German Mother, the Mother of Germany: Visions of Patriotism, Modernity, and Motherhood in Ina Seidel's *Das Wunschkind* (1930)

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When Ina Seidel's *Das Wunschkind* (*The Wish Child*) was published in 1930, it sealed the author's reputation as one of the leading writers of her generation. Seidel, echoing other conservative women authors,[1] tapped into religion and German history to outline German national values, namely, her version of German womanhood. Written in the genre of the so-called *Heimatroman*, Seidel's 1000-plus page novel offered a sensitive portrayal of feminine experiences in Prussia between 1792 and 1814, marked by the French occupation of Mainz and German Wars of Liberation (1792-1814). In addition to revered historical figures like Queen Louise, *Das Wunschkind* drew a feminine ideal from a fictional heroine who was deeply rooted in native soil, religion, and the *Volk*.

In contrast to contemporary liberal urban writers (Vicki Baum, Irmgard Keun, Anna Seghers, and others) whose works commented on changing sexual relationships, working women, and controversial issues such as abortion, Seidel advocated a spirit of cultural conservatism. While interested in women's contributions to society and literature, conservative authors like Seidel pointedly avoided the cultural and social realities of the Weimar Republic (1919-1933): the development of mass market and new media, international influences (Americanization) or the emergence of new literary trends (New Sobriety). Instead, Seidel's works called for the restoration of traditional values, celebrated German landscapes and tapped into mysticism.

Seidel's family- and *Volk*-oriented heroine, as well as the author's enthusiastic acceptance of the Nazi regime, became the decisive factor in the reception of *Das Wunschkind* during and after the Third Reich. To many modern scholars, *Das Wunschkind* remains part of the *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil) literature.[2] In Grazyna Barbara Szewczyk's view, the motherliness of *Das Wunschkind*'s protagonist represents "a type of exercise of power that is prompted by the search of power

and that operates mythically-endowed in the vein of National Socialist ideology."[3] Similarly, Annette Kliewer identifies in Seidel's 1930 bestseller "the turn to a Nazi mother novel." [4] Furthermore, Cindy Walter-Gensler sees the use of words "wish" and "will" in the narrative structure of *Das Wunschkind* as strategic and clearly "foreshadowing" the famous call of Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, the leader of the National Socialist Women's League: "Say to yourselves, I am *the Volk*."[5]

While Seidel's political record remains tainted, *Das Wunschkind* cannot be evaluated solely in the National Socialist vein or in terms of the author's ideological errors. Agnes Cardinal argues that Seidel, the wife of a Protestant pastor, shared "the retrospective disorientation" of a large section of the German middle class who "lacked sound political education" (371). Along with other Christian writers (Werner Bergengruen, Edzard Schaper, Ernst Wiechert, Elisabeth Langgässer), Seidel composed "thoughtful fiction which appealed to the well-educated and supposedly morally discerning German bourgeoisie" (Cardinal 372). Because it reached a broad readership (between 1930 and 1945, *Das Wunschkind* went through nine editions and sold more than 450,000 copies),[6] its mythos of self-realization profoundly influenced public consciousness. As such, *Das Wunschkind* deserves to be evaluated on its artistic merit and as epoch-specific accounts of history, femininity, and nationhood. Seidel's heroines, Nina Nowara suggests, evoke contemporary gender theories of Johann Jacob Bachofen and Georg Simmel. Seidel's conceptualization of German womanhood resembles that of Helene Lange and Gertrud Bäumer, the leaders of the German bourgeois women's movement.[7]

This article extends the discussion of Seidel by looking at *Das Wunschkind*'s presentation of the mother as Seidel's emancipatory paradigm for her female readers. In the Weimar Republic, motherhood became increasingly politicized. Using the trope of the mother, politicians, writers, and artists reflected upon the economic and cultural changes brought by World War I. I argue that *Das Wunschkind*'s mother(ly) protagonist most evocatively captures the ideals propagated by the German bourgeois women's movement as it also incorporates elements of the New Woman. *Das Wunschkind*, though set in the nineteenth century, explores many tensions of the Weimar Republic such as those between seductive femininity and nurturing motherliness, between racism and patriotism, and between the ideals of women as

professionals and as guardians of national identity.

This close reading situates the novel within the movement's model of spiritual motherhood, namely its ideas about the "female essence" and "politics of motherliness." In addition, I analyze how it contextualizes the Weimar debate about the New Woman and interweaves Seidel's own religious views into her vision of German womanhood. Besides demonstrating how the text reflects the dominant cultural and political discourses of the late Weimar Republic, I also examine how *Das Wunschkind* intersects with contemporary art, that is, with depictions of mothers and of women and war.

Seidel: Life and Work

Ina Seidel was born in Halle on the Saal on 15 September 1885 but grew up in Braunschweig. Raised in a religious home, she and her two siblings received extensive instruction in art and world literature, as well as pantheism. As Seidel reveals in her memoires *Meine Kindheit und Jugend* (1935), her happy childhood ended abruptly when her father, a distinguished orthopedic surgeon, fell victim to professional rivalry and committed suicide. After the burial, the family relocated to Marburg and then Munich, where Seidel studied to become a teacher and cultivated friendships with many distinguished artists of the area. An entry from her diary written in Munich at the age of twenty discloses how she defined her future life goals: "I very much want to be able to fulfill my duty to mankind. I realized that as a woman one achieves this by being a wife and a mother. But in order to become [wife and mother], I lack the most necessary condition: a man who loves me, so I decided to continue my studies and become a teacher."[8] At the age of twenty-two, she left her studies to marry her cousin, Heinrich Seidel, an evangelical minister, and moved to Berlin.

A difficult childbirth left Seidel with a heavy walking handicap and confined her, an avid outdoors lover, to the house for many years. During her slow recovery, Seidel suffered from deep depression. In writing, she found an emotional outlet for personal tragedies: the premature loss of her father, her disability, and, later, the death of her two young children.[9] Seidel's poetry and fiction, which is permeated with introspective sensitivity, mysticism and religious references, can be read as the author's processing of life's trials.

Seidel's early prose focused mostly on her family's history,[10] while her early poetry became notable for its pantheistic mysticism and idyllic

descriptions of German landscapes. Seidel's lyrical collections, *Gedichte* (1914) and *Weltinnigkeit: Neue Gedichte* (1918) continued the theme of *Heimat* similar to the works of Lulu von Strauß und Torney and Agnes Miegel, Seidel's longtime mentor.[11] All three authors shared a religious upbringing, along with a lifelong fascination with German regional history and mythology.

Besides *Heimat*, Seidel's poetry depicted what the author considered the ultimate source of joy: motherhood. In the 1914 poem "*Die Mutter sinnt bei der Wiege"* ("Mother Dreams by the Cradle") Seidel commemorates the birth of a child as a most wonderous event:

O tiefes Wunder, dass in dir	O deep miracle, that in you
Mein Leben Kraft geworden ist,	my life has acquired strength,
Dass du so ganz Erfüllung mir	that you so thoroughly fulfill me
Und Antwort meinem Wesen bist	and give me reason to exist.
Dass mein verschwiegenes frühstes Leid	That in your blood my hidden sorrow
Stumm weiterklagt in deinem Blut,	from long ago remains in silence,
Vergessene Freude fernster Zeit	that in your soul forgotten joy
Als Glanz in deiner Seele ruht!	of distant times shines in peace.
Dass heiß dein Herz in meinem schlug,	That in my heart your heart beat warmly
Dass dein Geschick in meinem schlief,	that in my destiny your destiny resided
So lange, eh mein Schoß dich trug,	as long as in my womb I carried you,
Und eh ich dich bei Namen rief …[12]	and called you by your name …[13]

In the poem titled "Planetenspiel zur Erdenfeier der Sonnenwende (1924)," Seidel exalts the Sun and the Earth as the mothers of the planetary system and of humanity, respectively.[14] Similar to Seidel's poetry, her fiction, most vividly in *Das Wunschkind*, depicts the connection between mother and child as profound, indissoluble, and quasi-mystical.

As a pastor's wife and an author, Seidel was interested in how women could play a benevolent role in the tumultuous, unstable German society of the interwar years. As stated in her *Lebensbericht*, she began to attend the lectures of Gertrud Bäumer and Ika Freudenberg as a teenager in 1903 while she still lived with her mother. Georg Seidel, the author's biographer and son, draws attention to Seidel's works written in the 1920s: "In all these books there are traces of Ina's decade-long engagement with all problems, with the woman. … In the 1920s she had contacts of all kinds with the women's movement: the militant pacifism echoed her views; the systematic dogmatism in other areas discouraged

her or sparked her humor."[15] Seidel's voluminous collection of letters and diaries record communications with the leaders of the German bourgeois women's movement, as well as with Thomas Mann and the playwright Carl Zuckmayer (both visited Seidel at her home).

Seidel's fame continued to rise with the publication of *Das Wunschkind* in 1930. Esteemed literati like Gabriele Reuter admired the novel's pacificist message and considered Seidel worthy of the Nobel prize. Julius Bab, a well-known theater critic and writer from Berlin, lauded it as "a timeless book, a book that concerns itself with the eternal issues, spanning a course of life from birth to death."[16] Elisabeth von Randenborgh, a contributor to the Protestant publication *Eckart* praised *Das Wunschkind* as

> A book by a German woman, which is written in a perfected poetic style without pathos or excessive stylization; from an apparent realistic distance and with a commanding fervent intimacy [and that represents] a commitment to womanhood, Germanness, religion, and as such, stands as a liberating achievement during the crises of the era.[17]

Following its success, in 1932 Seidel was awarded the Goethe medal and granted membership at the Prussian Academy of Arts, only the second woman (after Ricarda Huch) to receive the honor.[18]

Seidel, whose poetry hailed the *Heimat* and mothering and whose fiction interwove nationalist pride with mysticism, fit well in "the Third Reich's cohort of writers who captured the true German spirit" (Klee 584). Seidel's heroines, deeply rooted in their families and also in the *Volk,* in many aspects resembled the feminine ideal propagated by Nazi ideology. In 1933, together with eighty-eight other writers, Seidel declared her loyalty to Hitler's regime. Although Seidel's husband the minister retired from the church in protest against the politicization of religion and retreated into private life, Seidel took an active part in the cultural life of the Third Reich. Following the invitation of the NS-Kulturgemeinde (National Socialist Society of Culture), she lectured in schools and universities and participated in several literary conferences organized by the Ministry of Propaganda between 1933 and 1941. In 1939, Regina Dackweiler writes, the National Socialist press exalted Seidel's ability to vividly capture the "wahres Muttertum" and the "Größe der im Heimatboden verwurzelten deutschen Frau" ("the true motherliness" and "the greatness of the German woman

who is rooted in the native soil": 88). Several girls' schools were named in Seidel's honor, while *Das Wunschkind* and *Der Weg ohne Wahl* (1933) became part of the Nazi school curricula. Seidel, who perceived the regime as leading Germany to greatness and saw her own duty as capturing "the heroic" essence of the times, expressed her gratitude to Hitler on his fiftieth birthday with a poem (*Lichtdom*) and a eulogy.[19]

After the war, Seidel faced sharp criticism for her conscious alignment with the regime and her public reverence of the Führer. Still, Seidel's thematic subjects—the mother/child bond, family, and patriotism—appealed to post World War II readers as strongly as they did in the interwar years. Critics in the 1950s and 1960s recognized the literary quality of Seidel's introspective writing with a number of awards.[20] Seidel died in Munich in 1974 at the age of eighty-nine.

Weimar Debate on Motherhood

Motherhood, a central theme of *Das Wunschkind,* became increasingly politicized in the Weimar Republic. A significant part of the contemporary art (grouped under the umbrella term *Neue Sachlichkeit* "New Sobriety") used the trope of the mother to address various political and social issues. Left-leaning artists like Otto Dix depicted mothers as haggard and sickly, exhausted by childbearing in poverty, with the political purpose of attacking capitalism.[21] Artists affiliated with the KPD (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*) consistently used the image of a suffering proletarian mother to argue for working-class women's abortion rights.[22] The KPD was the most vocal opponent of Paragraph 218, the article of the German Penal Code (1871) that outlawed abortion.[23] Well-known figures such as Käthe Kollwitz, John Heartfield, and Rudolf Schlichter, though not fully espousing the party's political program, created anti-Paragraph 218 images for Communist posters and publications as well as for leftist art exhibitions. In Kollwitz's and Heinrich Zille's works, the image of a gaunt, destitute mother served as a sympathetic icon of the working class. [24]

On the other hand, Georg Schrimpf, one of the most prolific painters of mothers in the 1920s, featured voluptuous, healthy-looking mothers in an idyllic agrarian setting. Artists like Schrimpf, Michelle Vangen argues, used the maternal images not only to criticize the existing economic and social order, but also to outline their radical if utopian views: in Schrimpf's case, his anarcho-socialist beliefs

(131). Schrimpf's serene rural landscapes with peacefully lounging mothers sought to combat the ills of Germany's urbanization and industrialization. Although seemingly non-critical—especially when compared to artists like Dix and Grosz—Schrimpf nevertheless challenged the prevailing social order by picturing a peaceful, idealized alternative.[25] In this respect, Schrimpf's approach to art resembles that of Seidel's in *Das Wunschkind*: both Schrimpf and Seidel, while distancing themselves from the tumultuous present, actively advanced the trope of the mother as a source of social regeneration and strength for the society in which they lived.

Graphic artists like Käthe Kollwitz turned to the images of mothers to explore the physical and spiritual dimensions of loss—a theme Seidel would later also develop in *Das Wunschkind*. The contorted positioning of the models and the somber palette of *Mutter mit totem Kind* evokes the raw, overwhelming parental grief that she herself witnessed after the illness and consequent death of her own three siblings. Kollwitz's later works describe the harrowing experiences of World War I: death, bereavement, starvation. The lithograph *Brot*, for example, portrays the despair of mothers unable to feed their children, serving as a reminder of the more than 900,000 German civilians who died of hunger during the war due to the British naval blockade. Kollwitz's collection of seven woodcuts on paper (1924) features a heart-wrenching gallery of images with simple, succinct titles:[26] *Das Opfer, Die Freiwilligen, Eltern, Witwe I, Witwe II, Mütter* und *Das Volk* ("*The Sacrifice*, *The Volunteers, The Parents*, *Widow I, Widow II, the Mothers* and *The People*").[27] These somber images of war and mothers could serve as eloquent illustrations of *Das Wunschkind,* as they, albeit unintentionally, evoke several milestones of the protagonist Cornelie's journey.[28]

In the contemporary discourse, the mother image also surfaced in connection with the controversial New Woman. The New Woman materialized most visibly when the experience of World War I and inflation blurred class and gender distinctions, forcing women across the social spectrum to search for paid work. Women working in assembly lines, in department stores, and in offices as secretaries and typists became associated with Weimar modernity and emancipation.[29] The New Woman paid close attention to appearance-enhancing products and actively engaged in modern pastimes. As seen in the phenomena of the cosmetics industry and beauty pageants, both of

which proliferated in Germany in the 1920s and early 1930s, the desire to look fashionable and young constituted part of modern lifestyle and a means of self-expression. Investment in one's appearance became increasingly seen as "symbolic capital" (in Pierre Bourdieu's words), or as a resource to establish, enhance or assert social identity.[30] Compelled by the New Woman images circulating in contemporary media, young white- and blue-collar female workers, from middle-class and working-class backgrounds, welcomed shorter hair and gender-fluid clothing, spending their meager earnings on entertainment, beauty products, and tobacco. The New Woman demonstrated a more casual approach to sex and did not rush into marriage. The availability of contraceptives (if only mostly for middle-class women) allowed for an idea that motherhood was a choice, not a woman's natural purpose in life. For the conservatives, the notion of the androgynous and increasingly childless, professionally employed New Woman triggered anxieties about cultural anarchy and decay (Usborne 138).

A Sex Reform Movement, which at its height claimed around 150,000 supporters not only among social workers and medical professionals, but also among politicians and activists, focused on women's reproductive rights, seeking to regulate abortion and introduce reliable and affordable birth control for working-class women.[31]Activists like Helene Stöcker, the founder of the League for the Protection of Motherhood (Der Bund für Mutterschutz), on the other hand, campaigned for a New Morality, e.g., women's sexual fulfilment and motherhood within but also outside of marriage.[32] With these efforts, the reformers suggested a feminine identity that would "accommodate marriage and family as well as wage labor and active sexuality" (Grossman 63). The movement presented "the sexualized female body as a site of physical pleasure, not limited to its procreative function" (Bauer 16).

The German bourgeois women's movement (the BDF) offered its own alternative to the sexually liberated and self-reliant *Angestellte* (female white-collar worker). In the words of Gertrud Bäumer, the leader of the movement between 1910-1919, the contemporary social, cultural and political situation required women to intertwine their aspirations as individuals with the needs of the nation:

> A woman must learn to consider the vital, objective interest of the state, her people, her community and the diverse societies

> that comprise it together with her own interests. She must also learn to reclaim strength from communal life to develop her personality, one aiding the other: personality through community and community through personality, public life through her inner culture and her inner culture though public life in order for her to enrich, enliven, and contribute to both.[33]

The so-called maternalist ideology or spiritual motherhood, developed by bourgeois feminists in the 1890s, argued that women could benefit society through biological, as well as spiritual motherhood. Instead of threatening men in conventionally considered male domains, such as politics and finance, the movement's leaders advocated for women's access to medicine, social work, teaching, etc. Supporters argued that in those fields, women's "special nature would be especially esteemed" (qtd. in Koonz 272), and their maternal energies best utilized. Women who engaged in the "motherly professions" did not sacrifice their femininity but instead released its benevolent power for the good of the state and the nation.

Seidel kept a lively correspondence with Helene Lange and Gertrud Bäumer, the movement leaders from 1914 on. She expounded the idea of spiritual motherhood in several publications, including her 1916 article "Organisierte Mütterlichkeit" ("organized motherliness") in the periodical *Tat* (Krusche 13). To the twenty-first-century reader, *Das Wunschkind* eloquently interweaves the maternalist ideology with the author's response to the New Woman, as well as with portrayals of mothers in the contemporary art.

***Das Wunschkind*: Summary and Analysis**

Das Wunschkind is a tale of suffering and torment, of longing and self-search, where the author explores the journeys of the heroine Cornelie von Mespelsbrun on multiple planes: spiritual, emotional, psychological. Devout, nurturing, servant-hearted, Cornelie appears to be a paragon of conservative femininity. Yet, Seidel resists presenting her protagonist as an unquestionably virtuous motherly figure whose intentions are always benevolent and just. Cornelie is a realistically flawed human being who grapples with envy and who questions her (Protestant) faith. Her life, though affected by circumstances out of her control, is ultimately shaped by Cornelie's strong will and her commitment to family and *Volk*.

Das Wunschkind unfolds in 1792 in the city of Mainz. Cornelie

keeps vigil at her sick infant's bedside and anxiously prepares for her husband Hans Adams's leave to fight Napoleon. On the eve of Hans Adams' departure, their son dies. Numb with grief and premonition, Cornelie yields to her husband's desire, "leer von allem Wünschen war bis auf den einen Willen zur Fruchtbarkeit" ("drained of all wishes but one: the desperate desire to conceive": 15). Cornelie's wish is granted. Tragically, however, the news of the pregnancy coincides with the news of Hans Adams' death in combat. Fearing the approaching French army, the young widow follows the counsel of her father and uncle and flees to Frankfurt. Charlotte, her seventeen-year-old half-sister, defiantly oversleeps her coach and stays behind in Mainz.

Cornelie adjusts to life in the French-occupied Rhineland and, while fearing plunder and rape like most civilians caught in the war, draws strength and joy from her new pregnancy as well as from caring for her elderly mother-in-law. Meanwhile in Mainz, Charlotte, left to her devices, marries a French officer, Gaston Loriot, and declares herself a Republican. Charlotte's unsanctioned marriage and Cornelie's failure as chaperone infuriate their father, the retired Prussian general. Charlotte dies in childbirth, and Cornelie, having recently given birth to her "wish child," Christoph, rushes back to Mainz to bury her unfortunate half-sister and collect Delphine, her niece. Cornelie's bond with Christoph grows increasingly profound and tender, but her feelings for her niece Delphine are mixed. Cornelie, having envied her prettier half-sister as a child, wearily observes dainty Delphine turn into a spitting image of Charlotte: flirtatious, fond of luxury and attention. Furthermore, Cornelie worries about Delphine's influence on Christoph. She briefly contemplates another marriage—first, with Ruehle, a Prussian officer and, years later, with Buzzini, an Italian physician—but ultimately chooses to remain single. As she embarks on the life of an independent woman, Cornelie also converts from Protestantism to Catholicism.

When Delphine is kidnapped on the grandfather's orders and brought back to the ancestral estate in Hölkewiese, Christoph falls gravely ill with grief. Cornelie hires the Italian-born doctor Buzzini to treat her son and, over the course of Christoph's recovery, becomes the doctor's lover and assistant. Cornelie's dying mother-in-law encourages her to consider marriage, but she again chooses singlehood. Hesitantly, she travels to Hölkewiese to mend fences with her estranged father

and reunite the children. While in Hölkewiese, Cornelie stands up to the general's despotism and takes up the management of the estate, Christoph's future inheritance. She innovates the property and improves relations with the local community, all the while watching Christoph develop an ardent passion for Delphine. When the two become engaged, Cornelie laments that Delphine, increasingly aware of her beauty and its effect on men, shows marked preference for performing (acting, singing and dancing for an audience) and not for a quiet family life. The military confrontation between Napoleon and Prussia continues, and barely age-eligible Christoph is drafted into the army. Delphine reunites with her French father, now a general, and moves in with his rich (Jewish) friends becoming the star of their social gatherings. Eventually, Delphine breaks off her brief engagement to Christoph to become an actress. The novel ends with Cornelie mourning Christoph's untimely but honorable death in the 1813 battle of Leipzig.

To Seidel's contemporaries, the setting—the French occupation of the Rhineland following Prussia's shattering defeat by Napoleon at the battle of Jena-Auerstedt—offered a recognizable parallel with the humiliating political aftermath of World War I. The 1813 battle of Leipzig, the largest battle in Europe before World War I, on the other hand, resulted in a decisive victory for Prussia, ending French domination. In this context, the beginning and ending of *Das Wunschkind* aligns Cornelie (who loses her beloved husband and sons) with Germany itself: devasted but destined for glory. Christoph, the offspring of the Northerner Cornelie with Hans Adams, born in the South, fights against foreign invasion as well as for national unity. Christoph's untimely demise in Leipzig, although tragic, also foreshadows the imminent victory of Germany over France.

The historical milieu of the novel, in Agnes Cardinal's words, allowed Seidel to "revisit the nationalist argument" and to explore the "consequences of Germany's continuous confrontation with Europe" (375). The Prussian rulers Frederick the Great and Queen Louise appear (if briefly) as majestic influencers of history; however, Seidel resists the glorification of the king by pointing to his indecisiveness that cost German lives. Queen Louise, in contrast, is depicted as a benevolent, quasi-mythical figure, whose formidable intelligence and devotion to her country and her husband drastically improve Prussia's

odds in the war. Still, the cataclysms of the early nineteenth century come truly alive through the eyes of a fictional protagonist, a German mother.

Cornelie loathes the conscription of thirteen-year-old boys like her son Christoph to fight in a war:

> I no longer support this madness of sending children, just awakening to life, to be mowed down by a cannon—of teaching them how to handle murderous weapons to aim them against their brothers![34]
>
> Cornelie also reluctantly accepts the death of Christoph at his prime even if for the sake of national unity.[35]

Although "war . . . is moral when a nation of adults defends its native soil" (*Das Wunschkind* 484), Cornelie is terrified by its toll:

> I am certainly no faint-hearted patriot. I love my homeland and know how much it owes its reigning house. But there is also another, stronger feeling that lives in me forcing me to look at war, whatever its cause, as the evilest, the worst disease that could befall the human race, and to ask for nothing else than the means of healing it. Only, of course, when I am surrounded by sufferers, I no longer argue, but do what is required of me: nurse … alleviate suffering as long as I am able to.[36]

War tears apart spouses and severs the profound bond between mothers and sons. Cornelie's story, the story of a war widow, also exposes the grim reality left behind by armed conflict. Women endure plunder, hunger, and threats of rape in the occupied zones as they fear for their loved ones at the front.

As seen through frequent juxtapositions of Cornelie and other female characters, Seidel argues for a strong connection between character and geography, nationality (race) and destiny. A Northerner, Cornelie is "reticent, prim, and sparing of words." (22) Her face and figure are unremarkable if compared to her graceful and pretty half-sister, but her devotion to family is undisputed. Cornelie envelopes her loved ones with "the heavy tenderness of her Mecklenburg mother and the warm weightiness of the earth."[37] She embodies the archetype of the nurturer: "Her love was somber kindness and calmness, a longing to embrace, look after, nurture a loved one: motherliness."[38] Cornelie's reserved demeanor contrasts with her husband's cheerful and gallant personality, the result of growing up in the South, and with her half-

sister's flirtatiousness and charm, the traits Charlotte inherited from her French mother the actress. If Charlotte seeks to seduce many, Cornelie gives herself "freely only to the man she loved, then joyfully, ungrudgingly."[39]

Already a surrogate mother to Charlotte, Cornelie also molds into a quasi-maternal figure to her husband. On the eve of his departure, Hans Adams taps into Cornelie's nurturing energy to summon courage and strength before the battle:

> To be able to enter her [Cornelie's] womb, humble and small . . . to become a child again, nothing but her child . . . After being wholly absorbed in the wonderful waking sleep of the woman, [in the sleep] that was nothing but the state of the earth, he realized immediately that he would be able to die, to take the enemy's bullet as a gift from a brother's hand and to fall just as a fruit falls. [40]

To emphasize nurturing over sexual allure, Seidel deliberately removes any lustful connotation from their intimacy:

> And so it happened: during the night, when the blazing weather threw the heavens and earth together violently, when the clattering rain threshed the ripened wheat and pressed a young seed in the earth. In the days that followed the husk hung empty. But the seed was swelling in the soil.[41]

Cornelie's conception of her "wish" child, Christoph, is compared to a seed sprouting in the soil pointing to her fruitful use of her female essence. The potentially destructive forces of sexuality, conveyed by the storm, are safely redirected to fertility. Her idea of the "innerste Urordnung der Frau" ("the ancient, sacred destiny of the woman": 51) evokes the idyllic portrayals of motherhood in the countryside featured in Georg Schrimpf's paintings:

> . . . to live, to grow old, and finally to pass away in the sweet, gentle rhythm of laboring for the soil, after bearing, breeding and sending forth into the world many handsome, well-bred children was that not her preordained future, already settled beyond a doubt? [42]

Initially, *Das Wunschkind* strongly associates motherhood with suffering and grief: an illness robs Cornelie of her infant son, a war steals a son from her mother-in-law, a war kills her wish child. Simultaneously, mothering becomes the catalyst that transforms the bereaved, helpless widow into a confident patroness of her family and estate. Through motherhood, Cornelie taps into her female essence and releases its

powers.

Cornelie finds fulfilment in serving her community and family. Throughout, her sexual desire is safely sublimated into biological and spiritual mothering, reflecting the author's own religious background and her status as a pastor's wife: "My only task is to take care of all the living . . . of children, animals, flowers, trees – and yes, now also of fields and pastures, of land and people. It rejuvenates me, as I enjoy giving and it all flows back to me twofold, threefold."[43] The pastoral, idyllic portrayal of Cornelie's life mission evokes the anti-industrialization and anti-urbanization message of Georg Schrimpf's art. Moreover, it affirms the interconnectedness of personal and communal happiness advocated in the writings of the activist Gertrud Bäumer.

When interacting with men, Cornelie combines a vision of motherliness and domesticity with independent thinking and strong will. She seeks to improve the livelihood of the poor and mend religious (Catholic or Protestant) and class tensions. In her conversations with the clergy, noble relatives, farmers and officers, Cornelie performs the role of "bearer of culture." Developed by the sociologist Marianne Weber, the mission of "bearers of culture" implied the task of infusing the society "with love, benevolence and pure disposition" in order to "reconstruct the general ethical level and thwart a revolution" (qtd. in Koonz 273).

When constructing a praiseworthy role model for women readers, *Das Wunschkind* does not just divide all its female protagonists into "Priesterinnen, Schauspielerinnen und Mütter" ("priestesses, actresses and mothers") as Karl August Horst suggests (12). Rather, through frequent juxtapositions of her female protagonists Seidel incorporates the femininities of the Weimar era. Charlotte's irreverent behavior (she betrays her class and citizenship by marrying a low-born French officer) resembles that of the New Woman who allegedly erased traditional markers of class and gender and defied male authority. Similar to the New Woman, Charlotte questions motherhood as a woman's natural purpose in life. Charlotte's French blood, as mentioned in the novel, feeds into her selfish and lustful desires. Charlotte's behavior is centered on the pursuit of pleasure. In her division of women into maternal or lustful entities, embodied in Cornelie and Charlotte, Seidel echoes the leader of the German Evangelical Women's Federation, Magdalene von Tiling, who rejected the idea that women had erotic needs. Tellingly,

Seidel binds Charlotte's sensuality with destruction and betrayal. In contrast to Cornelie, whose sexuality nurtures and maintains family line, Charlotte's sexuality disrupts the familial bonds: following her unsanctioned marriage, the father denounces both Charlotte and Cornelie. Charlotte emerges as a triple traitor that of her class, her family and of Prussia. If Cornelie longs for offspring, Charlotte laments the inconvenience of the pregnancy and motherhood because they keep her from joining her handsome husband at the front. The pursuit of sexual pleasure, Seidel suggests, hinders Charlotte from tapping into her "female essence," and results in her lonely death in a dilapidated house.

In Charlotte's daughter, Delphine, Seidel explores the seductive femininity embodied in the actress. From an early age, Delphine readily flaunts her graceful figure and lustrous locks when dancing and singing. Delphine's serendipitous reunion with her father, Loriot, now a general in Napoleon's army, only strengthens her love to perform. Delphine briefly becomes her father's spy, skillfully deceiving her German family. The mentioned French blood, namely the vices passed down from her father, mother and grandmother the actress, ultimately seal Delphine's fate. Placed by Loriot at the house of the Kalishers, an affluent Jewish couple, Delphine finds her calling as the "femme fatale." Similar to Weimar and American film stars, Delphine's beauty and sexual magnetism are rewarded with luxurious gifts and male adoration. Fueled by vanity, Delphine rejects the German feminine virtues of modesty and domesticity and chooses the life of an actress. Predictably, the novel frames the occupation of the actress as the epitome of a threatening, destructive sexuality that tempts and devours men. Delphine the vagabond actress stands in direct opposition to Cornelie, the embodiment of hearth and motherhood.

Seidel's portrayal of the Kalishers, who are Jewish, like her characterization of the French, is also stereotypical: expensive furniture, gastronomical delicacies served next to the portraits of a "hook-nosed, black-haired couple." Like the French, the Jews are indulgent and perpetuate the sin and temptations of the city. Like the French, they quickly switch loyalties, refusing hospitality to Delphine and Loriot when the French are defeated in Russia. By frequently contrasting Cornelie and Charlotte, and later, Cornelie and Delphine, Seidel crystallizes her conceptualization of German womanhood.

While Seidel's descriptions of Jews and some French characters bear racist undertones, Cornelie's affairs of the heart set the novel apart from the *Blut und Boden* literature. Cornelie does not favor race over physical attraction, nor does she embody the Aryan female. She, like the author herself, is a fair-skinned brunette, with a heavy frame and a hampered gait. Seidel, who had a walking impediment and was dark-haired herself, obviously did not identify physical prowess and blondness as necessary attributes of Germanness. Cornelie's decision to break up with a Prussian officer—an ideal Aryan candidate—to focus on raising Christoph and Delphine (a self-imposed singlehood), can be read as an attempt to keep an identity separate from a man/marriage.

When a few years later Cornelie becomes the lover of the Italian-born Buzzini, a Roma, her decision defies the expectation of her class and the *Volk*. Cornelie chooses affection above convention and race. Similar to her marriage, in this relationship she simply succumbs to Buzzini's "natural need" for sex. Her major motivation for the affair lies in the opportunity to assist him and his patients, adhering to the traditional female virtues of servitude and sacrifice. The dichotomy of modern and traditional continues with Cornelie's decision to leave Buzzini. As with the officer Ruehle earlier, Seidel does not choose to resolve Cornelie's hardships within marriage or a romantic relationship with a man. Instead, the text represents the protagonist's choice as a successful response to the dual role of mother and woman—Cornelie confidently navigates singlehood, redirecting her erotic desires into serving her children, Buzzini's patients, and the estate tenants.

Although Charlotte and Delphine espouse more sexual freedom than Cornelie, she demonstrates more control in her relationships with men. Cornelie defies her father's authority when she, a Northerner and a Protestant, marries Hans Adams, a Southerner and a Catholic. Her conversion to Catholicism as a young widow becomes the next step in her emancipation from her tyrannical father. Her active, purposeful spiritual self-search sharply contrasts with the devout aloofness of her sister-in-law, the Countess Walburn. In positioning Cornelie in the middle of theological discussions (with her brother-in-law, the cosmopolitan diplomat Count Walburn, and later, with a dinner guest, Baron Rosen), Seidel advocates for women's crucial role

in the matters of spiritual renewal. By interweaving multiple biblical references throughout the text and presenting Cornelie's conversion—even if motivated by her son's inherited religious denomination (he was baptized Catholic in honor of his father)—as a climax of her maturity, Seidel measures women's role in society in accordance with the pursuit of Christian morality and values, not sexual fulfilment.

Conclusion

The period from 1928 to 1933 in Germany, the timeframe surrounding the novel's publication, represented a decisive break in which both the political culture and the socio-economic circumstances of the Weimar Republic changed dramatically: it thus had a pronounced impact on the discourse about women's role in society. Only a few middle- and upper-class women had the financial freedom to fully realize the image of the New Woman promoted in the contemporary visual and printed media (Bauer 16-17). The majority still experienced the pressures of the patriarchal family at home and the effects of the ambiguous Weimar constitution in the workplace. The provocative, androgynously clad, childless flapper, who dominated the image of modern femininity in the early 1920s, gradually transitioned into a type with reinforced traditional attributes in the late 1920s and early 1930s. *Das Wunschkind*, which positions community and family in the center of the plot, echoes these changes while also responding to both the controversial New Woman and the images of the mother in contemporary art and politics.

Das Wunschkind pursues an abstract approach to female emancipation and appears more concerned with spiritual renewal than changes in women's social roles. Simultaneously, it opposes war and presents women as important agents in the pursuit of peace. Seidel called war the "Abart des natürlichen Daseinskampfes" ("mutation of the natural struggle for survival": qtd. in Krusche 18) and considered the women's liberation movement as an anti-war movement for peace and social justice, not emancipation or the vote. In this context, the closing sentences elevate the mother as the primary agent of peace: "And the tears of women would become a flood, powerful enough to extinguish the fire of war forever . . . Then the Son will place the crown on the head of the Mother."[44] Cornelie's sacrifice of her son for the sake of the nation resembles Mary's loss of Christ because both were intended for the good of mankind—and in her mind, a hope for

the end of death. After Hitler's takeover, the motherly and patriotic protagonist described in *Das Wunschkind* became the Aryan Woman. Paradoxically, Nazi rhetoric presented Seidel's matriarch mother as a wholly loyal supporter of the *totaler Krieg* (total war).

Notes

[1]Lydia Kath, Seidel's contemporary, portrayed Germanic tribes in ancient times in her novels *Aud. Geschichte einer Wikingerfrau* (Aud. Story of a Viking Woman; 1934) and *Urmutter Unn: Geschichten um altnordische Frauen* (Great Mother Unn: Stories about Ancient Germanic Women; 1936). Kath depicted strong, fearless women warriors, who sacrificed their lives alongside men. Other authors (Josefa Berens-Totennohl, Marie Diers, and Anne-Marie Koeppen) featured heroines who protected the purity of the German race against dark-skinned, exploitative foreigners and sinister Roma women. See Agnes Cardinal, "Women's Writing under National Socialism," in *A History of German Women's Writing in Austria, Germany and Switzerland*, Edited by Jo Catling. Cambridge UP, 2000, 147-48. For more about trends in literature by women in the decade preceding the Nazi takeover, see Chris Weddon, "The Struggle for Emancipation: German Women Writers of the *Jahrhundertwende*" and Sabine Werner-Birkenbach, "Trends in Writing by Women, 1910-1933," both in *A History of Women's Writing in Germany, Austria and Switzerland,* Edited by Jo Catling. Cambridge UP, 2000.

[2] See among others, Christian Adam's analysis of Seidel's publications during World War II in *Lesen unter Hitler: Autoren, Bestseller, Leser im Dritten Reich* (Fischer, 2007), 264-65; Grazyna Barbara Szeweczyk's study "*Zwei Mythen und zwei Paradigmata der Weiblichkeit im Werk von Ina Seidel und Gertrud von Le Fort," Die Bilder der neuen Frau in der Moderne und den Modernisierungsprozessen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Katowice UP 1998), 225; Annette Kliewer's article "Die Mutter als 'Wurzel der Gemeinschaft.' Ina Seidels *'Wunschkind'* als Wende zum NS-Mutterroman.*" Diskussion Deutsch*. Jg. 23 (1996). Heft 127, 426-37.

[3] Here and further, the translations from the German in this article are mine. The original quote reads: "Eine Art Machtausübung [die] von Machtsucht getragen wird und mythenstiftend im Sinne der nationalsozialistischen Ideologie wirkt." Grazyna Barbara Szeweczyk, "*Zwei Mythen und zwei Paradigmata der Weiblichkeit im Werk von Ina Seidel und Gertrud von Le Fort,"* 225.

[4] Annette Kliewer, "Die Mutter als 'Wurzel der Gemeinschaft'" 426-37.

[5] Cindy Walter-Gensler, "Käte Kestien's *Als die Männer im Graben lagen*," *Women Writing War: from German Colonialism through World War I*. Ed. by Katharina von Hammerstein et al. (De Gruyter 2018), 240.

[6] Ernst Klee, *Das Kulturlexikon zum Dritten Reich. Wer war was vor und nach 1945* (Fischer, 2007), 564.

[7] Nina Nowara, *Frauenbilder im Prosawerk Ina Seidels*, 2008 (Katowice, PhD dissertation), 47. https://www.yumpu.com/de/document/read/43496679/frauenbilder-im-prosawerk-ina-seidels.

[8] "Ich will gern fähig werden, meine Pflicht als Mensch gegen andere zu erfüllen. Ich habe eingesehen, dass man das als Frau am besten als Gattin und Mutter kann. Um aber das zu werden, fehlt mir die notwendigste Bedingung: der Mann, der mich liebt. So habe ich mich entschlossen, mein Abiturium zu machen und später Lehrerin zu werden." In Feber, 153.

[9] After the unexpected death of her second infant daughter in 1918, Seidel wrote that she "auf die Arbeit an meinem Forster-Roman [Das Labyrinth, 1922] geworfen wie nach einem Schiffbruch auf eine reitende Planke" ("threw [herself] into work on a novel about Forster as one clasps a plank after a shipwreck"). Ina Seidel, *Lebensbericht 1885-1923* (Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt 1970), 32.

[10] Seidel belonged to a remarkably gifted family. Her uncle, Heinrich Seidel, was an accomplished author. Her brother Willy (1887-1934) became known as the "German Kipling," because he was a skillful fairy-teller and poet; and her sister Annemarie (Mirl) (1895-1959) was an actress in the expressionist tradition in the Weimar Republic. Family history became an important theme of Seidel's essays such as *Meine Kindheit und Jugend* (*My Childhood and Youth*; 1935), *Drei Städte meiner Jugend* (*Three Cities of My Youth*; 1960), *Von Tau und Tag* (*In the Dewy Morn*; 1962), and *Lebensbericht 1885-1923* (Life Story 1885-1923; 1970). Feber, *Die Seidels,* 140.

[11] All three authors shared a religious upbringing, as well as fascination with German regional history and mythology. They frequently portrayed the conflict between man and nature, with the noble human mind emerging triumphant over weakness and failure. All three became celebrated authors in the Third Reich due to the distinct "Blut und Boden" emphasis of their works. For more about

the reception of these authors' works in the Third Reich, see Tobias Schneider "Bestseller im Dritten Reich," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*. Jahrgang 52 (2004), Heft 1.

[12] Ina Seidel, *Gesammelte Gedichte* (Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1937), 105.

[13] All translations from the German are mine.

[14] Mary McKittrick, "Weltinnigkeit: An Introductory Study of Ina Seidel." *Monatshefte Für Deutschen Unterricht*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1938, pp. 83–93. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/30169471.

[15] "Es finden sie sich in all diesen Büchern Spuren von Inas jahrzehntelanger Beschäftigung mit allen Problemen, der Frau. … In den Zwanzigerjahren hatte sie vielerlei Kontakte mit der Frauenbewegung: der militante Pazifismus entsprach ihren Ansichten, der konsequente Dogmatismus auf anderen Gebieten schreckte sie ab oder reizte ihren Humor." In Nowara 77.

[16][Ein]"zeitloses Buch, ein Buch, das von den ewigen Dingen spricht, von denen, die in Geburt und Tod den Kreislauf des Lebens umfassen. Ein Buch, das von einer Frau handelt, und das nur eine Frau geschrieben haben kann: das Buch der Mutter." In Dackweiler 88.

[17]"Das Buch der deutschen Frau, in vollendeter dichterischer Form ohne Pathos und ohne Geiste; [das Buch, das] in scheinbar sachlicher Distanz und beherrschter glutvoller Innigkeit ein Bekenntnis zu Frauentum, Deutschtum und Religion, in der Krise unserer Zeit eine befreiende Tat [ist]." Quoted in Regina Dackweiler, "Rezeptionsgeschichte von Ina Seidels Roman *Das Wunschkind*," *Verdeckte Überlieferungen. Weiblichkeitsbilder zwischen Weimarer Republik Nationalsozialismus und fünfziger Jahre.* Edited by Barbara Determann (Haag & Herchen, 1991), 86.

[18] Dorit Krusche. "Frau und Krieg. Etappen einer Werkgeschichte Ina Seidels." *Ina Seidel. Eine Literatin am Nationalsozialismus* (Kulturverlag Kadmos Berlin, 2011), 16.

[19] After the war, Seidel denied that the poem and eulogy were published with her consent and knowledge and that she fully accepted the National Socialist regime. Seidel's collection of letters to the fighting German soldiers, published under the title *Dienende Herzen* in 1942, however, hailed the National Socialist ideals of service, sacrifice and humbleness. Christian Adam, *Lesen unter Hitler: Autoren, Bestseller, Leser im Dritten Reich* (Galiani, 2010), 264.

[20] Seidel received the Wilhelm Raabe Preis in 1948 and the Verdienstkreuz der Bundesrepublik Deutschlands in 1954. She was granted an honorary membership at the Akademie der Künste Berlin (West) in 1955, and the Kunstpreis of Nordrhein-Westphalen in 1958. In 1966 Seidel received the Großes Verdienstkreuz der Bundesrepublik Deutschland and in 1970, an honorary distinction from the city of Stanberg. Krusche, "Frau und Krieg,"18.

[21] As Michelle Vangen points out in her analysis of Dix's painting *Mother and Child* (1921), the artist drew attention to the working mother's plight by portraying her with exaggeratedly furrowed skin, protruding veins and a shriveled body. Vangen, Michelle. "Left and Right: Politics and Images of Motherhood in Weimar Germany." *Woman's Art Journal*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2009, pp. 25-30. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/40605296.

[22] Communists construed Paragraph 218 as a tool for class repression because the law primarily impacted the working class: bourgeois women, they argued, could afford contraception or to travel abroad to receive an abortion. Vangen, "Left and Right," 34.

[23] The KPD was the only political party during the Weimar period to consistently demand the complete legalization of abortion. The KPD argued that Paragraph 218 was a brutal form of gender-specific class oppression, a law that targeted working-class women too poor to afford birth control. The Party's goal of legalizing abortion did not seek to promote women's reproductive freedom or to challenge the traditional view that motherhood was women's main social role. Rather, the Party sought to end the oppression of the proletariat. Vangen, "Left and Right," 25, 30.

[24] A lithograph by Käthe Kollwitz titled *Down with the Abortion Paragraphs* (1923) depicts a poverty-stricken, pregnant proletarian mother—the type of woman the KPD claimed was most likely to be affected by the abortion law. Alice Lex-Nerlinger's 1931 painting *Paragraph 218* features a figure of the suffering pregnant woman who is accompanied by a group of women working together to topple a giant cross with the inscription "Paragraph 218." Vangen, Dissertation *Left and Right*, 27.

[25] Schrimpf's art in the 1920s abounds with idealized imagery in the classic tradition; it has contributed to him being seen as a conservative artist who created a resolutely apolitical art (133). Schrimpf's contemporaries, such as the Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch, faulted

the artist for creating escapist art that disengaged from the Weimar Republic's reality. Vangen writes that Schrimpf's paintings, while not overtly agitational, were nevertheless grounded in his radical anarcho-socialist views and his desire for a revolutionary change. Vangen, Dissertation *Left and Right,* 133-36.

[26] By limiting the narrative details of the woodcuts to a minimum, e.g., excluding references to specific time or place, Kollwitz sought to portray real human sacrifices demanded in exchange for abstract notions of honor and glory. Donald E. Gordon, *Expressionism: Art and Idea* (New Haven and London 1987), 165.

[27] https://www.kollwitz.de/folge-krieg-uebersicht

[28] Kollwitz created the woodcuts to commemorate the human cost of World War I, which included the death of her own son on the battlefield. Thus, *The Volunteers* portrays Kollwitz's son Peter in a line of young soldiers, marching behind the skeletal figure of Death beating a war drum. Kollwitz's diary entry echoes the universal grief of all mothers, including Seidel's Cornelie in *Das Wunschkind*: "Made a drawing: the mother letting her dead son slide into her arms. I might make a hundred such drawings and yet I do not get any closer to him. I am seeking him. As if I had to find him in the work. And yet everything I can do is so childishly feeble and inadequate, I feel obscurely that I could throw off this inadequacy, that Peter is somewhere in the work and I might find him. And at the same time I have the feeling that I can no longer do it. I am too shattered, too weakened, drained by tears. I am like the writer in Thomas Mann: he can only write, but he has not sufficient strength to live what is written. Only it is the other way round with me. I no longer have the strength to form what has been lived. A genius and a Mann could do it. I probably cannot." *The Diary and Letters of Käthe Kollwitz*. Kollwitz, Hans, ed. Translated by Richard and Clara Winston (Northwestern UP 1955), 23.

[29] Modeled on so-called Fordism and fueled by the American investment and the Dawes Plan rationalization of the workplace sought to facilitate a recovery of the German nation after the ravages of war, rebellion, and inflation. It led, according to Grossman, to positioning women into, but not necessarily increasing the proportion of women in the labor force. Women's visibility in the public sphere increased

due to the rationalization of production and the work processes in the 1920s: introduction of the assembly line, scientific management, and new standards of speed and productivity. Atina Grossman, "*Girlkultur* or Thoroughly Rationalized Female. A New Woman in Weimar Germany?" *Women in Culture and Politics: A Century of Change,* ed. by Judith Friedlander, et al (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986), 66.

[30] Victoria Vygodskaia-Rust. "Consuming Beauty in the Weimar Republic: A Discussion of Youth, Cosmetics, and Power in Vicki Baum's play *Pariser Platz 13* (1930)," *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature* vol. 43, no. 2, article 47, 1. https://doi.org/10.4148/2334-4415.2064.

[31] The Communist Emil Höllein, the sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, founder of the World League of Sexual Reform, and Doctor Max Hodann were just a few prominent men who supported women's reproductive and sexual rights in the Weimar Republic. Abortion was legalized in 1926 to save the mother, if her life was considered in danger. Cornelie Usborne, "The New Woman and Generation conflict: Perception of Young Women's Sexual Mores in the Weimar Republic," *Generations in Conflict: Youth Revolt and Generation Formation in Germany, 1770-1968* (Cambridge UP 1995), 139-41.

[32] Feminists in the Social Democrat and Communist Parties advocated for legal equality of unmarried mothers and their children and for better access to birth control, including abortion, which they regarded as a precondition for sexual emancipation. Usborne, "The New Woman and Generation Conflict," 140.

[33]"Die Frau muß lernen, die großen objektiven Interessen des Staates und ihres Volkes, ihrer Gemeinde und der mannigfachen Korporation, die sich umgeben, mit als ihre Interessen anzusehen. Sie muß lernen, auch diesem Gemeinschaftsleben seine Kräfte persönlicher Kultur abzugewinnen, eines durch das andere: Persönlichkeit, das öffentliche Leben durch Innenkultur und Innenkultur durch das öffentliche Leben zu bereichern, zu beleben und zu befruchten." Bäumer, 22.

[34]"Und euren Wahnsinn, dass die Kinder, die eben zum Leben erwachten, vor die Kanonen gestellt werden, dass man ihnen beibringt, Mordwaffen zu handhaben und sie auf Brüder zu richten, den mach' ich nicht mehr mit." *Das Wunschkind*, 571.

[35] Children like Christoph, Hölscher suggests in her analysis of *Das Wunschkind*, cannot yet understand sacrifice for their motherland

and do it willingly. That is why Seidel's Christoph has to mature before accepting his destiny. Irmgard Hölscher, "Geschichtskonstruktion und Weiblichkeitsbilder in Ina Seidels Roman *Das Wunschkind*." *Verdeckte Überlieferungen*, 71.

[36]"Ich bin gewiß keine schlechte Patriotin, ich liebe meine Heimat, und ich weiß, was sie ihrem Königshaus zu danken hat; aber in mir lebt auch ein anderes, ein stärkeres Gefühl, das mich zwingt, den Krieg, aus welchen Gründen er auch entbrennen möge, wie eine bösartige, wie die schlimmste Krankheit des Menschengeschlechts zu sehen und nach nichts anderem zu fragen als danach, wie sie geheilt werden könnte. Nur freilich, wenn ich von Kranken umgeben bin, so räsonierte ich nicht, sondern tue das, was der Augenblick fordert: pflegen … den Zustand lindern, soweit ich vermag. Ich kann nicht hassen, wo ich Menschen unter einem übermächtigen Geschick handeln sehe." *Das Wunschkind*, 593-94.

[37]"die schwere Zärtlichkeit ihrer mecklenburgischen Mutter." *Das Wunschkind*, 22.

[38]"Ihre Liebe war dunkle Gut und Stille, inbrünstige Sehnsucht, das Geliebte zu umschließen, zu hegen, zu nähren: Mütterlichkeit." *Das Wunschkind*, 22.

[39]"Da sie den harten nordischen Bereich ihrer Herkunft auch als Heimat des Herzens empfand, wortkarg und spröde war und nur dem liebenden Geliebten sich erschloss- und dann freilich lächelnd, dann hingebend, rückhaltlos und beseligend." *Das Wunschkind*, 22.

[40]"Demütig und klein in ihren Schoß eingehen zu können … wieder Kind zu werden, nichts als ihr Kind … Ganz in den wunderbaren Hellschlaf des Weibes hineingezogen, der nichts ist als der Zustand der Erde, wusste er für einen Augenblick, nun würde er sterben können, nun würde er da draußen im Felde den Tod durch eine feindliche Kugel hinnehmen können wie aus Bruders Hand und fallen, nicht anders als Früchte fallen." *Das Wunschkind*, 17.

[41]"Und so geschah dies, dass in dieser Nacht ein loderndes Wetter Himmel und Erde zusammenschlug – dass der prasselnde Regen die reife Ähre ausdrosch und das junge Korn in den Boden stampfte. Tags darauf hing die Ähre leer. Aber schon quoll im Erdreich der Keim." *Das Wunschkind,* 15.

[42]"… zu leben, zu altern, von hier aus dahinzugehen aus dem schönen sanften Rhythmus erdgegebener Arbeit heraus, nach dem

Gebären, Großziehen und Aufriss der Zukunft an dessen gottgewollter Selbstverständlichkeit ein Zweifel gar nicht möglich war?" *Das Wunschkind,* 39.

[43]"Ich glaube, ich muss nun auch nicht weiter suchen: für mich heißt es nur, für Lebendes sorgen—für Lebendes, verstehen mich wohl, das noch wachsen will, also für Kinder, Tiere, Blumen, Bäume, ja, und nun auch für Acker und Wiesen, für Land und Leute. Das ist mir wohl, da geb' ich so leicht, da strömt es mir doppelt und dreifach an Kräften zurück." *Das Wunschkind* (Im Insel, 1930), 132-33.

[44]"Aber der Tag wird kommen—und er muss kommen—, da die Tränen der Frauen stark genug sein werden, um gleich einer Flut das Feuer des Krieges für ewig zu löschen. . . . Dann setzt der Sohn der Mutter die Krone aufs Haupt." *Das Wunschkind*, 792.

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