down to 5,000. Now he takes the oxygen tube out of his mouth, leans over and twists a little radio dial beside him. At the same time he is almost imperceptibly leveling-off, straightening the stick. He speaks into the microphone around his neck.

CHRIS
BKR calling CGKF… BKR calling CGKF.

He turns his head to look over the side.

EXT. LANDSCAPE
9 long shot through cockpit cover
We can vaguely see the countryside below - - a canal and a road darker blotches that might be houses or trees.

p. 3
9 continued:

CHRIS’S VOICE
Come in, GCKF…

INT. COCKPIT OF PLANE
10 med. close shot chris
Still fiddling with the radio dial. He hears something and tunes in louder. Then he begins to hum “Clementine.” Then he signs out:

CHRIS
(signing)
Calling …C…G…K….F
Calling …C…G…K….F

A laconic, las voice comes through the earphones in a studiedly conversational tone.

VOICE
Calling BKR… Oh, I say – are you polluting the ether with those horrid noises?

CHRIS
(indignantly)
Who wants to know

VOICE
This is CGKF…

At that moment we hear the powerful roar of a motor (not Chris’) and there is a spitting machine-gun fire. We can see the effect of the bullets as they rip through the transparent cockpit cover. Chris looks around, his hand already beginning to act on the stick.

CHRIS
(reproachfully)
Come, now – that’s pretty harsh criticism…

He zoom his plane upward, out of the range fire.

Ext. Sky
11 FULL SHOT PLAN\ne
As Chris is zooms upward, we see that the three German planes are after him. Chris barrel-rolls and gets behind one of the Germans.

p. 4
INT. COCKPIT OF PLANE
12 MED CLOSE SHOT CHRIS
He turns his head to keep his eyes on the enemy planes, but he is calm and sure of himself. He continues to maneuver the plane during the following conversation.

VOICE
(utterly placid)
Lot of static on your wireless, old man. You'd better have it looked over.

CHRIS
Better give me your report now. I'll have to be buzzing off…

VOICE
Report?... Oh, quite.
(a pause)
Heavy traffic on railway north of Amsterdam.
(pause)
Evidently baby submarines shipped in section for assembly at the channel port.

Chris nods.

CHRIS
(throwing stick over)
What port?

VOICE
(apologetically)
Don’t know. May have that information on your next trip over…

13 ANOTHER ANGLE ON CHRIS
Chris is outmaneuvering the Germans, and they’ve had no opportunity to hit him.

CHRIS
Same time?

VOICE
Righto. I say – is there a fuss going up there? I seem to hear guns…

CHRIS
That’s my typewriter - - I’m writing a letter.
As Chris is getting a German plane in the sight.

CHRIS
(taking aim)
To Adolph…
(his guns begin fire)
Love and kisses…
(the guns spit again)
From BKR…

EXT. SKY
14 (sic) FULL SHOT CHRIS’ PLANE
Zooming upwards, as a German plane flashes by with its machine-guns chattering. We can see the line of fire by tracer bullets. They are striking home and there is a flash of fire from the motor of the Spitfire. It side-slips and quickly loses altitude.

INT. COCKPIT
16 MEDIUM SHOT
Chris fights for control of the plane, then quickly shove the sliding top of the cockpit and starts climbing out.

EXT. SKY
17 FULL SHOT CHRIS’ PLANE
Screaming downward into a spin as Chris climbs out of the cockpit and slips off. The wind catches his parachute and it opens. As he falls into the darkness, we follow the plane as it hurtles downward.

18 LONG SHOT DOWNWARD
as the plane crashes with tremendous explosion.

DISSOLVE TO:
HIGHLY IRREGULAR

FADE IN:

NOTE: A new, exciting prologue will be devised showing Chris being shot down and escaping in Holland. It will also establish him as an American flyer in the R.A.F., who, when his present mission is completed, will be going back to Pearl Harbor.
p. 148
EXT. SKY – MOONLIGHT
200 LONG SHOT
   The German plane winging through the air.

INT. PLANE – MOONLIGHT
201 THREE SHOT
   as Chris looks out over the side, motions downward, smiling.

CHRIS
   England!

Anita and the Countess, who is knitting, look over the side smiling. The Countess looks off to the right and then pokes Anita and points. Anita takes one look and pokes Chris, who turns his head sideways and smiles indulgently.

EXT. SKY – MOONLIGHT
202 LONG SHOT
   We can vaguely see two planes in the moonlight coming toward ours.

p. 148
INT. PLANE
209 THREE SHOT

CHRIS
   Spitfires. I’d better talk to them. We’re in an enemy plane.

He starts monkeying with his radio. While he is monkeying with the radio, bullets begin to come crashing through the planes. Chris maneuvers his plane to avoid the gunfire. Anita is frightened, but the Countess continues knitting calmly.

CHRIS
   (into radio)
   Hello – Hello! I’m not an enemy!
   I’ve just escaped!

FIRST VOICE FROM RADIO
   Are you Goering?

CHRIS
   No! I’m...

SECOND VOICE FROM RADIO
   Goebbels?
CHRIS
No!

p. 157
203 CONTINUED:
FIRST VOICE FROM RADIO
He’s nobody - - shoot him down.

More bullets come through. Christ has to zoom his plane.

CHRIS
(into radio)
I’m English - - R.A.F. pilot - - downed
in Holland!

EXT. SKY
204 as the planes maneuver in the moonlight.

INT. PLANE
205 CLOSE SHOT CHRIS, ANITA, AND COUNTESS

FIRST VOICE FROM RADIO
Did you hear him, Ben?

BEN’S VOICE
Bring him down. We can talk later.

CHRIS
Wait, fellows! I’m not shooting back! Let me land!

COUNTESS
(still knitting unperturbed)
Tell him we forgot our oui ja
board. We will have to talk now

CHRIS
Wait, fellows! I’m not even fighting! Let me land!

FIRST VOICE FROM RADIO
Hold it a minute, Ben. Maybe he’s telling the truth.

BEN’S VOICE
Not likely.

Bullets come crashing through the plane again.

CHRIS
(desperately)
Listen, you fellows are from the Coastal Command. Your squadron
Commander is Major Carlyle Wilson - - “Lucky” Wilson. I can
tell you more about him: his pet phrase is ‘highly irregular’. He
always says it.
FIRST VOICE FROM RADIO
(uncertainly)
What do you say, Ben?

p. 158
205 CONTINUED:

BEN’S VOICE
Let him land - - but stay right with him.

COUNTESS
(still knitting calmly)
Well, that’s nice- -even Hess didn’t get a military escort.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. R.A.F. AIRPORT – NIGHT
206 MED. LONG SHOT
as the German plane comes down with the two Spitfires behind it. It rolls to a stop on the field and some men run toward it with rifles leveled. There is an officer among them.

207 FULL SHOT AT GERMAN PLANE
The door of the bomber opens and Chris jumps out hurriedly. The door slams closed again behind him. Chris stops the officer.

CHRIS
Major Wilson!

MAJOR
Captain! I’m glad to see you. Nice work!

Chris
We’ve located a new submarine base at Yselmunde! They’re assembling a fleet. It will have to be bombed at once!

The Major reacts. He turns to the Adjutant who stands beside him.

MAJOR
Yselmunde, eh? (he turns to his Adjutant who stands beside him)
Carter, phone bomber command at once!

Carter turns away instantly and runs for the phone.

p. 159
207 CONTINUED:

At that moment there is a hammering on the inside of the door of the bomber. Chris suddenly realizes that Anita and the Countess are still inside. He reaches over and opens the door, explaining to the Major.

CHRIS
Major Wilson, this is my wife, Anita.
The Major reacts, and then reacts again as the Countess steps out of the bomber instead of Anita.

MAJOR
(awkwardly)
A bit mature, isn’t she?
COUNTESS
(indignantly)
I’m of age, Major. I’m of age.

CHRIS
(smiling)
This is the Countess Oldenburg, Major.
(then as he helps Anita out)
This is my wife.

The Major bows

MAJOR
(to Chris) When did you meet her?

ANITA
We met the other day when we were being divorced.

MAJOR
(to Chris)
I didn’t know you were married, Captain.

CHRIS
Well, Major, we weren’t married before the divorce but we are now. He turns to Anita, puts his arms around her and kisses her happily. The Major and Countess look on for a moment. Anita suddenly pushes Chris back.

ANITA
By the way - - what did you say your name was?

p. 160
207 CONTINUED – 2:

CHRIS
Oh, there’s no time for that now.

He starts to kiss her again. The Major looks at the Countess, shaking his head in bewilderment. He begins to splutter and simply can’t get the words out of his mouth.

MAJOR
But that’s - - but that’s - -

The Countess looks at him.
COUNTESS
(helpfully)
Yes, Major, highly irregular.

FADE OUT.

THE END
EXT. STREET – NIGHT
19  FULL SHOT
A German military car comes up the street and pulls toward curb.

INT. CAR
20  SHOOTING TOWARD SIDEWALK
The chauffeur, Mueller, is a stolid, heavy-set German. Captain Zettwitz, the passenger is as pleasant an officer as we could imagine. Before he became Nazified, he might have made an agreeable fourth at bridge.

As the car slows to a stop, we see – illuminated by the headlights – a pair of very attractive legs going up the steps of a private home. Zettwitz watches the legs, and Mueller, having brought the car to a stop, leans over on the seat to get a look at them, too.

ZETTWITZ
(watching the leg thoughtfully) Those aren’t Dutch legs, Mueller.

MUELLER
(also watching)
No, sir.

ZETTWITZ
(still ogling)
This is the Woverman house, isn’t it? These are my quarters…

The legs disappear in the house. Zettwitz nods approvingly and starts to get out of the car.

ZETTWITZ
Mueller, I think I’m staying home tonight.

EXT. STREET
21  FULL SHOT  TOWARD DOORWAY
as Zettwitz gets out of car and goes quickly up the steps. He tries the door. It doesn’t open.
APPENDIX E
MHLC: MAJOR ZELLFRITZ MEETS ANITA

p. 1
INT. ZELLFRITZ’S CAR – DUSK (PROCESS)
1. MEDIUM SHOT
This is a typical military staff car, an open touring model. The top is down and seated at the wheel is Muller, a German aide-de-camp, driving at a normal speed down a lightly trafficked street in a city in Holland. In the rear seat, with his head held high and his chest puffed out, is Major Zellfritz, a pompous German officer. As the car proceeds down the street, we get the impression of the locale from the background: a Dutch trolley car, shops with typical signs and merchandise, possibly a windmill in the distant b.g. From the radio in the car we hear an official announcement coming forth, to which both Zellfritz and Muller are listening.

RADIO VOICE
… The pilot of the plane which was shot down is believed to be in the vicinity of the west end of the city. All soldiers and civilians are ordered to be on the lookout for this British aviator! Any information is to be honed to the Gestapo headquarters at once!

As the radio voice comes over, Muller listens with a stolid expression, and pays attention mostly to his driving, but Zellfritz glances down both sides of the street and watches the passersby intently. The street lights start to come up in the b.g.

RADIO VOICE (continuing)
The broadcast is coming from the headquarters of the Intelligence Bureau. All officers and soldiers assigned to searching parties report to you stations immediately! (etc., etc.)

While this second portion of the broadcast is coming over Zellfritz suddenly becomes extremely interested in something he sees o.s. He watches for a moment with narrowed, speculative eyes, and then, in the middle of the speech, he barks a sharp command at Muller:

ZELLFRITZ
(waving his hand)
Shut that thing off!

p. 2
1 CONTINUED:
As Muller leans forward and flips off the key, Zellfritz issues another order:

ZELLFRITZ
Stop the car!

Muller brings the car to an abrupt halt. Zellfritz leans forward in his seat and, tapping the surprised-looking Muller on the shoulder, hisses:

ZELLFRITZ
Look! Look!!
(indicating)
Over there!

Muller turns in the direction indicated, and his eyebrows lift in astonishment.

ZELLFRITZ
(continuing; thoughtfully)
Those are not Dutch legs, Muller

MULLER
(agreeing; appreciatively)
Nein!

EXT. WOVERMAN HOUSE:
2 CLOSE PANNING SHOT ANITA’S LEG
   The light of a nearby lamp-post illuminates Anita’s shapely gams as she
unhurriedly mounts the steps to the doorway of the Woverman home, unconscious
of the admiring eyes of the two men in the car.

EXT. STREET
3 MED. SHOT AT ZELLFRITZ’ CAR
   As he and Muller watch Anita, o.s.

ZELLFRITZ
(half to himself)
Suppose we investigate. These are
war times – alien legs should be re-
garded with suspicion – nicht wahr?

   Muller
   Yawohl!

Muller hops down from his seat, and opens the rear door for Zellfritz. He is all
smiles; greatly pleased with this new change in duties.

p.3
3 CONTINUED:

ZELLFRITZ
I will make the investigation! You
Get my clothes and belongings.
(with a glance toward the Woverman house)
I may chance (sic) my billet tonight - - my patriotic duty, you understand.

MULLER
(crestfallen)
Oh, yah!

He looks grudgingly after Zellfritz, who exits toward the house.
For a wealthy Dutch family, it is a rather modest room, with rich drapes, brooding Dutch portraits and furniture solid enough to support a good Dutch burger. Thomas Woverman, Mrs. Woverman’s oldest son, is sitting behind the desk. He is paunchy and pontifical man, more pompous than even a lawyer has a right to be. Nearby, nodding her head in approval of her husband’s stand is Maria Woverman, Thomas’s wife. She is a little woman, completely in awe of Thomas, and with about as much individuality as a grape.
INT. LIBRARY
16    FULL SHOT TOWARD LIBRARY
Thomas Woverman, Mrs. Woverman’s elder son, is sitting behind the desk. He is a paunchy and pontifical man, more pompous than even a lawyer has a right to be. Nearby, nodding her head in approval of her husband’s stand is Maria Woverman, Thomas’ wife. She is a small, innocuous little woman, completely in awe of Thomas. Standing before the desk in a belligerent pose is Anita Woverman Hendrik’s wife – the girl with the pretty legs.
“FADE IN”: This expression merely represents the beginning of a script.

“EXT. SKY – MOONLIGHT”: The abbreviation ‘Ext.’ stands for external, the opposite would be ‘INT.’, short for internal. Both abbreviations are usually directly followed by a one-word description of the location. Here it would be “the sky”. The third element in the line points to the time. In this case it would be night, as the viewer is supposed to see moonlight.

“24 FULL SHOT TOWARD DOORWAY”: The number at the beginning of lines indicates the number of shots. In this case it would be the twenty-fourth shot.

“200 LONG SHOT”: The term “long shot” refers to the shot and angle the scriptwriters envision for the scene.

‘Continued’ usually indicates that the dialogue, shot or scene continue, even though the page of the script has reached its physical end.

If the scriptwriters insert dialogue, the character’s name along with their lines will be in the center of the page.

The page number (for example: p.28), indicate the actual pages within the script, which are usually located at the top right corner of each page.
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