

1. **Theoretische Begriffe und literarische Praxis**: **Schuld**, **Leiden** und **Trauma** deuten auf unterschiedliche Perspektiven hin und führen auch zu verschiedenen moralischen und politischen Ergebnissen in der deutschen Nachkriegsliteratur. Was bedeuten diese Begriffe? Inwiefern sind sie unterschiedlich? Was für einzigartige Erzählperspektive setzt jeder dieser Begriffe voraus? Gibt es bestimmte historische Voraussetzungen für deren Aktualität in der deutschen Literatur- bzw. Kulturgeschichte? Was für Konsequenzen hat jeder Begriff? **Für jeden Begriff schreiben Sie ungefähr fünf Sätze, indem Sie ihn definieren und anhand eines Beispiels aus unserem Seminar veranschaulichen.** (30 Punkte)

a. die Schuld: Guilt is a two-headed hydra: both in German and English, it can refer either to an accusation of an immoral act, or the load a person must bear as a result of an action opposing his morals. Insofar as our class is concerned, our first encounters with guilt include Jasper’s “Die Schuldfrage,” where philosopher Karl Jaspers further divides the German guilt into four categories, as well as “Das Stuttgarter Schuldbekenntnis,” and Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s exegesis thereon. The latter texts are concerned with the Evangelical church’s early (1945) willingness to avow guilt for the Hitler’s rise to power; as we discussed in class, the problems with this include the inherent acceptance of the notion of collective guilt, as well as an unintended absolution of the catholic church. Borchert’s drama deals less with guilt in the attributive sense, but still grapples with Beckmann’s individual guilt (or moral, as Jaspers might call it) for the death of his comrades. Since these three terms are inextricably linked, it would be simplistic to say Ledig and Kluge do not deal with guilt, but the theme is not as central to their novels as others. Weiss, and Arendt as a supplement to his “Die Ermittlung,” are where we first explore German guilt from the perspective of the arguably most-damaged victims, the Jews: “Die Ermittlung” explores Auschwitz from an outside-in perspective, as we slowly realize just how horrific some of the perpetrators were, whereas Arendt deals with the case of Adolf Eichmann, “the architect of the Holocaust,” whose calm demeanor and perpetration through pen and paper led her to coin the term “die Banalität des Bösen.“ Finally, we explore the guilt of the second generation in Timm’s “Am Beispiel Meines Bruders,” and Schlink’s “Der Vorleser.”

b. das Leiden: Suffering refers to the acute negative feelings throughout one’s life—as it relates to this class we focus on the suffering associated with World War II; in this sense, individual guilt is also a form of suffering. Although they go about portraying an air raid in diametrically opposed ways, both Kluge and Ledig’s works have suffering as central themes in their novels. Ledig’s suffering is unbounded: kids are gratuitously blown to pieces; named characters are introduced to account their imminent death; the protagonist, Strenehen, must go through hell and back before he is even granted his death; the Germans suffer, the Americans suffer, and the reader suffers (assuming he chooses to empathize with any character). Kluge’s suffering emerges in the convergence of the “strategy from above” and “the strategy from below.” The former is to keep bombing until there is no conceivable threat or hope remaining: bombs are not to be wasted, white flags are not to be trusted, and Germans are not to be humanized. The latter is a mix of hiding in holes and houses, and also a moot long-term educational plan that is a half-decade late—neither the holes nor the houses are reliable, however, which results in a chaotic and arbitrary orgy of suffering.

c. das Trauma: Trauma is the re-living of past events that is often fueled by holes in one’s understanding. Just like suffering to an extent, trauma is non-discriminatory and independent of whether one is the perpetrator or the victim. Both “Am Beispiel Meines Bruders” and “Der Vorleser” have trauma as an important theme: the second generation is still traumatized by the deeds of the Nazi generation. This is particularly amplified, as the books suggest, by a direct relation to the previous generation, be that through coitus or blood ties. The books have drastically different conclusions, however: where Schlink’s protagonist is somewhat able to come to terms with his past and move on, Timm’s is never able to quite come to terms with his brother and the place he should hold in his memory.

**II. Die Form des Erzählens**: „**Zusammenhängend**“ und „**unzusammenhängend**“ sind entscheidende Wörter für Alexander Kluges experimentelle Poetik in „Der Luftangriff auf Halberstadt am 8. April 1945“ (1977). Was für eine Rolle spielen diese Begriffe *auf der formellen Ebene* seiner Ezählung? Inwiefern spielen diese Begriffe eine Rolle im Leben der vielen Figuren *innerhalb seiner Erzählung*? Steht *Form* in Kluges Erzählung im Gegensatz zum *Inhalt* oder sind sie mit einander verbunden und, wenn schon, wie? Inwiefern ist Kluges Erzählung „realistisch“? Was will Kluges Kritik in der Erzählung erzielen? **Schreiben Sie einen gut gegleiderten Aufsatz von 10 bis 15 Sätzen, indem Sie so gut wie möglich Stellen aus Kluges Erzählung hinsichtlich der oben angegebenen Fragen erläutern.** (30 Punkte).

I will be using the words “congruous” and “coherent” to denote “zusammenhängend” throughout this essay, as the word “Zusammenhang” is difficult to fully translate with one word. While definitely experimental, Kluge’s novel displays a congruity between its content and form; in fact, it can be said that its form is very much designed to illuminate the subject matter. Furthermore, while Kluge’s realism does not stem from the narration style, it displays both a psychological realism, as well as a cogent, multifaceted depiction of an air raid, in a way that may be impossible through a simple narrative.

The novel begins with a very visceral depiction of the incongruity of an air raid: as her theater is blown apart, its owner is only concerned with cleaning it up as to be ready for the next showing, which clearly will not take place. “Frau Schrader wollte wenigstens hier Ordnung schaffen, legte die gekochten und – entweder durch diesen Vorgang oder schon durch die Sprengwirkung – unzusammenhängenden Körperteile in die Waschkessel der Waschküche.“ (Kluge, Der Luftangriff auf Halberstadt, 12). The novel continues with other vignettes around the city, that all share one central theme: the actors in each are concerned with their own plight, and that is all. There is no coherence in their “strategy from below,” only a chaotic struggle to avoid explosives that rain without order.

This leads to the incongruity between the “strategy from below” and the “strategy from above.” The latter is simple, effective, and ruthless, as is most bluntly outlined in the interview with Brigadier Anderson. After he explains that the bombs had to be dropped somewhere due to fuel costs, he is asked why he couldn’t just drop them in the middle of nowhere. To that, he answers: “Die wertvollen Bomben? Das bleibt doch nicht vertraulich. Wir hatten mit der Stadt doch auch gar nichts im Sinn. Wir kannten da keinen. Warum sollte sich zu ihren Gunsten irgendwer an einer Verschwörung beteiligen?” Later he also explains why surrender means nothing from 10,000 feet in the air.

The form of the novel, i.e., small parts that together form a coherent picture, allows this contrast to be seen most effectively.

III. **Vergleichende** **Textanalyse – Schlink vs. Timm**: Mit Hilfe der amerikanischen Literaturwissenschaftlerin Cathy Caruth wurden die letzten zwei Lektüren von Schlink und Timm im Rahmen des Traumadiskurses untersucht. Obwohl der Traumabegriff Wurzeln in der Neurologie des 19. Jahrhunderts hat, entwickelt sich der Begriff in jüngster Zeit in Anlehnung an Sigmund Freuds *Der Mann Mose und die monotheistische Religion* (1939). In Ihrer Besprechung von Caruths bahnbrechenden Buch *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) schreibt die Wissenschaftshistorikerin Ruth Leys Folgendes:

„Caruth’s theory of trauma [believes] that the trauma experienced by one person can be passed on to others. The basic model for that **transmission** is the **face-to-face encounter** between a victim, who enacts or performs his or her traumatic experience, and a witness who listens and is in turn contaminated by the catastrophe. [...] Caruth expands [this] model to include the transmission of trauma **across space and time**, so that the trauma of one individual is understood as capable of **haunting later generations**—as if the ghosts of the past could speak to those living in the present, contagiously contaminating them in turn.“[[1]](#footnote-1)

Die Idee der **intergenerationalen Übertragung von Trauma** spielt in sowohl Timms Autobiographie als auch Schlinks Roman eine entscheidende Rolle, jedoch auf unterschiedliche Art und Weise und mit grundverschiedenen Konsequenzen. Mit Hilfe von den Thesepapieren Ihrer KommilitonInnen, den Lektüren von Schlink und Timm und den PDF-Dateien von Kammlers und Kösters Analysen auf Sakai schreiben Sie einen Aufsatz über die Rolle der intergenerationalen Übertragung von Trauma in diesen beiden Werken. Die folgenden Fragen dürfen als Ecksteine für Ihren Aufsatz dienen:

* Wie wird diese intergenerationale Übertragung in diesen beiden Werken unterschiedlich verkörpert?
* Wann wird das Trauma in den entsprechenden Handlungen übertragen?
* Wer wird am meisten „kontaminiert“, zu welcher Generation gehört diese Figur und von wem und wessen Generation wird sie „kontaminiert“?
* Was für eine Wirkung hat die „Kontaminierung“ auf diese Personen und wie gehen sie mit der traumatischen „Infizierung“ um?

**Schreiben Sie einen gut gegliederten Aufsatz von nicht weniger als 15 Sätzen, in dem Sie so gut wie möglich Textstellen aus beiden Werken zitieren.** (40 Punkte)

The way in which the intergenerational transference of trauma is conveyed in Schlink and Timm’s respective works are very much central to the message of each. Blood ties are an innate property; i.e., they are something one has no control over. This does not grant Timm, however, an indifference to the actions of his brother, insofar as he is concerned: familial ties are as inextricable as they are uncontrollable.

Michael, on the other hand, is only contaminated through a deliberate act—in fact, his family never really comes to the forefront. His relationship to Hanna is traumatizing on multiple levels: even without the knowledge of her deeds, his early relationship with a much older woman traumatizes him and alters the course of his life. He is alienated from his classmates, and his future lovers are relegated to living in her shadow. Then when he finds out what she did, only then does the trauma of the Nazi regime transfer to him. Even this sudden traumatization is more in the face of losing the pristine image of his idealized relationship with Hanna. His general distance to the past is also apparent in his reaction to the student movements: “Was das dritte und eigentliche Thema der Studentenbewegung anging, die Auseinandersetzung mit der nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit, spürte ich eine solche Distanz zu den anderen Studenten...” (Schlink, Der Vorleser, 160)

Timm himself was very much involved with the student movements. This is one of the main lines that differentiates the two works, and how they approach the transference of trauma. Not only does Timm find himself traumatized by the actions of his family, but he also sets higher standards for them, which, in turn, makes the trauma even more difficult to deal with. When Schlink’s Hanna asks the judge what he would have done in her place, Timm has an answer for that: “Der Wunsch, sie – der Bruder, der Vater – hätten sich so verhalten wie jener deutsche Offizier, der sich auf der Straße seiner Heimatstadt in Uniform mit einem befreundeten Juden zeigte, zu einer Zeit, als die Juden durch den Stern gebrandmarkt wurden.” (Timm, Am Beispiel Meines Bruders, 118). This officer was then dishonorably discharged, but to Timm, negative consequences to acting righteously do not warrant wrongdoing.

In conclusion, Timm’s understanding of intergenerational trauma is very much a universal phenomenon, that each German must deal with. Schlink’s is much more specific to the circumstances, and willing to view past sins in a forgiving light.

1. Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000) 284. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)