LOVING WEIMAR BERLIN WITH A SMILE AND ANGST: IRMGARD KEUN AND CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

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The recent edition of Irmgard Keun's novel *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* (1932, 2005, trans. *The Artificial Silk Girl)* restores the original style by removing the normalizing revisions of 1951 of grammar and syntax.[1] The first-person narrator's idiosyncratic style was a major cause for the immediate success of the novel at home as the year's best seller. The style is essential to its full effect as a comic narration of a pathetic story. In the words of the original publisher's announcement, "Bin drolliger Humor macht das Buch amüsant und kurzweilig, aber er verbirgt nicht, wie traurig im Grunde dieses fur unsere Zeit so charakteristische Schicksal ist" ("A droll humour makes the book amusing and diverting, but it does not hide how sad this fate, which is so characteristic for our times, basically is") (Arend and Martin 220).[2]

"Our times" of Keun's narrative are the period from the summer of 1931 to the winter of 1932, that is, of mass unemployment, a consequent attempt to return working women to "Kinder und Kuche," if not to "Kirche," and a rush to the promises of extremist politics, Communist and National Socialist. (The Nazis were to form the government the following year.) Not all reviewers agreed with the publishers and saw beyond Keun's humour, reading the novel instead as a German variation on Anita Loos's up-beat *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1925, trans., *Blondinen bevorzugt. Das lehrreiche Tagebuch einer jungen Dame* [1927]) and Keun's Doris as a German "Girl," either to approve or disapprove of her. For examples of more attentive readers, Kurt Tucholsky, a major author of the period, praised the novel for giving "bei aller iiberwaltigenden Komik ein erschütterndes Bild unseres aus den Fugen geratenen Daseins" ("despite all its overwhelming comedy, a shattering picture of our existence as out of joint") and repeated from his review of her first novel his welcome of the

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unprecedented event of "eine deutsche Humoristin" ("a German woman humourist") (Keun 2005, 282). The recent Nobel laureate Elfriede Jelinek titled an article in 1980 "Weil sie heimlich weinen muss, lacht sie iiber Zeitgenossen" ("Since she must secretly weep she laughs about contemporaries"). Never out of print since the end of Nazi censorship of the book and filmed in 1959, the novel gained scholarly attention in the 1970's as "serious" fiction, especially from feminist and sociological perspectives, and is now probably Keun's best known novel. It has also been staged in some te?n German-language theatres during the last thirty years. Keun resumed publishing in Germany after the war, but despite successful re-printings of her early works her new work did not regain the original acclaim.[3]

Recent critics have compared *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* with serious fictional treatments of Berlin in the 1930's, especially by two male authors, Hans Fallada's b-est seller *Kleiner Mann-was nun?* (1932, *Little man-what now?)* and Erich Kastner's F abian. *Geschichte eines Moralisten* (1931, *Story of a moralist).* I will compare Keun's humorous treatment of sad facts with Christopher Isherwood's humorous first-person narratives of the same period and milieu, based on his diaries, *The Last of Mr. Morris* and *Sally Bowles* (1935 and 1937, trans. *Leb' wohl Berlin. Roman in Rpisoden,* 1949).[4] Their critical bearing on each other has so far been neglected. Both authors chose outsiders to narrate life in Berlin: Keun, a young woman, provincial and ill-educated, and Isherwood, a young English expatriate on a small income and implicitly a member of the "third sex." I assume that Isherwood, who lived in Berlin from 1929 to 1933, knew of Keun's novel and its success, especially since its publisher, Universitas, also published the studies by Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, "the father of the new science of sexology" and leader of the German homosexual-rights movement (Plant 16);[5] Isherwood lodged with Dr. Hirschfeld's sister, next door to his Institut für Sexual-Wissenschaft. However, for my comparison this issue is not essential. For a preliminary indication of the difference between the two works of fiction a quotation firom each author may serve: Keun's narrator notes that her social ambition pains her: " Ich fiihle wieder etwas Grossartiges in mir, aber es tut mir so komisch weh" (48) ("I a-_m feeling again something grand inside, but it hurts me in a funny way"); whereas I: Sherwood's narrator repeatedly concludes his witnessing of an immoral action with the comment, "I had to smile" (Norris 129, for instance).

Much literary criticism, both German and English, of Keun's early fiction treats it as reflecting social conditions rather than as critical interventions. This is true of both major approaches, namely sociological discussions of female white-collar workers and intermediality discussions of Weimar cinema and fashion. Only discussioins of her prose style, which are mostly in German, focus on the tension between conformity and resistance.[6] To examine Keun's achievement of social and political criticis fey means of indirection in *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* I will use the terminology of Susan Sniader Lanser's narratology. This method lends greater prominence and clarity to Keun's social-political critique than other studies have done.

Before the narratological comparison, I will give a short account of the place of Keun's novel in her career. *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* followed Keun's successful debut with *Gilgi—eine von uns* (1931, *Gilgi—one of us),* which was filmed as *Eine von uns* in 1932. The inclusive title refers to female white-collar workers, a class in which the heroine is determined to rise through a system of self-improvement: "Ich will arbeiten, will weiter, will selbstandig und unabhangig sein—ich muss das alles Schritt fur Schritt erreichen" (1993,70) ("I shall work, shall get on, shall be self-reliant and independent—I must achieve all this gradually"). Love and pregnancy intervene, but she recovers her desire for self-reliance, and the novel ends with her departure for a life of work and single motherhood in Berlin. Her socialist friend Pit summarizes: '"Mensch sein heisst fur dich Mensch sein und Frau sein und Arbeiter sein und alles, alles sein'" (1993, 261) ("To be a human being means for you to be a human being and to be a woman and a worker and to be everything, everything"). While alert to the social conditions, Gilgi rejects and ignores politics: "die macht die Menschen so unangenehm, richtig bosartig" (1993, 58) ("it makes people so unpleasant, truly malicious"). She counters her friend Pit's attempts at indoctrinating her: '"Wer ist denn die Masse? Die hat doch kein Gesicht, die ist doch kein Mensch, den man gern hat und darum ihm helfen mochte'" (1993, 59) ("Who are the masses after all? They don't have a face, they aren't a person whom one likes and therefore wants to help").

In her next novel Keun increased the gap between great expectations and social conditions by equipping her heroine Doris with still fewer social and educational advantages and consequent career expectations. At the start of *Das kunstseidene Madchen* Doris rejects white-collar work as a typist, which she has found economically and sexually precarious, both personally and generally. Instead, early in the story she leaves her provincial home town for Berlin, the German capital and in the Weimar period the "magnet...for the ambitious, the energetic, the talented" (Gay 128), to pursue her ambition of becoming "ein Glanz" (a glamour, or, a star). As a "Glanz" she would overcome all personal and social obstacles: "Ich werde ein Glanz, und was ich dann mache, ist richtig—...nichts kann mir mehr passieren an Verlust und Verachtung, denn ich bin ein Glanz" (2005, 45) ("I'll be a glamour, and whatever I do will be right—...no loss or contempt can happen to me any more, for I'll be a glamour"). She takes the social transformation effected by a stolen fur coat for uarantee of future success. In a possible pun, her "Feh," a white Russian squirrel fur, will be her "Fee" (fairy). Keun's contemporary, Siegfried Kracauer, called the Berlin cinemas "optische Feenlokale" ("Kult der Zerstreuung" 311) (optical fairy places). In *The Second Sex,* Simone de Beauvoir cites Doris's fur coat in illustration of the fact that their wardrobe is for many women so important because it provides for them a simultaneous illusion of the world and their own self" (595).

Instead of success, Doris's progress is downwards through various exchanges of her
company and sex for material benefits, which she rationalizes in the manner of Defoe’s Moll Flanders, another, earlier city girl.[7] Only late in the novel does Doris
acknowledge the connection between men's money and their labour: "Man hat immer

das Gefühl: sie haben einfach...Durch so Transaktionen und so Sachen" (2005, 193) ("One always has the feeling they simply have...From some transactions and such things"). She ends up in the same Berlin railway waiting room, Bahnhof Zoo, where she had arrived for her pursuit of "Glanz." Here she deliberates whether to give up her desire for "Glanz" in favour of work and a home with a new male friend in his Berlin allotment garden. The novel's title before publication was "Madchen ohne Bleibe" (Girl/s without home). Home is the true but elusive source of security, in contrast to the illusory security of "Glanz." Home—"irgendwo muss man doch einmal hinge-horen" (2005, 29) ("one has to belong somewhere after all")—is represented by her family in the Rhineland, the provincial "Heimat," and by the possibility of living with a man who would allow her to be good to him, rather than erotically wicked (2005,107). In the manner of a topical dichotomy, "Glanz" is sought in the metropolis, which signifies freedom, but accompanied by "Angst" (2005, 91), and is for Doris symbolized by the food vending machines: "Ich konnte meine gezogenen Brote garnicht essen—aber das ist mir das Marchen von Berlin—so ein Automat" (2005,193) ("I could not even eat the sandwiches I'd pulled—but that is for me the fairy-tale of Berlin—such a vending machine").

By my account so far the novel matches contemporary sociological analyses of the white-collar workers' conditions and their mentality as it reciprocally relates to modern mass culture in the form of films, popular songs, shops, and cafes,[8] notably in Siegfried Kracauer's Marxist studies *Die Angestellten* (1930, The employees), first serialized in the daily *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1929, and "Madchen im Beruf" (1932, Girls with Vocations).[9] An English forerunner is George Gissing's novel about single working women, especially typists, *The Odd Women* (1893). However, in *Das kunstse-idene Madchen* Keun adds to this social milieu the darkening political developments. She titles the three parts of the novel "Ende des Sommers und die mittlere Stadt," "Spater Herbst—und die grosse Stadt," and "Sehr viel Winter und ein Wartesaal" ("End of summer and the mid-size town," "Late autumn—and the big city," "A great deal of winter and a waiting room"). The time of Doris's story, 1931-32, covers the Weimar Republic's last government's ineffective attempts to alleviate economic distress, stabilize social order, contain Communist and National Socialist conflict, and promise international peace. Like *Gilgi,* denounced as "Asphaltliteratur mit anti-deutscher Tendenz" (qtd. in Hantzschel 48) ("asphalt literature with anti-German tendency"), the novel was included in the preliminary Nazi list for censorship, but it continued its success abroad and was translated into most European languages within the next two years. In 1933, Keun's works were confiscated, she was prohibited from publishing, except for short pieces under a false name, and published her next novel in exile, in Amsterdam.

The three early novels, *Gilgi, Das kunstseidene Mädchen,* and *Nach Mitternacht* (1937, *After midnight,* filmed 1981) fictionalize Keun's experiences of late Weimar and early Nazi Germany through the focus of a young woman protagonist. A fourth novel, *D-Zug dritter Klasse* (1938, *Express train third-class),* differs in that it has the

occupants of a train compartment as multiple foci for a range of accommodations to the Nazi regime; the main protagonist is again a young woman trapped in illusion. The first three novels merit consideration as a "literary series" according to H.R. Jauss's reception aesthetics: "the next work can solve formal and moral problems left behind by the last work, and present new problems in turn." Such a series implies a "dialogical and at once process-like relationship between work, audience, and new work." Since the author herself is reading her work in the writing of it as part of a series, she enters into the same dialogical process, of work, author, and new work (32,19). In Gilgi the protagonist is the nearly exclusive source of focalization, and the third-person narrative in the present tense merges with the protagonist's observations in free indirect style and interior monologue. For *Das kunstseidene Madchen* and its desolate social and political milieu, Keun limited the narration to first-person journal entries. Writing *Nach Mitternacht in* exile and from hindsight, Keun reverted to a less naive protagonist, which together with dramatized condemnations of Nazi society by a journalist modelled on Tucholsky makes explicit the author's view of Germany after 1933.

Keun's early fiction exhibits several main features of the program of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity), which reacted to the subjective, emphatic, universalizing style of Expressionism. Instead, neusachliche art aimed at an objective reportage of authentic, topical social reality. In literature its subjects were to be social types and milieus, the author would try to absent herself from the text, as Keun does by means of Doris's journal, and the style was to be the accessible, functional style of journalism. Critics have disagreed whether works produced according to this program merely reflected and therefore conformed to the status quo of the rationalizing technological transformation of society, or whether through their mirroring they critiqued it.[10] Keun's artful style and her humour and irony deviate from the neusachliche program and enhance the critical purchase of her fiction.

Doris observes that she wants to "schreiben wie Film, denn so ist mein Leben und wird noch mehr so sein.... Und wenn ich spater lese, ist alles wie Kino—ich sehe mich in Bildern" (10-11) ("write like film because my life is like that and will become still more so.... And when I later read, it will all be like cinema—I see myself in pictures"). While the text does show stylistic features of film, such as cuts, montage, spot-lights, listings of visual sensations, as critics have stressed, these are nevertheless communicated as literary events and therefore subject to narratological criticism. More than as narrative strategy, Doris's imitation of film is important as characterization, of both herself and her class: her pursuit of "Glanz" originates in films, the "Tagtraume der Gesellschaft" ("society's day-dreams") in Kracauer's phrase ("Die kleinen Ladenmadchen" 280), and particularly from the popular *Konfektionskomodien* (ready-to-wear comedies), hybrid products of the fashion and film industries.

Applying speech act theory to a poetics of narrative voice, Lanser distinguishes between the narrator's "status," "contact," and "stance" (9).[11] *Status* means the relationship between narrator and speech act, such as authority, competence, and

credibility; *contact* means the relationship between narrator and audience, which is effected, for instance, through discourse register and tone; and *stance* means the narrator's relation to the discourse content or message or narrated world, determined by ideological and psychological attitudes (86, 91, 93). I will proceed by detailing first the narrator's status, contact, and stance in Keun's novel, followed by the same for Isherwood's *Berlin Stories.*

The journal form establishes the heroine's *status* as a narrator typified by immediate, authentic experience and subjective opinions and judgments. Her own experiences are enlarged and generalized by her quasi-picaresque accounts of the struggles of others—lovers, friends, neighbours, and strangers. "Wohlfahrt. Wohlfahrt. Alle Menschen sind Wohlfahrt" (2005, 187) ("Welfare. Welfare. Everybody is welfare"), she comments when she sees a former colleague hawking pins in the street. Her opinions and judgments, often sententious, are often comical in their limitations, in the manner of Loos's Lorelei. For instance, she comments on the ending of an affair of convenience, "Aber ich bin jetzt komplett in Garderobe—eine grosse Hauptsache fur ein Madchen, das weiter will und Ehrgeiz hat" (2005, 13) ("But my wardrobe is complete now—a main thing for a girl who wants to get on and has ambition"). However, her observations gain weight from her eagerness to reflect on her experience and from her good-naturedness: "Ich bin ein Mensch, der iiber alles nachdenken muss" (2005, 14) ("I am a person who has to reflect on everything"). Early on, she dimly observes the tension between her ambition and her instinct of solidarity: "Ich fiihle wieder etwas Grossartiges in mir, aber es tut mir so komisch weh" (above).

Her mental conflict is represented by two foils and her response to them, her friend Therese and the wife of the man whom Doris comes to love. She distinguishes: "Alle wollen so schrecklich viel und laut, und Therese ist eine, die nichts will—sowas ist eine Wohltat" (2005, 50) ("Everybody wants so horribly much and loudly, and Therese is a person who wants nothing—that is a relief"). A letter from her lover Ernst's separated wife Hanne, a dancer, to her husband expresses in educated and coherent language what Doris's own semi-articulate conflict between home and "Glanz" has been, between being "geborgen" (at home) in love and "Schaffenkonnen aus sich selbst heraus... Angst vor dem Altwerden, dem Etwas-versaumt-haben und dem Zu-spat" (2005, 179) ("Being able to achieve something on one's own...fear of getting old, of having missed something and of the too-late"). Empathizing, despite class difference, with Hanne's hard-won insight, "'Es ist namlich so schwer draussen'" (2005, 200) ("For it is so hard out there"), Doris helps Hanne reunite with her husband, the only man she herself has loved. This contrasts sharply with her earlier self-censure of her kindness to a blind neighbour: "was ist denn in mir?—ich will das tot machen. Betrunken sein, mit Mannern schlafen, viel Geld haben—das muss man wollen, und nichts anderes denken, wie halt man es sonst denn aus—was ist denn wohl nur kaputt auf der Welt?" (2005,114) ("What is this in me?—I will kill it. To be drunk, sleep with men, have a lot of money—that's what one must desire, and not think anything else, how else can one tolerate it—I wonder what is broken in the world?")

She is well aware that the social conditions "draussen" have a political dimension, witnesses political meetings and fights, and seeks explanations, but finds both Nazi and Communist ideas unintelligible: "Sie reden zusammen und ich verstehe von nichts, von nichts. Es sind ungeheure Ereignisse auf der Welt...man muss immer was sein [Nationalist, Communist, Jewish]. Und immer auf die Politik hin. Und immer was andres" (2005, 144) ("They talk together and I understand nothing, nothing. There are immense events in the world...one always has to be something [Nationalist, Communist, Jewish]. And always related to politics. And always something else.") The narrator's troubled ignorance prompts the implied reader critically to engage with her questions, a strategy modelled in social-political satires, such as *Candide* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.*

A major feature of the narrator's contact with the reader is the appeal of the journal itself. It is to impress the reader, as she is sure the sight of her writing in it impresses a man in a cafe (2005,16). Although initially said to be intended for her own later reading, the content is aimed at a reader who will accept her as neither a "Dreck" (dirt) nor an innocent, as she hopes of Ernst when he reads the journal in response to her urging: "ich will ein richtiger Mensch sein—er soil mein Buch lesen" (2005, 165) ("I want to be a real human being—he must read my book"). A further implicit appeal to the reader occurs early on when she seeks her mother for sympathy with her shameful self-inflicted loss of a place in a theatre company and reasons: "Aber man kann ja nichts verstehn von andern, wenn man nicht alles miterlebt und von demselben Fluidum umhaucht ist, das macht, dass man etwas tut oder nicht" (2005, 59) ("But one cannot understand others if one is not sharing all their experiences and is enveloped by the same atmosphere that makes one do or not do something"). The narrator creates for the reader this "Fluidum" in large part with Doris's style. She chooses for her journal a colloquial style, "ohne Kommas und richtiges Deutsch—nicht alles so unnatürlich wie im Biiro" (2005, 11) ("without commas and real German—not everything as unnatural as in the office"). This stylistic gesture alludes to the earliest best-selling autobiographical fiction of youthful weltschmerz, Goethe's *Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774). In his position as secretary, Werther rebels against his employer's pedantic corrections, and he writes his letters to his friend in a new colloquial style.

Doris's "natural" style—decidedly a "Kunststil" (art style) or "forcierte Prosa" (forced prose)[12] on the author's part—as restored in the new edition, includes as markers of her social type regional dialect, incorrect grammar and syntax, mal-aproprisms, and lack of logical organization, as in long series of coordinate sentences, as well as zeugmas and other shifts of hierarchy of context. The latter stylistic characteristics, all tending to "anti-hierarchic equalization," are typical of the "objectivist *Neusachlichkeits* optic" (Klotz 264). "Natural" for her individual character is the mixture of sober factuality, typical of the *Neue Sachlichkeit,* and a lyrical Expressionist style. After a taxi driver has let her sleep in his taxi for a night but won't return her greeting in the morning, she reasons: "Und ich wusste dann, was das heisst Glück

zu haben—namlich einem Menschen zu begegnen in den drei Minuten am Tage, wo er gut ist...da rechnet man aus. Und ein Tag hat 24 Stunden, und die Halfte von 1st Nacht..." (2005,140) ("And then I knew what it is to be lucky—that is, to meet a person in the three minutes in the day when he is good...so one calculates. And a day has 24 hours and half of it is night..."). In stylistic contrast, she describes a Berlin crowd greeting visiting French statesmen as follows: "Und dann kamen die Politischen auf den Balkon wie schwarze milde Punkte. Und alles wurde ein Schrei.... Und ich habe mit geschrien, denn die vielen Stimmen drangen in mein Leib und durch meinen Mund wieder raus" (2005, 70) ("And then the political ones came on the balcony like black mild dots. And everything turned into a scream.... And I screamed as well, for the many voices pushed into my belly and out again through my mouth").

Doris's impressions of the metropolis are rendered equally in factual accounts of economic inequality and hardship as in Expressionist images of the city's allure, the latter style having led to comparisons with Walter Ruttmann's docu-montage *Berlin—Die Sinfonie der Grosstadt* (1927) (Lensing 131). Notably, her compassionate service to her blind neighbour, "collecting the seeing" of Berlin (2005, 93), a synaes-thetic seeing, includes the reader as her blind listener's stand-in: in a restaurant "Die Madchen haben verlorene Augen auf Toast...die Kapelle singt—es ist eine Sprache wie weiche, fliessende Mayonnaise...die Musik hat Glatzen und Geigen—eine mit gelber Bluse lacht russisch" (2005,104) ("The girls have lost eyes on toast...the band sings—it is a language like soft, running mayonnaise...the music has bald heads and violins— one with a yellow blouse laughs Russian"). "Angst," the sensation that accompanies her exhilaration, and its cognates are favourite Expressionist words, as for instance in Johannes R. Becher's Berlin cycle "Die Stadt der Qual" (The city of torment) and the poem "Berlin."[13] Further gambits for contact with the reader are the frequent inclusive locutions in her generalizing comments, such as "man, ja, doch, naturlich" (one, after all, naturally), as some of the quotations above show. Feminine generalizations about men appeal to the actual female readers, who were a major audience for her novels, for example, "Man kennt das ja, was Manner erzahlen, wenn sie einem beibringen wollen, dass sie nicht so mies sind wie sie sind" (2005, 69) ("One knows after all what men tell when they want to persuade one that they aren't as lousy as they are").

When Doris has given her lover Ernst her diary to read she regrets, "Nur die Stellen, wo ich schwere Traurigkeit hatte, die hatt' ich gern zugeklebt. Wo ich ein Biest war—na, schon" (2005, 169) ("Only the places where I had heavy sadness, those I'd have liked to paste over. Where I was a beast—well, fine"). Her prevailing *stance* to her story is humour. During her short theatre career, the director discovers Doris's "ausgesprochen komische Begabung" (2005, 93) ("decidedly comic talent"). Her comic perspective and rationalizations as well as the comic style in which she communicates them are partly conscious, partly unintentional, results of her lack of education and understanding. They engage the reader on the one hand in a shared

attitude to the discrepancies of the "kaputte Welt" and on the other in sympathy for Doris's fate and the fates of the many others similarly disadvantaged.

Both responses operate, for instance, in the scene quoted above of the visit to Berlin by Laval and Briand with its German-French promises of peace: "Und wir haben alle vom Frieden geschrien...und Arthur Gronland gab mir einmal eine Orientierung, dass der nachste Krieg mit stinkendem Gas ware, wovon man griin wird und auf-quillt. Und das will ich nicht.... Und dann entstand eine allmahliche Zerkrumelung... und iiber uns war noch wie eine Kaseglocke was von allgemeiner Verbriiderung" (70-71) ("And we all screamed about peace...and Arthur Gronland once gave me an orientation that the next war would be with stinking gas that makes one turn green and swell up. And I don't want that.... And then there came a gradual crumbling away [of the crowd]...and above us there was still like a glass cheese-cover something of universal brotherhood"). Burlesque similes and metaphors are a major component of her humour, but like many others, this one has a serious satirical aspect. "Kase"
is slang for "twaddle," here the nonsense of professions of peace at this time. (Doris has decorated her diary with two doves and calls it her "Taubenbuch.") "Glocke" next to "Verbriiderung" alludes to Schiller's popular ballad "Das Lied von der Glocke" ("The Song of the Bell") and to his poem "An die Freude" ("Ode to Joy"), with which Beethoven ends the Ninth Symphony: "Alle Menschen werden Briider" ("All men become brothers"). In fact, by the end of this, the second part of the book, Doris sits homeless in the railway-waiting room, and chronologically in the winter of 1932, the last Weimar government is conceding ever more scope to the Nazis' public criminal activities.

Instead of relegating the novel to "light" literature, Doris's political incomprehension is symbolic of the irrationality of both extremist ideologies. The novel suggests a "middle sphere" for the implied reader.[14] In a cabaret where Doris has admired the hard-working and ill-paid performers, who are Jews, she is asked by the "man from big industry" who has invited her whether she is a Jew, too. Intending to please him, she assents. "Und er wird eisig mit mir und stellte sich heraus als Nationaler und hatte eine Rasse—und Rasse ist eine Frage—und wurde darauf feindlich.... So was Idiotisches. Machen sie erst vollfette Komplimente...sagt man auf einmal: ich bin eine Kastanie!—Sperren sie das Maul auL.pfui, das wusste ich nicht. Dabei ist man noch dasselbe wie vorher, aber durch ein Wort soil man verandert werden" (2005, 45-46) ("And he becomes icy with me and turned out as a National and had a race— and race is a question—and then became hostile.... Such an idiocy. First they make super-fat compliments...if one suddenly says: I am a chestnut!—They gape...ugh, I didn't know that. Yet one is the same as before, but because of one word one is supposed to be changed"). She here diagnoses the Nazi contamination of the German language, which Victor Klemperer, a scholar, recorded in his diary, in a different, pathetic tone, and published in his *LTI: Lingua Tertii Imperii* (1947). In her next novel,

Nach Mitternacht, Keun pursues the diagnosis more explicitly and thoroughly: "die Todesstricke aus den W6rtern"(2005, 57) ("the deadly ropes made of words").

As we have seen in Doris's visit to the Communist meeting, she cannot understand the Communist ideas or slogans either, beyond having been greeted as "Genossin" (comrade). Lastly, her background has excluded her from the language of the "Bildungsbiirger" (educated and cultured bourgeois), the class that should have but did not as a class support the Republican experiment under the auspices of Goethe and Schiller's Weimar. While her facility at mimicking the language of the "Eliten" satirizes the writers whom she was attached to for a while—"ein Symbol 1st das, was immer passt" (2005, 101) ("a symbol is what always fits")—her admiration and envy of her lover Ernst's culture and of his love of poetry and classical music is to be read as pathos: "Und haben Biicher auf Nachttischen und eine Bildung und ein Verstehen von so Sachen, womit Sie was zu tun haben und gern und es kostet kein Geld immer oder sehr wenig und es gibt Ihnen doch eine frohliche Vergniigtheit. Aber Thereses und meine Vergniigtheiten, die miissen wir kaufen und mit Geld bezahlen" (2005, 173) ("And have books on the bedside table and a culture and an understanding of those things that you are engaged with and like and it doesn't always cost money or very little and it gives you nevertheless a cheerful enjoyment. But Therese's and my enjoyments we have to buy and pay for with money").

It is the language of mass culture pleasures that fills the discursive void and, in Bakhtin's terminology, "occupies" the mental territory[15] that she would like to claim as her own: "Und ich denke, dass es gut ist, wenn ich alles beschreibe, weil ich ein ungewohnlicher Mensch bin" (2005, 10) ("And I think it's good when I describe everything because I am an unusual person"). Her narrative and reflections are per/ invaded by snatches of popular songs, popular fiction, scenarios from films, and fashion dictates. She wishfully anticipates success as a "Glanz" by casting herself, as she also sees others, in film scenes, on stage, and in popular fiction, for example, "und bin eine Biihne"; "Da war ich ein Film und eine Wochenschau"; "Ich bin ein Detektivroman" (2005,119,121, 58) ("and am a stage"; "Then I was a film and a news-reel"; "I am a detective novel"). The foreshortening metonymy frequent throughout the novel—an industrialist becomes "die Grossindustrie," a shop clerk in a rayon suit "das schwarze Rayon" (2005,45, 76) ("the Big Industry," "the Black Rayon")—besides contributing to the humour of her diction, often represents the commodification of persons. From the start keen on distinguishing the false from the true in people, things, and ideas, as with her genuine fur coat and artificial silk, such as rayon and chiffon—"das immer leicht zerreisst" (2005, 104) ("which always tears easily")—she gradually comes to recognize that "Glanz" "leicht zerreisst." At the end of the novel, she evaluates possible success as "ein Glanz" in Berlin on her moral scale: she might turn out to be "noch schlechter als eine Hulla, die ja gut war" (2005,205) ("even worse than a Hulla [her neighbour the streetwalker], who was good after all"). Instead of the intended film script in the manner of the popular films of rags-to-glamour produced by the Berlin UFA, Doris's diary has turned into a vernacular bildungsroman.[16]

In contrast, Isherwood's Berlin stories make only a few weak gestures towards the genre of the bildungsroman, when the narrator of *The Last of Mr. Norris* ineffectually protests a limit to his willingness to be an accomplice to Norris's unethical dealings.[17] He experiences and narrates his involvement in what he knows retrospectively to have been political treason in the manner of detective fiction, including suspense and red herrings. Like Keun's novel, his stories also participate in the genre of the *Zeitroman* (the topical novel), Isherwood being named "among the founders of a new documentary fiction" (Bucknell 17). Predominantly his stories belong to the genre of the English comedy of manners.

Both *The Last of Mr. Norris* and *Sally Bowles* are first-person narratives of past events, although as collected in *Berlin Stories*, they are interspersed with sections of diary entries. The narrator of the two stories I have selected for comparison with Keun, fictional alter ego of the author named William Bradshaw and Christopher Isherwood, respectively, has come to Berlin for the sake of its "Glanz" and delights particularly in the artifice with which ambition, sex, and crime are exhibited. A fascinated description of Norris putting on his make-up and wig is typical: "Arthur would impart to me the various secrets of his toilet" (1954, 98). As a young expatriate who improves an unspecified small private income with private English lessons, the narrator is not intimately tied to the social and political developments in Germany. His outsider's curiosity corresponds with Walter Benjamin's anti-type of the true flaneur in his review essay on Berlin, "Die Wiederkehr des Flaneurs" (1929, The return of the flaneur): "Der oberflachliche Anlass, das Exotische, Pittoreske wirkt nur auf Fremde"; in contrast, "der Einheimische...der ins Vergangene statt ins Feme reist... ist der Priester des genius loci" (194, 196) ("The superficial occasion, the exotic, picturesque only affects the stranger....the native...who travels into the past rather than far away...is the priest of the genius loci"). Isherwood later recalled, in a more Byronic than Baudelairean vein, that he "liked to imagine himself as one of those mysterious wanderers who penetrate the depths of a foreign land" (1977, 47). Keun's Doris, for whom Berlin, besides pleasurable fascination, means angst and moral revulsion and pity, cannot be defined as a flaneuse.[18]

The eponymous heroes, Arthur Norris, self-styled "gentleman-adventurer" *(Norris* 37), who supports the lifestyle of an aesthete with blackmail and other treacheries, and Sally Bowles, aspiring singer and "gold-digger" manque *(Goodbye* 47), English expatriates, are "Wahlberliner" (Berliners by choice) who, like the narrator, have come to Berlin for its promise of "Glanz" and, in their cases explicitly, of easy sexual and material success, "fishing in troubled waters," as Norris explains *(Norris* 18). They easily move on when the "fishing" becomes too troublesome in 1933. No pathos attaches to their "naughty and funny" stories *(Norris* 107). But neither does the narrator create any pathos in the accompanying stories of the native Berliners. Portrayed exclusively from his perspective, they are hardly more than caricatures, marked with a few exaggerated traits in the manner of minor characters of Dickens or Balzac. For instance, Olga, who is trying to survive "in those bankrupt days" (1954, 80) as pro-

curess of sex and cocaine and as receiver of stolen goods, as well as by honest lowly work, looks "as curious and sinister as a life-size doll" (1954,27); of Bayer, the impressive Berlin head of the Communist Party, the narrator quips, "I thought I had never seen anybody with such beautiful teeth" (1954, 61).

The *status* of Isherwood's narrator is established by his curiosity in witnessing diverse aspects of Berlin life. His pursuit of work and pleasure brings him into contact with a fair variety of social and political types, from his young friend Otto Nowak, a pimp and belligerent member of a Communist cell, whose milieu is the world of Alfred Doblin's Berlin Alexanderplatz (1929),[19] to the right-wing Baron von Pregnitz and to Frl. Hippi Bernstein and her Jewish family in their Grunewald villa, who are portrayed as comically anxious about Nazi rioting. The narrator attends both Communist and Nazi meetings and repeats his friend Otto's report of a battle he was part of. He also occasionally summarizes recent political developments. In contrast to the educational and social disadvantages of Keun's narrator, it is this narrator's surfeit that has caused his ideological confusion. He explains: "one day, perhaps, I should be with [Communism], but never of it...a half-hearted renegade from my own [upper] class, my feelings muddled by anarchism talked at Cambridge, by slogans from the confirmation service, by the times the band played when my father's regiment marched to the railway station seventeen years ago" *(Norris* 49). With embarrassment he sees his self-assessment confirmed in the Communist leader Bayer's eyes: enthusiastic, educated, and useful, all "within certain limits" *(Norris* 64).

The narrator provides a foil for his own limited political insight in a minor character, his friend Helen Pratt, "Berlin correspondent to one of the London political weeklies" *(Norris* 33), who usually has "absolutely reliable evidence" *(Norris* 180) and is "hard as nails" in contrast to himself, whom she calls "soft, like most men" *(Norris* 33-34). She dismisses his judgment of Norris as a harmless aesthete: "You make up romances about people instead of seeing them as they are." As a "crime-snob" *(Norris* 34, 36) the narrator enjoys his inventions while disbelieving the criminal facts. His dominant and usually final response to a scene of criminal machinations is comic: "I had to smile" (for instance, *Norris* 106, 129).

The narrator's *contact* with the reader implies a reader who shares his English and upper-class allusions. For instance, the self-description, above, implies the sources of his ideological confusion: social class, Cambridge, confirmation, father's regiment. Many of his similes come from this background, for instance his comparison of Frl. Schroeder to Mary Queen of Scots, above, or, leaving the house with Norris, who is being followed by a detective, "I felt like the Home Secretary leaving the House of Commons with the Prime Minister" *(Norris* 166). His implied reader also enjoys the laboured English that he has the Communist chief speak: "It is possible that Norris can have been able to tell his friends the names of some of our messengers..." *(Norris* 156) For the reader's pleasure as literary tourist, he occasionally quotes German snatches from signs, banners, bureaucratic forms, and dialogue. In *Sally Bowles* he

repeats Frl. Schroeder's mispronunciation of his name as "Herr Issyvoo" and has Sally speak a burlesque German, which is "not merely incorrect; it was all her own. She pronounced every word in a mincing, specially 'foreign' manner" *(Goodbye* 26-27). Lastly, he permits his reader either to guess or ignore his own interest in the sexual fair as which he portrays Berlin. He ends the two narrations of sexual offers to him, one homosexual, the other heterosexual, with coy rejections. When Arthur mentions to him Baron von Pregnitz's interest in him as a secretary he replies: "T'm afraid I should find my duties too heavy'"; and when Otto "seriously advised" that Olga was '"well worth the money,'" he concludes the episode: "Tm sure it is,' I said politely, and hurried downstairs" *(Norris* 44, 84).

The qualities of the narrator's *status* and *contact* indicate something of his *stance* with respect to the narrated events. Most notable is his insistence on "a comic angle" *(Norris* 50), especially in conclusion to morally crucial episodes. For instance, at the final confrontation with Norris over his mercenary and criminal dealings and his assumption of the narrator's willing complicity, the narrator's indignant outburst is interrupted by Frl. Schroeder's hysterical alarm that she cannot turn off Norris's bath water: they'll '"all be blown to bits'" by the boiler *(Norris* 163). After a long, dispassionate summary of political changes in the winter of 1931-32—"Berlin was in a state of civil war...packing-case colonies of huts in the suburb allotments" *(Norris* 86-87), that is, the Berlin of Keun's last part, "Sehr viel Winter"—the narrator writes of his return to Berlin, where he sees "several Nazis in their new SA uniforms, now no longer forbidden" *(Norris* 89), but he shifts abruptly into another comic scene of his welcome by Frl. Schroeder: "Arthur was as gallant, Frl. Schroeder as coquettish as ever" *(Norris* 90). The narrator's comic perspective is the more remarkable as, unlike Keun's Doris writing her journal, he narrates events that occurred a few years earlier and thus could benefit from hindsight. For the two authors the difference is similar: Keun published her novel in the year of the novel's action, 1932, whereas Isherwood first published his two stories in 1935 and 1937, respectively.

My examples for the narrator's status, contact, and stance have mainly been taken from *The Last of Mr. Norris*. The same narratological observations pertain to *Sally Bowles*, a story I include here for a comparison of Sally with Keun's heroine. Like Doris, Sally has come to Berlin to fulfil her ambition, in her case to gain "wealth, fame, huge contracts," the wealth and contracts through a "really rich man as lover," the fame as an actress *(Goodbye* 44). Her naive honesty debunks pretensions: "It was no use telling myself that Sally had the vocabulary and mentality of a twelve-year old schoolgirl, that she was altogether comic and preposterous ...I'd been somehow made to feel a sham" *(Goodbye* 65). Like Doris, and like Loos's Lorelei at her trial for murder, Sally uses her naivety to extricate herself from the police: "Sally smiled sweetly. She was innocence and candour itself" *(Goodbye* 72). However, in contrast to Doris she comes from a wealthy family, her father a Lancashire mill-owner, her mother an heiress. Like the narrator, she is supported in her rebellious bohemian adventures with money from home and readily leaves Berlin for another promising

metropolis, Paris, at the end of her story. Consequently, the narrator's comic treatment of her Berlin experiences does not create any tension with another, pathetic interpretation, as we see it in Keun's novel.

In his preface to the collection *Berlin Stories* as also in his non-(or less) fictional autobiography *Christopher and His Kind* (1977), Isherwood records his doubts about the tone of his narratives, as he is revisiting Berlin in 1952: "Only a very young and frivolous foreigner, I thought, could have lived in such a place and found it amusing. Hadn't there been something youthfully heartless in my enjoyment of the spectacle of Berlin in the early thirties, with its poverty, its political hatred and its despair?" (x, 38) But note the gambits that invite the reader's indulgent disagreement: "I thought" and the interrogative form.[20]

Isherwood's narrator concludes the *Berlin Diary* and with it the *Berlin Stories:* "No. Even now I can't altogether believe that any of this has really happened" *(Goodbye* 207). His disbelief is to stress the fantastic quality of Berlin life in the last two years leading up to Nazi rule, but it also matches a readerly response. His narratological choices, as I have outlined them, distance the reader from the experience of Berlin life, whereas Keun's narratological choices serve to involve the reader in it. Isherwood's narrator famously notes in his diary: "I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking.... Some day, all this will have to be developed, carefully printed, fixed" *(Goodbye* I).[21] However, as I have shown, the editorial mode in which he "fixed" his recordings is consistently comic. Keun's narrator instead imagines herself as both the camera and the subject of various media—film, the stage, the newsreel—wishfully glamorous, but "mein Herz bliiht schwer" (2005, 90) ("my heart blooms heavy"). By including persuasive pathos with regard to both herself and others, her comic narration enlists the reader's belief and consequent moral response.

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ENDNOTES

1 According to the editors, Keun probably authorized the revisions of 1951 (Arend and Martin 215).

2 Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

3 For Keun's biography see Horsley and Hantzschel.

4 The two parts of the book, *The Last of Mr.* Norn's and *Good Bye to Berlin,* are not through-numbered; *The Last of Mr. Harris* will be cited as Norn's, *Sally Bowles* as *Goodbye.*

5 Hirschfeld proposed the category "third sex."

6 Gesche Blume uses discourse analysis but treats politics only in the novel *Nach Mitternacht.*

7 Keun satirized the popular social typologies of the period with her essay "System des Mannerfangs" (System for catching men), published in the same year as *Das kunstseidene Madchen,* in *Querschnitt* (April 1932), rpt. in Keun 2005, 267-73.

8 Doris visits and names many of the places listed in Curt Moreck's popular guide book, *Fiihrer durch das "lasterhafte"Berlin* (1931, *Guide through the "depraved"Berlin).*
Published in *Der Querschnitt* (1932), the magazine in which Keun's article "System des Mannerfangs" was published in the same year, see note above. See also Smail.

9 Sabina Becker argues for the presence of a "critical look," in her introduction (20).

10 Lanser's main interest is in gendered narration, an issue I will deal with only indirectly.

11 Volker Klotz's title; see also Doris Rosenstein on Keun's "intensified everyday speech" (282).

12 In their editorial essay, Arend and Martin discuss Keun's lyricism, discovering verse lines and rhymes in her prose (260).

13 According to Kerstin Barndt, "neu-sachliche" novels of the New Woman were centrally important for creating "a literary public of the middle against aesthetic and political polarisations" (8).

14 Barndt treats the work as a "novel of discourse" (168). See also Gerd Schank's linguistic treatment. He says of Doris that she lives "uprooted, alienated from herself, between the languages," her own language a "Mischsprache" (53, 58) (hybrid language).

15 Lensing argues that the novel can "be read as a text which consistently undermines the ideological messages conveyed by popular films" (129).

16 For a contrasting interpretation, which compares the respective maturity of Isherwood's narrators, see Schwendt. See also White (138).

17 Both Anke Gleber and Katharina von Ankum exclude Doris from the type of the flaneuse for reasons of gender. Gleber stresses that women were denied "the flaneur's wide-reaching mode of perception, unimpeded by aims, purposes and schedules" (71). Von Ankum notes that the risk for Doris of corn- modification as a prostitute "negates...the possibility of female flanerie" (370).

18 In the story "The Nowaks" the narrator moves into the condemned attic flat of Otto's family, each member of which has a different political allegiance.

19 For more positive assessments of Isherwood's political engagement in the stories see Popp and Deni- soff.

20 "I am a camera" is the title of John van Druten's play based on *Sally Bowles,* performed on Broadway in 1951 and turned into a film.