Women (Re)Writing Language

Literary Approaches to the Linguistic Representation of Women and Men in English and German

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I, Christiane Luck, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

Since the 1970s activists and linguists have argued for a more inclusive linguistic representation of women and men. As a result, editorial guidelines, legislation and everyday usage now incorporate more inclusive terms. However, in many instances men continue to be referenced as the linguistic norm. The research questions guiding this thesis are: 'Can literary texts help to shape attitudes toward inclusive language?' and 'Can they help to advance linguistic change?'

My starting point is narrative research. Zwaan showed that literary texts are processed differently to non-fiction. Furthermore, literary texts are able to 'get under the radar' of certain preconceptions, Dal Cin et al. found.

To provide the linguistic frame, I introduce key thinkers and findings from the English- and German-language context. Lakoff and Trömel-Plötz first problematised linguistic representation, followed by researchers such as Sczesny et al. who empirically demonstrated the impact of language on imagination.

I combine literary, linguistic and sociological research methods to evaluate the effectiveness of fiction. Firstly, I assess texts in a wider philosophical framework. I discuss Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* and Stefan's *Häutungen* in relation to Leibniz's work on language and logic. I evaluate Arnold's *The Cook and the Carpenter* and Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* with reference to Wittgenstein's notion that 'eine Sprache vorstellen heißt, sich eine Lebensform vorstellen'. And I assess translations of Brantenberg's *Egalias døtre* in dialogue with Freud's thought on humour. Secondly, I conduct a focus group study to gain insight into reader responses. Analysing the data with grounded theory shows that literary texts raise awareness of the importance of inclusive language. Moreover, literary texts encourage readers to reconsider dominant practices.

Together, the two perspectives illustrate the usefulness of literary texts. Fiction, I argue in conclusion, is an effective tool to advance more inclusive linguistic representation.

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Contents

Introduction

Activists and linguists have been problematising the linguistic representation of women and men since the 1970s. As a result, some linguistic practices – and formal usage, in particular – have changed. However, wider revisions are yet to be made; moreover, any adaptation remains highly contested. In this thesis I ask, 'Can literary texts help to shape attitudes toward inclusive language?' and 'Can they help to advance linguistic change?' In the following I set out the premises of my research. I state my motivations, present findings of narrative studies, and provide the structural and theoretical frame of my research.

Motivations

Like many feminist research projects, this thesis has its origins in education and activism. In 2010 I enrolled on a Masters' programme in Comparative Literature; at the same time I became more politically involved. After a gap in my education I felt there was much more to learn; I also wanted to play a more active role in challenging bias against women. In the beginning these two strands remained separate. I attended feminist meetings in my free time and at the university during the day; however, both soon started to overlap. My increasing exposure to feminist viewpoints and ideas resulted in a more critical perspective on my education. Like many women over the past forty years, I started to ask: 'Why are most of the set literary texts written by (white) men?'; and 'Why are most of the theorists discussed in lectures male as well?' In short: 'Where are the women?' I began to read more widely around the curriculum and focused on the work of female authors and theorists. Feminist literary writers, in particular, appealed to me as they combined activism and creative expression. Equally, I was drawn to feminist thinkers as they exposed dominant norms both as constructed and subject to change. One such norm is the linguistic representation of women and men – in fact, the work of Dale Spender and Luise F. Pusch highlighted that the very way we refer to human beings is biased against women. Literary texts provide a fruitful space for experimentation and I became interested in how writers responded to the issue of sex/gender and language. I located Verena Stefan's *Häutungen* and June Arnold's *The Cook*

and the Carpenter, both of which problematise the linguistic status quo. My Masters' dissertation evaluated the texts' approaches from a linguistic and philosophical perspective, and this interdisciplinary outlook formed the basis for this thesis.

However, the research presented in this thesis extends far beyond my previous investigations. First of all, I create a theoretical framework for literary texts thematising the issue of sex/gender and language. I identify three distinct approaches: 'Problematising the linguistic status quo'; 'Proposing linguistic neutrality'; and 'Reversing the linguistic status quo', and categorise texts accordingly. Secondly, I analyse the effectiveness of each approach from a linguistic and philosophical perspective – as I illustrate below, one key thinker provides the wider context for my discussion. And thirdly, I conduct a focus group study; rather than relying solely on the outcomes of my own evaluation, I ask readers to reflect on which approach they consider most effective. The insights from this study allow me to contextualise my previous assessments. This methodology is innovative: I combine literary, linguistic and sociological research methods to investigate the issue of sex/gender and language. With the help of an interdisciplinary approach I investigate in-depth how fiction can prompt reflection on dominant linguistic norms and potential alternatives. I assess both the validity of literary texts and their impact on readers from various perspectives. In particular, the results of my focus study illustrate the value of fiction in guided group settings. This provides promising empirical evidence for literary texts as a pedagogical tool and, in turn, highlights the fruitfulness of interdisciplinary research methods. One key text which has explored women's and men's linguistic representation in literary texts, but lacks a sociological perspective, is Anna Livia's 2001 *Pronoun Envy: Literary Uses of Linguistic Gender*. Livia analyses 'written texts in English and French … that in some way problematize the traditional functioning of the linguistic gender system' (2001, p. 5). The author elaborates on her choice: 'I concentrate on French and English because it is in these languages that the most daring experimental works have been produced' (2001, p. 5). Moreover, she focuses 'on written texts … because many morphological indicators of gender in French are only apparent in the written form' (2001, p. 5). While our projects overlap in terms of our shared interest in the literary, and specifically, written, problematisation of the

issue of sex/gender and language, they also diverge fundamentally from the outset. One key difference is the linguistic focus; in contrast to Livia, my working languages are English and German. I assess literary texts in these two languages because of their shared linguistic heritage. Both are Germanic languages. English has been shaped by German – tribes such as the Angles, Saxons and Jutes invaded and settled in Britain from the fifth century onwards (Durkin, 2016, n. pag.) – while the global status of English today influences developments in the German language. Their ongoing relationship therefore enables deeper insights into each language. Additionally, their central difference in communicating sex/gender – English predominantly relies on social connotations while German additionally employs grammatical gender – makes them particularly fruitful for comparision. In effect, it is this comparative approach which forms the heart of my study. This marks another difference: I analyse texts written in English and German as well as texts in translation. I am therefore less concerned with linguistic origin than with the texts' effectiveness at problematising the linguistic status quo in each language.

My decision to work with the English and German translations of a text written in a third language, i.e. Gerd Brantenberg's Norwegian novel *Egalias døtre*, needs further clarification at this stage. First of all, the translations of Brantenberg's original provide a comprehensive illustration of the impact of linguistic reversal in each language. Secondly, I found this illustration decidedly more effective than any of the originally English and German reversals I consulted for this thesis. As a result, I decided to evaluate the text in translation which, like my other choices, has been guided by Livia's central criterion for selection. The texts I assess equally 'test the reader's comprehension, demonstrating both the flexibility and the limits of the gender system' (2001, p. 10). Moreover, '[t]hey also test the imagination, so that what is produced is not a blueprint for linguistic change but a challenge' (2001, p. 10). Our mode of analysis, on the other hand, differs substantially. Livia assesses one novel in one chapter and four in another; additionally she does not evaluate texts comparatively. Also, Livia concentrates not on the evaluation of one set of linguistic tools but discusses the features she deems most relevant in relation to each text, ranging from lexical substitution to speech, deixis, episode and tense. In contrast, I compare literary texts within a philosophical frame. Moreover, the

literary texts I am evaluating are perspectival, that is, they are narrated from a first-person or third-person perspective. This enables readers to access the narrator's perceptions and thereby experience the problematisation of linguistic norms and their revisions. I assess the use of nouns, pronouns, names and titles, in particular – I decided on these terms as they are the most direct referents for human beings and therefore indicative of linguistic norms. Nevertheless, Livia's work has had a profound influence on my thesis. For one, three of the texts she evaluates in her chapter on 'Epicene Neologisms in English,' namely *The Left Hand of Darkness*, *The Cook and the Carpenter* and *Woman on the Edge of Time*, form a key part of my own analysis. Additionally, the final lines of her conclusion effectively mark the beginning of my project. 'The hegemonizing power of cultural gender is indisputable,' she states, '[w]hat is demonstrated by the texts examined here is that the possibilities for subverting that hegemony through grammatical gender and other means are equally impressive' (2001, p. 202). Continuing Livia's train of thought, I add a sociological perspective, namely a focus group study, to the literary and linguistic analysis. In doing so, I extend the remit of Livia's work and push the boundaries of interdisciplinary research. Moreover, by integrating readers' perspectives I illustrate the educational value of literary texts.

I discuss the theoretical basis for this approach in more detail next. In particular, I present the findings of narrative studies which highlight the impact of literary texts on readers.

The power of literary texts

> In reading a novel, any novel, we have to know perfectly well that the whole thing is nonsense, and then, while reading, believe every word of it. Finally, when we're done with it, we may find – if it's a good novel – that we're a bit different from what we were before we read it, that we have been changed a little… (Le Guin, 1969b, p. 3-4)

As Ursula K. Le Guin states in the 1976 introduction to *The Left Hand of Darkness*, literary texts can have a powerful impact on readers. With the help of characters and storylines, literary texts – and in particular those narrated from a first-person or third-person perspective – introduce readers to unfamiliar

perspectives and environments, or, indeed, present familiar people and places in a new light. And though 'the whole thing is nonsense,' as Le Guin reflects, readers willingly immerse themselves in this fictional representation. Moreover, they often find themselves changed by the encounter with a text, by the very act of reading. Encountering the German translation of Gerd Brantenberg's *Egalias døtre* evokes a particularly strong memory of this impact. At the time of reading I was living in an area in which I did not feel safe. As my flat was accessed via a small, dark alleyway I felt nervous leaving during the day and even more so, returning home at night. The world presented in the novel, however, opened a door to a different perspective. In Egalia, I did not have to feel this way; in fact, in Egalia, I, as a woman, had nothing to fear. As a direct consequence of reading the text I walked the streets differently. Furthermore, I began to feel differently about myself and my place in the world. It was of course 'nonsense' to be feeling this way, but this 'nonsense' had a profound impact nevertheless. The novel allowed me to become immersed in an alternative conception of the sexes/genders, and through this immersion I was able to comprehend the artificiality of women's subordination. I was able to perceive what is generally considered the norm in a different light, i.e. the status quo of a female being scared of male violence.

This capacity of perspectival literary texts to evoke a new understanding can be traced to cognitive mechanisms. In fact, fiction is processed differently, as Rolf A. Zwaan's study 'Effect of Genre Expectations on Text Comprehension' illustrates. In one experiment, Zwaan presented 36 university students with 'excerpts from news stories' or 'excerpts from literary stories,' and asked them to evaluate a subsequent statement (1994, p. 922-3). The results showed that '[t]he texts were read significantly slower in the literary condition … than in the news condition' (1994, p. 924). Moreover, Zwaan reports, '[t]here were higher scores on the surface and textbase levels in the literary condition' (1994, p. 924). A follow-up experiment with 40 participants supported these findings. Again, the news texts were read faster than the literary stories, and 'the literary readers devoted extra processing resources to surface-level processes … [and] to the construction of a coherent textbase' (1994, p. 929). Consequently, Zwaan summarises, '[g]enre expectations cause readers to allocate their processing resources in specific ways that meet the constraints of a given genre' (1994, p.

930). Sonya Dal Cin, Mark P. Zanna and Geoffrey T. Fong agree in 'Narrative Persuasion and Overcoming Resistance' that this difference is due to expectations. While readers cognitively prepare themselves to evaluate the pros and cons of a rhetorical argument, they 'expect to be entertained' when encountering a literary text (2004, p. 177). As a result, readers disable their critical evaluation skills in order to tap into the 'simulation,' as Raymond A. Mar and Keith Oatley term it in 'The Function of Fiction Is the Abstraction and Simulation of Social Experience,' of the novel's characters and events. Mar and Oatley explain that 'while engaging with such products [films, novels, plays, and TV dramas] we undergo a form of experience not found elsewhere, reacting to represented events as if we were a part of them' (2008, p. 173). Through this modelling process readers are able to access 'complex social information in a manner that offers personal enactments of experience, rendering it more comprehensible than usual' (2008, p. 173). As a result, the authors propose, '[n]arrative fiction … helps us to understand life in terms of how human intentions bear upon it' (2008, p. 173), i.e. by simulating reality in recognisable terms readers are able to access different motivations and experiences.

This simulation, Mar and Oatley believe, results in a heightened impact of perspectival literary texts. 'Whereas expository representations tell us information,' they explain, 'literary narratives show us things by having us experience them first-hand' (2008, p. 177). In a way then, fiction allows readers to 'try out' new perspectives and environments, an experience which in turn encourages empathy and understanding. However, not all narratives have the same effect: readers need to be able to become immersed in the fictional events for the simulation to take place. In short, the story and its characters need to be sufficiently engaging. In 'The Role of Transportation in the Persuasiveness of Public Narratives' Melanie C. Green and Timothy C. Brock refer to this process of immersion as 'transportation'. Based on Richard J. Gerrig's proposals in *Experiencing Narrative Worlds: On the Psychological Activities of Reading*, Green and Brock understand 'transportation as a convergent process, where all mental systems and capacities become focused on events occurring in the narrative' (2000, p. 701). When transportation occurs, all cognitive functions are concentrated on the simulation of the fictional characters and events. Consequently, 'the reader loses access to some real-

world facts in favor of accepting the narrative world' (2000, p. 702), as was the case during my reading of the German translation of *Egalias døtre*. I felt transported into an entirely different worldview whilst reading. Moreover, this experience has had a long-lasting impact. I have not considered the status quo 'normal' since.

This anecdotal experience is supported by Green and Brock's experiments. In a first study, the authors presented 97 undergraduate students with a narrative about a child's murder by a psychiatric patient. When subsequently asking them to complete several measures, including story-specific beliefs and a transportation questionnaire, the authors found that 'there was a significant effect of transportation on the violence index … with highly transported participants indicating that violence was more likely' (2000, p. 706). Additionally, the results showed that 'highly transported participants reported beliefs more consistent with those implied in the story, indicating that psychiatric patient freedoms should be restricted' (2000, p. 706). In effect, the level of transportation was directly linked to story-consistent beliefs. A follow-up experiment confirmed these results further. 69 participants read the same narrative and once more completed several measures, 'with highly transported readers reporting more story-consistent beliefs; the pattern of results was identical to Experiment 1' (2000, p. 711). As a result, Green and Brock propose that 'transportation is a mechanism whereby narratives may exert their power to change beliefs. The results are noteworthy in that the belief-change dimensions were not explicitly articulated in the story' (2000, p. 718). That is, even if beliefs are merely implied they may be sufficient to alter readers' preconceptions about characters and environments. For example, the narrative did not explicitly state that violence may occur at any time, or that psychiatric patients are potentially dangerous; however, the simulation of these notions resulted in a shift of awareness, at least in highly transported readers.

But what enables readers to become transported? Green investigated possible answers in her study 'Transportation into Narrative Worlds: The Role of Prior Knowledge and Perceived Realism'. She asked 152 undergraduates, 87 of them women, to read a short story about 'a homosexual man who returns to his college fraternity reunion' (2004, p. 253). The respondents subsequently completed a series of measures, including belief statements and a

transportation scale, with results showing that 'individuals with close friends or family who were homosexual … were more transported into the story' (2004, p. 257). Additionally, Green found that '[i]ndividuals who were more transported showed more story-consistent beliefs' (2004, p. 258). Effectively, familiarity seems to impact on transportation, which, in turn, impacts on the reader's beliefs. However, readers need not necessarily be familiar with a certain character or issue to become transported. As Hans Hoeken and Karin M. Fikkers showed in their study 'Issue-Relevant Thinking and Identification as Mechanisms of Narrative Persuasion,' readers are also able to simulate experiences and opinions different from their own. The authors asked 138 students, half of them female, to read a narrative presenting either a positive or negative attitude toward raised tuition fees. After completing a questionnaire measuring their attitudes, engagement and identification, Hoeken and Fikkers found that it was the perspective given by the protagonist which proved most influential. So, '[e]ven when the protagonist expressed a dissimilar attitude, and the antagonist a similar attitude to that of the participants, participants identified more strongly with the protagonist than with the antagonist' (2014, p. 93). Consequently, it is the protagonist's perspective with which readers identify and which subsequently shapes understanding.

This potential of narratives to modify preconceptions is particularly significant for disadvantaged social groups. As Adam G. Galinsky and Gordon B. Moskowitz highlight in their study 'Perspective-Taking: Decreasing Stereotype Expression, Stereotype Accessibility, and In-Group Favoritism,' being able to put oneself in the place of another enables identification and thereby decreases bias. In one study, the authors showed a photograph of an older person to 37 undergraduate students and asked them to reflect on a typical day in this person's life. One third were given no instructions, one third were asked to repress stereotypical responses and the final third 'were instructed to adopt the perspective of the individual in the photograph' (2000, p. 711). Galinsky and Moskowitz found that '[b]oth stereotype suppressors … and perspective-takers … wrote less stereotypical essays of the elderly than did participants in the control condition' (2000, p. 712). Additionally, '[p]erspective-takers … expressed more positive evaluations of the target individual' (2000, p. 712). A second study confirmed these findings. Galinsky and Moskowitz

presented 85 undergraduates with a 'list of 90 traits … and asked [them] to rate how well each trait described them' (2000, p. 715), followed by the same task as in the first experiment. The results showed that '[b]oth stereotype suppressors … and perspective-takers … wrote less stereotypical essays of the elderly,' and that '[p]erspective-takers expressed more positive evaluations' (2000, p. 715). Furthermore, '[p]erspective-takers rated the elderly less stereotypically than did participants in the other two conditions' (2000, p. 715). In a final experiment, Galinsky and Moskowitz investigated whether perspective-taking can also impact on the perceptions of social groups as a whole. 40 undergraduate students were assigned to one of four conditions: one fourth was asked to imagine 'a day in the life of an underestimator,' another to take the perspective of an underestimator, a third to reflect on the similarities between overestimators and underestimators, and the final did not complete the writing task (2000, p. 718). Subsequently, all completed measures rating 'how well each trait describes both groups' and their 'favorability' (2000, p. 718). The authors found that only the 'participants in the perspective-taking condition did not rate the in-group … any higher than the out-group' (2000, p. 719). Additionally, 'taking the perspective of what it is like to be an out-group member increased ratings of the out-group to a level comparable to that of the in-group' (2000, p. 719). In effect, as the study illustrates, taking another's perspective, be they an individual or a group, decreases preconceptions.

Literary texts narrated from a first-person or third-person perspective encourage identification with the protagonist. Readers are then transported not only into the narrative world but into the main character; they see what she or he sees and feels what she or he feels. The higher the level of transportation, as Green and Brock's study showed, the deeper the immersion into the protagonist's perspective. And the deeper the immersion, the lower the resistance to different understandings and ideas. Dal Cin et al. argue that this is what makes literary texts so powerful in promoting change; more powerful, in fact, than rhetorical arguments. They state, '[w]hen presented with a communication advocating a position with which we do not agree, there is a tendency to ignore the message, counterargue the information, or belittle the source' (2004, p. 177). On the other hand, 'narratives might be more effective than rhetoric because the former are not seen as persuasive attempts' (2004, p.

177). Consequently, the authors propose, 'narratives may be inherently suited to the presentation of messages seeking to change strong attitudes because they "get under the radar" of our efforts to protect these attitudes' (2004, pp. 177-8). Readers want to become transported into a narrative as this allows them to experience pleasure; to achieve this aim they willingly take on the perspective of the protagonist. By taking on this perspective, readers effectively simulate a potentially different understanding – and this simulation allows the fictional world to become 'real'. This persuasive potential is not restricted to the boundaries of a text; in fact, literary texts can continue to shape understanding long after a story has ended. While my experience of reading the German translation of *Egalias døtre* might be only anecdotal proof for the longevity of narrative impact, empirical evidence is once more supportive.

As Markus Appel and Tobias Richter show in their study 'Persuasive Effects of Fictional Narratives Increase over Time,' reading fiction can have a long-term impact. The authors presented 81 participants, 63 of them women, with one of two experimental texts containing true and false assertions. Subsequently, the participants were asked to complete a questionnaire at the time of reading and again two weeks later indicating their agreement. The results highlight that 'there was a considerable short-term persuasive influence of false information in the fictional narrative, but the influence of false information was even higher at a delay of two weeks' (2007, p. 125). As a result, the authors propose, 'fictional narratives can have a persistent implicit influence on the way we view the world, and … these effects may last longer than the effects of typical explicit attempts to change beliefs' (2007, p. 129). By 'getting under the radar' then, as Dal Cin et al. argue, literary texts can alter what readers perceive to be 'real'. In the case of this thesis, this perception relates to attitudes toward the issue of sex/gender and language. In particular, I ask: 'Can literary texts help to shape attitudes toward inclusive language?' and 'Can they help to advance linguistic change?' Of course, '[n]either a theory nor a story explains completely or adequately, there's always something missing,' (2004, p. 140) as Lynne Tillman argues in 'Telling Tales'. However, as studies have shown and Christina D. Weber confirms in 'Literary Fiction as a Tool for Teaching Social Theory and Critical Consciousness,' literary texts can be a powerful tool to change perspectives. As one of Weber's students comments

after encountering both fiction and theory, '[t]heories come to life and have more depth in these stories' (2010, p. 358). Additionally, she or he remarks, 'theories become more applicable to every life, meaning … I can put myself in that particular situation' (2010, p. 358). This interplay between text, imagination and reality is effectively put to the test in my thesis – I present how this takes place next.

Research questions and thesis structure

This thesis is guided by four main research questions:

1. 'How do literary texts engage with women's and men's linguistic representation?'
2. 'How effective are they in engaging with this issue?'
3. 'Can literary texts help to raise awareness of the importance of inclusive language?' and
4. 'Can they help to shape attitudes and debates?'

To address these questions I employ an interdisciplinary approach, combining literary, linguistic and sociological research methods. My hypotheses are as follows: firstly, I am proposing that literary texts can help to engage speakers with the issue of sex/gender and language. And secondly, I am suggesting that through this engagement literary texts can help to promote positive attitudes toward inclusive language. Moreover, I am proposing that this engagement can help to advance linguistic change. I explore these hypotheses over five chapters.

In Chapter 1, I introduce key thinkers from the English- and German-language context, such as Robin Lakoff and Senta Trömel-Plötz, as well as their contemporaries. I focus here on research on nouns and pronouns, in particular. Other theorists include Wendy Martyna, who worked extensively on the use of male generic terms throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and Luise F. Pusch, who remains a central voice in German feminist linguistics to this day. To place theoretical debates in a wider research context, I present empirical findings from the 1970s to recent years. Early studies include Sandra L. Bem and Daryl J. Bem's 1973 'Does Sex-Biased Job Advertising "Aid and Abet" Sex Discrimination?' and Josef Klein's 1988 'Benachteiligung der Frau im

generischen Maskulinum – eine feministische Schimäre oder psycholinguistische Realität?'. More recently, Jane G. Stout and Nilanjana Dasgupta's 2011 study 'When He Doesn't Mean You: Gender-Exclusive Language as Ostracism' and Dries Vervecken, Bettina Hannover and Ilka Wolter's 2013 'Changing (S)expectations: How Gender Fair Job Descriptions Impact Children's Perceptions and Interest Regarding Traditionally Male Occupations' investigated the impact of male generic terms. The chapter concludes with examples of recent language use, illustrating that while much has changed current linguistic practices are generally still far from inclusive. Furthermore, linguistic representation remains highly contested as shown by my analysis of contemporary debates.

In the following three chapters, I address my first and second research questions and evaluate English- and German-language literary texts thematising sex/gender and language. I identified three distinct approaches employed by authors and grouped the texts into the following clusters: 'Problematising the linguistic status quo,' 'Proposing linguistic neutrality' and 'Reversing the linguistic status quo'. My analysis of the effectiveness of each approach is framed by a philosophical and an etymological perspective. The philosophical evaluation allows me to assess the wider relevance of the literary problematisations, while an etymological discussion of key terms enables me to highlight that language has, and continues to be, subject to change. Providing a focused etymological analysis in each chapter allows me to provide an apt illustration of these changes in relation to the key terms discussed.

In Chapter 2, 'Problematising the linguistic status quo,' I assess Ursula K. Le Guin's 1969 *The Left Hand of Darkness* and Verena Stefan's 1975 *Häutungen*. I introduce each work in relation to contemporary literary criticism, and follow on to discuss them from a linguistic perspective. Le Guin, I argue, consistently employs 'he' and 'man' to highlight that these terms are rarely understood inclusively. Stefan takes a more direct approach and openly questions the generic use of male nouns and pronouns. In doing so, I propose, Le Guin and Stefan problematise the ability of male terms to represent both sexes/genders. I frame the authors' probing of this dual-representation by discussing Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's *Allgemeine Untersuchungen über die Analyse der Begriffe und Wahrheiten*. Leibniz argues that words are employed

to convey concepts and ideas, and fail if they do not communicate clearly. This notion of 'failure' is explored further by an etymological study of male generic terms. Complementing the empirical results presented in Chapter 1, I show that many of these nouns and pronouns have neither an inclusive origin nor core meaning. In conclusion I argue that *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Häutungen* effectively illustrate this incongruence to the reader. Furthermore, by challenging the linguistic status quo, I suggest, they pave the way for more experimental texts.

June Arnold's 1973 *The Cook and the Carpenter* and Marge Piercy's 1976 *Woman on the Edge of Time* take centre stage in Chapter 3, 'Proposing linguistic neutrality'. Again, I begin by introducing each work from a critical perspective, and move on to evaluating them linguistically with focus on the key terms employed to represent women and men. Arnold and Piercy both use epicene pronouns to refer to characters – Piercy imagines a future egalitarian society employing 'person' instead of 'he' or 'she,' while Arnold proposes 'na' as used by the members of a separatist community. The use of neutral language, I argue, is tied to proposing a society in which sex/gender no longer matter. I integrate Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, and especially his concept 'eine Sprache vorstellen heißt, sich eine Lebensform vorstellen,' into my discussion to evaluate this suggestion from a wider philosophical perspective. For Wittgenstein, language enables the comprehension of a certain 'form of life,' and consequently a change in language could allow for a new conception. An etymological study provides evidence of past and current understandings of key nouns and pronouns. I pay particular attention to existing neutral pronouns, such as 'they,' to discuss what is possible today and supplement this exploration with empirical studies on usage. In conclusion, I propose that by allowing readers to experience linguistic neutrality, *The Cook and the Carpenter* and *Woman on the Edge of Time* encourage them to think beyond current linguistic practices.

In Chapter 4, 'Reversing the linguistic status quo,' I assess translations of Gerd Brantenberg's 1977 *Egalias døtre*. I introduce the text in relation to its critical reception, and go on to focus on nouns and pronouns employed to represent women and men. Brantenberg uses reversed versions of male generic terms and thereby, I argue, highlights how damaging a biased language

can be. I propose that the English and German versions of Brantenberg's novel successfully make the case for each language. The novel employs wordplay, such as 'housebound,' instead of 'husband,' and 'Herrlein,' instead of 'Fräulein,' to engage the reader. By using humour, I suggest, the translations of *Egalias døtre* can be seen to have liberating potential. To assess this proposal from a theoretical perspective, I discuss Sigmund Freud's *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten*. Freud believes humour allows readers to laugh at figures of authority and consequently experience a feeling of liberation. The impact of this experience remains contested, however, and I evaluate the function of humour from various perspectives. The discussion of key terms, such as 'woman' and 'wife,' provides an etymological frame, and highlights that these can hold unexpected origins and meanings. 'Wife,' for example, was not always understood as 'married woman'. The English and German translations of *Egalias døtre*, like *The Left Hand of Darkness*/*Häutungen* and *The Cook and the Carpenter*/*Woman on the Edge of Time*, I conclude, sensitise readers toward the issue of sex/gender and language. Additionally, I suggest, the reversal of male generic terms prompts readers to consider more inclusive terminology.

Chapter 5 addresses my final two research questions and evaluates the ability of the three approaches to raise awareness from a sociological perspective. With the help of a focus group study I assess how readers respond to the literary texts, with particular focus on the nouns and pronouns employed to represent women and men. Furthermore, I explore whether literary texts can help to make readers more aware, and potentially more supportive of inclusive language. In effect, I provide empirical evidence for the impact of each approach on readers, and thereby highlight the educational potential of literary texts. I conducted a pilot focus group to test my materials, and two focus groups with native English speakers and two with native Germans. Each group was presented with an excerpt from Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Arnold's *The Cook and the Carpenter* and Brantenberg's *Egalias døtre* in either language. I collected data using a semi-structured topic guide and the results were analysed with grounded theory. The findings of this study highlight the relevance of literary texts in raising awareness of the issue of sex/gender and

language. Moreover, the data shows that literary texts encourage readers to reconsider dominant linguistic practices.

These results feed into my wider assessment and link back to my earlier contention that fiction is a powerful tool to illustrate and challenge wider social norms and issues. In particular, I explore the educational potential of literary texts in relation to sex/gender and language, addressing how they can help to sensitise readers to linguistic norms and prompt them to consider alternatives. Based on my findings throughout this thesis, I discuss the possibilities and limitations of the three literary approaches in the conclusion. Moreover, I suggest how the evaluated texts could reach a wider audience and thereby effect profound linguistic change. Additionally, I clarify the type of linguistic revision I would like to see for the English and German language, and point out fruitful avenues for future research.

Justification of texts

At this point, it is important to clarify my choice of material – both my selection of literary and philosophical texts was guided by clear principles. As this is an activist thesis, aiming to progress debates on the issue of sex/gender and language, all literary authors identify as activist, or specifically feminist activist, writers. Moreover, the evaluated texts thoroughly engage with the disparate linguistic representation of women and men. Ursula K. Le Guin, Verena Stefan, Marge Piercy, June Arnold and Gerd Brantenberg challenge social and linguistic norms in their writing. Fiction is understood to be a powerful tool – as Verena Stefan comments in the 1994 introduction to *Häutungen*, encountering literary problematisations of women's subordination shaped her own understanding. '1972 begann ich wieder zu lesen,' she states, '[u]nd gemeinsam mit anderen Frauen stellte ich fest, in welcher Mangelsituation wir lebten' (1994, p. 8). As a result, Stefan explains, '[e]*in buch zu schreiben war damals die geeignetste form, für die sache der frauen zu handeln*' (1994, p. 10, emphasis in original). Stefan therefore considers writing an effective form of activism. Ursula K. Le Guin agrees. As she remarks in an interview with Jonathan White, '[o]ne of the functions of art is to give people the words to know their own experience. There are always areas of vast silence in any culture, and

part of an artist's job is to go into those areas and come back from the silence with something to say' (Freedman, 2008, p. 101). Fiction, according to Le Guin, can provide a voice to those who have been silenced. And while the impact of this voicing may be contested, '[f]iction and poetry can't change anything,' as Marge Piercy remarks in an interview with Monica J. Casper, Piercy also contends that it has the potential to 'change someone's consciousness' (n.d, n. pag.). Raising awareness is the first step toward altering someone's perception of the world, as Stefan's own experience illustrates. And as I show throughout this thesis, literary texts can play a profound role in challenging what is generally deemed fixed and 'natural' – in this case, the linguistic representation of women and men.

The literary texts I discuss throughout this thesis belong to the genre of narrative fiction and are, moreover, perspectival, that is, they enable readers to access the narrator's perceptions. By presenting the problematisation of linguistic norms and their revisions from a first-person or third-person perspective, the reader is able to directly experience the significance of sex/gender and language. And this experience, in turn, highlights the impact and extent of the linguistic status quo. Verena Stefan's *Häutungen* seems to be at odds with the other texts as it is a hybrid between a fictional and autobiographical narration. This, following narrative studies, could potentially compromise simulation and thereby fail to facilitate perspective-taking. However, despite its autobiographical leanings, Stefan's text presents a first-person narration akin to *The Left Hand of Darkness*. And by employing devices such as symbols and allegory it effectively mirrors a literary text. Additionally, the narrated events and experiences are recognisable to many female readers, thereby encouraging transportation. As a result, *Häutungen* effectively meets the criteria for inclusion in my corpus. But while this might justify my choice of authors, some might question the timeframe of the selected texts. All were published between 1969 and 1977; in effect, up to forty-seven years before the present day. Questions might be, 'Why not choose more contemporary writers?' and 'Are these texts not outdated?'. My response is two-fold: firstly, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, *Häutungen*, *Woman on the Edge of Time*, *The Cook and the Carpenter* and the *Egalias døtre* are all iconic texts which laid the foundations for later literary problematisations. These early engagements with and

challenges of linguistic norms provide a useful frame of reference in which to assess subsequent approaches. Furthermore, all originate from a distinct time of social upheaval, in particular, second-wave feminism, and therefore provide a valuable insight into concerns at the time and their progress since. This leads me directly on to my second reason. As I show throughout this thesis, debates on the issue of sex/gender and language have not profoundly changed since the texts' publication. In fact, as the responses of my focus group participants illustrate, English and German speakers today often fail to notice the linguistic status quo. Also, they are as confused by neutral terminology as readers might have been some forty years earlier. The texts therefore remain highly relevant. Additionally, the literary experiments of the 1970s – and I have only been able to concentrate on a few in this thesis – symbolise a strong belief in the possibility of change. Art was considered a key driver both in communicating the artificiality of social norms and initiating social change. Le Guin, Stefan, Piercy, Arnold and Brantenberg all highlight the potential of fiction; by providing a space to experiment and imagine these authors played a key role in sensitising readers toward the issue of sex/gender and language. And as my research shows, they continue to do so to this day.

My choice of philosophical texts is also in need of clarification. Some might ask, for example, 'Why not use more contemporary thinkers to frame my analysis?'. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, in particular, might be queried as potentially outdated in light of more recent theory. However, my intention is precisely to illustrate the long history of thought on language and imagination. Leibniz's *salva veritate* principle already confirmed in 1686 that two terms need to be fully replaceable in order to be considered one and the same. If they are not, like 'man' and 'human,' as I show in Chapter 2, they cannot be employed interchangeably. Leibniz's thought is therefore fruitful for framing Le Guin's and Stefan's literary problematisations, as well as general investigations into the issue of sex/gender and language today. Equally insightful is Ludwig Wittgenstein's work. Wittgenstein's 1953 *Philosophische Untersuchungen* might be a more recent text; however, his relevance might still be questioned. My response is that Wittgenstein's thought is revolutionary in terms of its exploration of the link between language and imagination. In fact, his notion 'eine Sprache vorstellen heißt, sich eine Lebensform vorstellen' provides a

sound basis for arguing that linguistic change is not only necessary but possible. And while a caveat is a common acceptance of any changes, the linguistic status quo is exposed both as malleable and subject to alteration. This provides a valuable context for Piercy's and Arnold's literary experiments, as well as for wider calls for a more inclusive representation of women and men. Finally, Sigmund Freud's work on humour – with particular focus on wordplay – illustrates the potential of playful engagement with language. Rather than being rejected as farcical, humorous language is shown to be a useful tool to raise awareness in speakers. As such, Freud's work highlights the potential of Brantenberg's satiric problematisation, as well as opportunities for activist engagement with the issue of sex/gender and language.

But before I begin to build my argument with the above literary and philosophical texts, I present definitions of key terms to ensure conceptual clarity.

Definitions of key terms

The following terms are significant throughout my thesis and need to be defined further. The terms 'sex' and 'gender,' in particular, need to be clarified as they play a central role throughout. However, this is not as simple a task as it may initially seem. First of all, 'sex' holds several meanings; while the term is primarily defined as '([c]hiefly with reference to people) sexual activity, including specifically sexual intercourse,' it also holds the meaning '[e]ither of the two main categories (male and female) into which humans and most other living things are divided on the basis of their reproductive functions' (OD, 2016, n. pag.). Disregarding the first and focusing on the second definition, it is this division of human beings 'on the basis of their reproductive functions' which leads to 'sexism,' i.e. '[p]rejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex' (OD, 2016, n. pag.). Closely related to this notion of 'sex,' and 'sexism,' is the concept of 'gender,' which is defined as '[t]he state of being male or female (typically used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones)' (OD, 2016, n. pag.). That is, 'gender' is here understood to refer to the sociocultural behaviours associated with a certain sex. However, complicating matters further, this separation of

biology and culture is far from clear-cut. For one, 'gender' is also defined as '[t]he members of one or other sex' (OD, 2016, n. pag.), which, in fact, renders the term equivalent to 'sex'. In many instances therefore, someone might be referring to a person's 'gender' when in fact they mean this person's 'sex' – which is problematic on several accounts. Firstly, this conflation creates confusion as to whether bodies or behaviour, or a combination of both, are at the centre of the argument. And secondly, it enshrines the notion that both are essentially interlinked, i.e. that 'biology is destiny'.

As Rhoda Kesler Unger argues in her 1979 article 'Toward a Redefinition of Sex and Gender' the two terms need to be separated to avoid the above. Unger bases her assessment on the fact that psychological studies all too often equate biology with culture, an equation which could be avoided with clearer terminology. 'The distinction between sex and gender,' she states, 'can assist in the generation of research hypotheses that do not assume the former is necessarily the basis for the latter' (1979, p. 1093). As a result, she adds, 'it [is] less likely that psychological differences between males and females will be considered explicable mainly in terms of physiological differences between them' (1979, p. 1093). Unger's argument contributed to the linguistic and conceptual separation of bodies and behaviour, as is visible in the definitions of 'sex' and 'gender' today. However, as the *Oxford Dictionaries*' entries also highlight, this divide, while still present, is once more becoming obscured. In fact, as David Haig argues in his study 'The Inexorable Rise of Gender and the Decline of Sex: Social Change in Academic Titles, 1945–2001,' '[t]his distinction [between sex and gender] is now only fitfully respected, and gender is often used as a simple synonym of sex' (2004, p. 87). When analysing the titles of more than 30 million articles, the author noticed a clear shift. For example, Haig found, while '[f]or the years 1945–1959, 1,685 … SCI titles out of 1,162,909 contained sex but only five … contained gender,' '[f]rom about 1980, gender began a steady increase in frequency, partly at the expense of sex' (2004, p. 89-90). Explaining these results further, Haig states, '[a]mong the reasons that working scientists have given me for choosing gender rather than sex in biological contexts are desires to signal sympathy with feminist goals, to use a more academic term, or to avoid the connotation of copulation' (2004, p. 94-5).

In this sense, 'gender' has for many effectively become the replacement term for 'sex'.

At the same time, however, the very distinction between 'sex' and 'gender' is potentially an issue to begin with. As Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet argue in *Language and Gender*, 'there is no obvious point at which sex leaves off and gender begins, partly because there is no single objective biological criterion for male or female sex' (2003, p. 10). The authors elaborate, 'the selection among ... criteria for sex assignment is based very much on cultural beliefs about what actually makes someone male or female' (2003, p. 10). Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's understanding is based on Judith Butler's inquiry into sex/gender in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. In fact, Butler questions the understanding of 'sex' in purely biological terms: '[a]re the ostensibly natural facts of sex discursively produced by various scientific discourses in the service of other political and social interests?' (1990, p. 9). Continuing along this line of thought, Butler proposes that 'gender' might in fact create 'sex'. She states, 'gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which "sexed nature" or "a natural sex" is produced and established as "prediscursive," prior to culture' (1990, p. 10). As a result, 'sex' is far from a mere biological category; culture seems to produce bodies as much as behaviours. While this seems to justify an inclusive use of 'gender,' i.e. encompassing 'sex' to some extent, for many speakers 'gender has come to be adopted as a simple synonym … for sex by many writers who are unfamiliar with the term's recent history' (Haig, 2004, p. 95). Consequently, such usage might be confusing or misleading. Taking the potential issues inherent in a conflation into account I use the following compound during this thesis: 'sex/gender'. This is useful because firstly, it acknowledges that both terms are at once distinct and interrelated. And secondly, it highlights a central link between 'sex' and another type of 'gender,' with language the key focus of this thesis.

The term 'grammatical gender' has its own potential problems and needs to be clarified accordingly. First of all, English is considered a 'natural gender language … where gender-associated information is conceptually and semantically embedded and is not overtly marked on a grammatical level' (2013, p. 792), as Sayaka Sato, Pascal M. Gygax and Ute Gabriel explain in

'Gender Inferences: Grammatical Features and their Impact on the Representation of Gender in Bilinguals'. German, on the other hand, is a 'grammatical gender language … [in which] both animate and inanimate nouns are morphologically marked for gender' (2013, p. 793). Grammatical gender, in particular, is generally understood as unrelated to biology – the separation between 'Genus' and 'Sexus' in German highlights this. As the *Oxford Dictionaries*' online platform states, '[it] is only very loosely associated with natural distinctions of sex' (2016, n. pag.). However, as I show throughout this thesis, terms used in reference to human beings, such as nouns, pronouns, names and titles, are in fact predominantly associated with one sex/gender. Consequently, grammatical gender and physical bodies are far from separate entities; visible also in the dual German use of 'Geschlecht'. In contrast to 'Genus' and 'Sexus,' 'Geschlecht' can encompass both grammar and biology. Sato et al. highlight this link by distinctly referring to 'grammatical and biological gender' (2013, p. 793), but I believe the compound 'sex/gender' is able to make the case for this connection more clearly. I therefore refer to 'sex/gender and language'. Similarly, I employ 'male' and 'female' to highlight the sexed/gendered nature of grammatical properties. The phrase 'male generic terms' helps to illustrate that supposedly neutral terms, such as the English noun and the German pronoun 'man,' are indeed specific. However, overall I intend to use 'sex/gender' sparingly as I am aware that a compound can be challenging and distracting if overused. Therefore, I employ 'neutral' or 'specific,' instead of 'sex/gender-neutral' or '-specific,' to avoid oversaturation. Equally, I refer to 'the linguistic representation of women and men' as a synonym for 'sex/gender and language' – which leads me on to two more central terms in this thesis: 'woman' and 'language'.

To begin with 'woman,' the term is defined as '[a]n adult human female,' with 'female' defined as '[o]f or denoting the sex that can bear offspring or produce eggs, distinguished biologically by the production of gametes (ova) which can be fertilized by male gametes' (OD, 2016, n. pag.). However, like the definitions for 'sex' and 'gender,' this understanding is far from straightforward. As Butler points out, '[i]f one "is" a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive' (1990, p. 4). Specifically, 'gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts'; and

moreover, 'gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities' (1990, p. 4). In short, 'woman' seems too narrow a concept to encompass the diversity of a 'female' experience. However, as Butler adds, a term is certainly needed to signal the disparate treatment of the sexes. '[T]he political task is not to refuse representational politics – as if we could,' she says, '[t]he juridical structures of language and politics constitute the contemporary field of power; hence, there is no position outside this field' (1990, p. 7). In fact, Butler believes that the issues inherent in the term 'woman' can be useful to further debates on sex/gender and its intersection with other forms of oppression. 'The assumption of its essential incompleteness permits that category to serve as a permanently available site of contested meanings' (1990, p. 21), she states. Throughout this thesis I employ 'woman' with awareness as to its potential limitations. However, I believe it is important at this point in history to be able to name the experience of being 'female' and the bias associated with it. My intention is here not to universalise this experience or reassert any essential difference but to analyse and challenge the hierarchy of the sexes/genders. To do so, I require a consistent and, moreover, a recognisable term.

Another term which needs clarification is 'language'. Defined as '[t]he method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way' (OD, 2016, n. pag.), it is important to state which type of language I am referring to. I focus on written language in this thesis, and more specifically, written language employed in literary texts. Moreover, I evaluate literary texts narrated from a first-person or third-person perspective in order to faciliate optimum transportation in readers. While the constructed nature of written language differs from the spontaneity of speech, it presents key advantages. As Livia explains, 'many morphological indicators of gender in French are only apparent in the written form' (2001, p. 5) – this can be transferred to English and German in the wider sense. It is in writing that linguistic experiments become visible and poignant; what might be lost or ignored in a conversation, such as the use of a neutral pronoun, is able to act as a key feature in a written text. And through consistent usage, I believe, readers are able to both acclimatise to linguistic experiments and reflect more profoundly on the significance of such inventions. I work with literary texts in

particular throughout this thesis as such writing, in contrast to a theoretical or rhetorical piece, tells a story with the help of fictionalised characters, settings and events. It essentially paints a picture rather than providing the mere nuts and bolts of an argument. And this aesthetic experience, following narrative studies, has a profound impact on readers.

However, this stylistic distinction is the only one I am making; the particular genre of the selected texts is less significant. As my focus is on texts which problematise the linguistic representation of women and men I analyse work which meets this criterion; consequently, the presented texts range in genre from confessional writing and science fiction to satire. A particular focus is on how texts engage with nouns, pronouns, names and titles. To clarify, I am here most interested in the lexical meaning of words, i.e. '[t]he meaning of a word considered in isolation from the sentence containing it' (OD, 2016, n. pag.). However, I follow Vyvyan Evans' understanding, as laid out in *How Words Mean: Lexical Concepts, Cognitive Models, and Meaning Construction*, that '[w]ord meaning … is always a function of a situated interpretation' (2010, p. 23). And this interpretation, I argue, is guided by the sociocultural notion male-as-norm. In effect, I am investigating both the denotations and connotations of terms in relation to sex/gender.

Having provided an overview of my motivations, narrative research findings, the thesis structure and key terms, I now show how the premise male-as-norm has been problematised by linguists since the early 1970s. I assess the ensuing theoretical debates in the context of empirical findings, and provide an overview of today's positions on the significance of women's and men's linguistic representation. In particular, the next chapter illustrates the current state-of-play in sex/gender and language research. The contested nature of inclusive language highlights that a new approach is needed. Moreover, the restricted influence of theoretical arguments and empirical studies points to literary texts as a potential tool to progress debates. In short, I set out the linguistic frame for my argument.

Chapter 1: Sex/gender and language

Then and now

The feminist critique of language is a relatively recent historical phenomenon but, over the past forty years, it has had a profound impact on the understanding of and attitudes toward the issue of sex/gender and language. In the following I present historical and contemporary debates in the English- and German-language context as well as empirical findings. I investigate discussions around the significance of nouns and pronouns, in particular, as these form the central focus of my argument. As I show in the following, while certain linguistic practices have certainly adapted in line with feminist proposals, others remain contested. This lays the foundations for my subsequent exploration of literary texts as a useful tool to further promote inclusive language use.

Historical debates and findings

Robin Lakoff and Dale Spender

It is difficult, if not impossible, to pinpoint the exact moment when the representation of women and men came to the forefront of linguists' minds. In fact, it was not necessarily a professional interest that started the inquiry, but a heightened awareness of the role of language in society. During the civil rights movement in the U.S. in the 1960s, different social groups – different in terms of their disparate treatment from the (white male) norm – began to question the way they were represented linguistically. Derogatory and belittling terms, such as 'boy' to address a man of colour or 'bitch' to refer to a woman, were obvious targets but soon language in general took centre stage. Questions from a female perspective included, for example: why was 'doctor,' a supposedly neutral term, usually pronominalised with 'he' rather than 'she'? And why were human beings generically referred to as 'man' but never as 'woman'? In short, why were men linguistically portrayed as *the* representatives of humanity? Alongside the demand for a more equal place in society, disaffected groups, with women the particular focus of this thesis, also demanded a more equal

place in language. This was especially important to those who saw a direct link between the terms employed for women and the society that assigned them an inferior position. Language was here considered not only a reflection of societal bias but a tool to perpetuate it. Two thinkers who made key contributions to the early feminist critique are Robin Lakoff and Dale Spender. There have been many other influential voices; however, I focus on Lakoff's and Spender's work as it encapsulates the different positions on the link between language and reality. Lakoff, as I show in the following, believes that only a change in society will bring about linguistic change, whereas Spender argues that a change in language can affect a more equal place for women in society.

Lakoff's 1973 essay 'Language and Woman's Place,' which formed the basis for her later book, holds a firm place in feminist linguistic history. As Lenora A. Timm comments in her review, '[Lakoff] has done pioneering work in an area which hitherto had been fairly well neglected by linguists, and even by sociolinguists' (1976, p. 251). However, this 'pioneering work,' as the author explains, is not without its problems. To name but three of her criticisms, Timm pinpoints to the deficient 'methods of analysis,' the 'definition of terms and concepts (or lack thereof),' and the 'use of freewheeling ... generalizations' (1976, p. 245). Considering Lakoff is a linguist by training, her methods are controversial: her main data were her own language use and that of acquaintances. However, as Lakoff reflects, '*any* procedure is at some point introspective: the gatherer must analyze [her/]his data, after all' (1973, p. 46, emphasis in original). While the method might be lacking in the eyes of some, Lakoff nevertheless makes several central observations, inspiring generations of researchers to come. First of all, she links societal power to language, '[t]he language of the favored group, the group that holds the power, along with its non-linguistic behavior, is generally adopted by the other group, not vice-versa' (1973, p. 50). Lakoff therefore sees a connection between linguistic disparity and social positioning. As the 'favoured' group is the category 'male,' and the 'other' group the category 'female,' language effectively mirrors the social hierarchy.

Furthermore, societal power structures are not only reflected in language use but also in meaning. As Lakoff comments, '[o]ften a word that may be used of both men and women ..., when applied to women, assumes a special

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meaning that, by implication rather than outright assertion, is derogatory to women as a group' (1973, p. 57). The term 'professional' is one of her examples: a male professional is generally considered an expert who happens to have a sex/gender. On the other hand, if a professional is female, she is often perceived in relation to her sex only. Spender agrees with Lakoff's observation. As she states in her 1980 work *Man Made Language*, '[t]o be linked with male is to be linked to a range of meanings which are positive and good: to be linked to minus male is to be linked to the *absence* of those qualities' (1980, p. 23, emphasis in original). In a social context in which men are the 'favoured' group, and furthermore, in which women are primarily categorised as sexual beings, the logic is: a professional 'minus male' can only be a prostitute[1]. In such a context men are the unmarked category, human beings in their own right, while women are marked, and marked specifically by their sex/gender. Lakoff elaborates, 'in the professions the male is unmarked, we never have **man (male) doctor*' (1973, p. 60, emphasis in original), while English speakers were, and still are, familiar with the reverse: 'woman doctor' or 'lady doctor'. These '[l]inguistic imbalances' (1973, p. 73) are of key concern to Lakoff; in contrast, however, the generic use of 'man' is less significant. In fact, she believes that male generic terms 'of course refer to women members of the species as well' (1973, p. 74). At this point both theorists' positions begin to diverge substantially. Lakoff argues, 'I don't think it [the use of 'man'] by itself specifies a particular and demeaning role for women, as the special uses of *mistress* or *professional* ... do' (1973, p. 74, emphasis in original) and explains, 'it does not indicate to little girls how they are expected to behave' (1973, p. 74-5). Spender, on the other hand, holds the opposite position: '*[h]e/man* makes males linguistically visible and females linguistically invisible ... so that it seems reasonable to assume the world is male until proven otherwise' (1980, p. 157, emphasis in original). 'He' and 'man,' the author argues, essentially imply male-as-norm – the unmarked use of 'man' is therefore as problematic to Spender as professional terms are to Lakoff.

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[1] As R. W. Holder's 2008 *Dictionary of Euphemisms* highlights, this understanding remains relevant to this day. He states: '[g]iven the antiquity of their *trade*, we should not be surprised that someone who *sells herself* might like to be called a *professional woman*' (2008, p. 54, emphasis in original).

Lakoff explains why she makes this distinction: 'we should be attempting to single out those linguistic uses that, by implication and innuendo, demean the members of one group or another' (1973, p. 73). Presumably the use of 'man' and 'mankind,' to her mind, do not. However, as Spender points out, '[t]hrough the use of *he/man* women cannot take their existence for granted: they must constantly seek confirmation that they are included in the *human* species' (1980, p. 157, emphasis in original). Surely, the need to 'seek confirmation' for their humanity causes women equal 'psychological damage' (1973, p. 73), as Lakoff terms it, as degrading language. In fact, Lakoff believes that 'if one deals with women as primarily sexual beings, one is in effect automatically relegating them to object status ..., they are not fully human beings in their own right' (1973, p. 62). But not only Lakoff can be criticised for contradictions; in her critique Spender can be similarly faulted, according to Maria Black and Rosalind Coward. In their essay 'Linguistic, Social and Sexual Relations: A Review of Dale Spender's *Man Made Language*,' the authors comment that Spender fails to reflect on 'many apparently non-gender specific terms that bear no resemblance to the exclusively masculine *man*, [which] occur in utterances where the same pattern of exclusive reference ... is also found' (1999, p. 108, emphasis in original). In short, linguistic representation matters as a whole, that is, unmarked 'man' is as significant as unmarked 'doctor' and terms of degradation.

While Lakoff and Spender disagree on which nouns are most in need of revision, they share an understanding of what is frequently deemed the most controversial aspect of Spender's work: the origins of androcentric language. Lakoff believes that men's societal position has filtered down into language, that 'this lexical and grammatical neutralization [of 'man' and 'mankind'] is related to the fact that men have been the writers and the doers' (1973, p. 74). Spender agrees that '[women] have not had the same opportunity to influence the language, to introduce new meanings where they will be taken up, to define the objects or events of the world' (1980, p. 52-3). In effect, both concur that men's linguistic position is linked to their position in society. However, Spender takes this interplay between language and reality one step further: 'because males have primarily been responsible for the production of cultural forms and images ... it would be surprising if language were to be an exception' (1980, p. 31). This

equation of social and linguistic power is for many, including Black and Coward, a step too far. It implies the ability to communicate pre-language, the authors comment, and '[o]ne wonders how, without already having a language, the patriarchs around the linguistic conference table managed to communicate to each other their plans about such a complex and sophisticated system' (1999, p. 106). One could argue that 'man-made' does not necessarily have to mean made from scratch. In fact, Spender's proposition could equally be interpreted to refer to a more gradual linguistic influence, e.g. in form of societal power being translated into language.

Nevertheless, both theorists essentially agree that social hierarchies shape linguistic representation. The key question which divides Lakoff and Spender, however, is whether women's and men's position in language is simply a historical relic or whether it impacts on speakers' understanding. Lakoff argues that 'it is very seldom the case that a certain form of behavior results from being given a certain name, but rather, names are given on the basis of previously-observed behavior' (1973, p. 75). Consequently, the unmarked and marked interpretations of 'professional' are due to observation only. This is problematised by Spender on two accounts. Firstly, she questions who observes and to what effect, and secondly, she queries the division of category and behaviour. In relation to the first point Spender states, '[n]ew names ... have their origins in the perspective of those doing the naming rather than in the object or event that is being named' (1980, p. 164). Considering the 'favoured' societal position of men, it seems plausible that official observing and naming, at least, took/takes place from a predominantly male perspective. Furthermore, it seems likely that this observation was/is based on men, 'taking themselves as the centre, the reference point' (1980, p. 54). In reference to her second point she elaborates, '[o]nce certain categories are constructed within the language, we proceed to organize the world according to those categories. We even fail to see evidence which is not consistent with those categories' (1980, p. 141). According to Spender, categories determine human beings' behaviour beyond their initial implementation. Therefore speakers come to expect a 'male doctor' when the term is unmarked, and a 'prostitute' when encountering a 'female professional'.

This is where we get to the heart of the disagreement between Lakoff and Spender: the link between linguistic and social change. Lakoff believes that '[l]inguistic imbalances … are clues that some external situation needs changing, rather than items that one *should* seek to change directly' (1973, p. 73, emphasis in original), while Spender argues that 'because their meanings are primarily those of minus male, women continue to be devalued. By such an interrelated process is the subordination of women in part created and sustained' (1980, pp. 23-4). Lakoff takes the position that a change in society precedes a change in language – 'social change creates language change, not the reverse' (1973, p. 76). Spender, on the other hand, considers both to be interlinked: '[a]s more meanings are changed so will society change and the sexist semantic rule be weakened; as society and the sexist semantic rule changes so will more meanings change' (1980, p. 31). But despite their seeming divergence Lakoff and Spender effectively agree on the impact of language on speakers. Lakoff, for example, refers to the 'psychological damage' of derogatory terms while Spender believes words 'help to structure a sexist world in which women are assigned a subordinate position' (1980, p. 31). Both theorists therefore consider language to have a tangible effect on speakers' perception. This understanding is based on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, or theory of linguistic relativity, which I explore in detail later on. Next, however, I focus on other voices who contributed to the feminist critique of language. As I show, there have been a multitude of approaches toward the issue of sex/gender and language which all profoundly influenced later developments and positions.

Wendy Martyna and other voices

While Lakoff and Spender are prominent voices in feminist linguistic theory, they are certainly not the only ones. As space is limited, I am unable to engage with all contributors; however, there are a few key ideas I would like to present – these set the tone for subsequent empirical studies. One particularly important thinker in the problematisation of male generics is Wendy Martyna, who published extensively throughout the 1970s and 1980s. In her 1978 essay 'What Does "He" Mean? Use of the Generic Masculine,' she states that both

'man' and 'he' are far from neutral but result in 'ambiguity,' 'exclusiveness' and 'inequity' (1978, p. 131-2). Explaining her proposal, she states that the terms are 'ambiguous' in the sense that speakers can never be entirely sure whether 'he' is used in the specific or neutral sense; 'exclusive' with regard to visibly excluding women, such as in 'Man's vital needs include food, water, and access to females' (1978, p. 132); and 'inequitable' as 'she' and 'he' do not serve parallel functions, i.e. 'she' is never used inclusively. A common counterargument, as put forward by Lakoff, is that the generic use of 'he' and 'man' is irrelevant. But as Martyna counters in 'Beyond the "He/Man" Approach: The Case for Nonsexist Language,' '[i]f pronouns [and nouns] are as amusingly insignificant as some consider them to be, we should expect no outcry were the situation reversed' (1980a, p. 484). Consequently, 'the best woman for the job,' 'a human being, she' and 'Woman's vital needs include food, water, and access to males' should be as acceptable. Common usage shows that they are not, and under the premise male-as-norm, '[o]nly females can become "linguistically invisible" when the term "man" is used; only women have the task of making sense of the fact that they are both "man" and "not man" at the same time' (1975, p. 84), as Barbara Bate confirms in her 1975 article 'Generic Man, Invisible Woman: Language, Thought and Social Change'. As a result, women have to perform additional cognitive work never required of men, which is exactly why unmarked 'man' is problematic, according to Martyna.

At this point, however, counter-voices become audible. Some argue that communication is a matter of intent as well as understanding. As Jane Duran argues in her 1981 essay 'Gender-Neutral Terms,' '[m]ere failure of recognition of intent, in and of itself, is not the proper criterion for whether or not a term may legitimately be considered to be neutral' (1981, p. 150). In effect, if the interlocutor does not understand the speaker's intention, it does not necessarily reflect on the term of choice; it might simply reflect a lack of context given. In everyday interactions clarification can of course be sought; however, this becomes decidedly more problematic in more formal settings and is almost impossible when information is presented as text. Readers do not generally contact authors to clarify whether 'man' does indeed refer to 'woman' also. Counterarguments are not restricted to intent, however. Furthermore, many are highly emotive, as Maija S. Blaubergs highlights in her 1980 'An Analysis of

Classic Arguments Against Changing Sexist Language'. Some opponents maintain, for example, that '[l]anguage is a trivial concern' (1980, p. 138) and linguistic representation irrelevant. One supporter of this position is Stefan Kanfer who argues in his 1972 piece 'Sispeak: A Msguided Attempt to Change Herstory,' that '[c]hairman is a role, not a pejorative. Congressman is an office, not a chauvinist plot' (1972, n. pag.). He explains that '[t]he feminist attack on social crimes may be as legitimate as it was inevitable. But the attack on words is only another social crime – one against the means and the hope of communication' (1972, n. pag.). Kanfer believes that language is, firstly, 'just' language and secondly, that any alteration unnecessarily complicates linguistic practices. This notion is shared by many, among them also reformative voices. The 1999 UNESCO 'Guidelines on Gender-Neutral Language,' drafted by Annie Desprez-Bouanchaud, Janet Doolaege and Lydia Ruprecht, for example, warns to 'use [his or her] sparingly to avoid monotonous repetition' (1999, p. 10), while the 'Guidelines for Nonsexist Language in APA Journals,' advise that '[a]ttempting to introduce nonsexist language at the cost of awkwardness, obscurity or euphemistic phrasing does not improve scientific communication' (cited in Blaubergs, 1980, p. 144). Interestingly, the equally monotonous use of 'he' or the ambiguous interpretation of male generics are not raised as concerns.

Arguments become particularly fraught when speakers feel linguistic change impinges on their freedom of speech. '[T]he less sensible activists of the women's rights movement' and '[t]he lunatic fringe of the women's "liberation" movement' (1980, p. 139) are just two 'opposition' statements quoted by Blaubergs. However, these positions are far from simple emotive outbursts but reveal a deeper antagonism. As Blaubergs confirms, '[t]hose who argue against change often overlay their arguments with ridicule and hostility towards feminists. The arguments themselves can be viewed as primarily manifesting an acceptance of sexism' (1980, p. 145). The use of 'less sensible' and 'lunatic' highlights this. As the UNESCO guide explains, 'language does not merely reflect the way we think: it also shapes our thinking'. Moreover, the guide continues, '[i]f words and expressions that imply that women are inferior to men are constantly used, that assumption of inferiority tends to become part of our mindset' (Desprez-Bouanchaud, 1999, p. 4). Therefore, the exclamation that

linguistic change is irrelevant or irrational should be treated with caution. However, as long as positions remain theoretical they can also be easily contested. In the following I present the findings of early empirical researchers who aimed to introduce a more objective perspective to the debates. This presents the beginnings of an evidence-based inquiry which continues to this day.

First empirical evidence: English

> A number of Lakoff's unsupported assertions about women's language could be reformulated as hypotheses, then tested in a controlled experiment or checked for validity against data gathered in natural speech situations. This strikes me as the only sensible way to arrive at a *valid* description of linguistic features which are characteristic of women in this society or elsewhere. (Timm, 1976, p. 251, emphasis in original)

As Timm states in her critique of Lakoff's work, without empirical evidence it is difficult to come to any conclusions about the impact of the linguistic representation of women and men. Furthermore, it is difficult to argue for linguistic change to level any disparity. Two pivotal studies of the 1970s tried to advance the debates and put feminist linguistic contentions to the test: Sandra L. Bem and Daryl J. Bem's 1973 'Does Sex-Biased Job Advertising "Aid and Abet" Sex Discrimination?,' and Joseph W. Schneider and Sally L. Hacker's 1973 'Sex Role Imagery and Use of the Generic "Man" in Introductory Texts: A Case in the Sociology of Sociology'. Published in the same year as Lakoff's essay, both studies question how the generic use of 'man' shapes readers' understanding.

Bem and Bem investigated whether the phrasing of job advertisements impacts on readers' motivation to apply. In their study, 120 high school students, half of them female, were presented with twelve job descriptions. One third was presented with the 'sex-biased format,' such as '*Telephone Frameman*' and '*Telephone Lineman*' (1973, pp. 8-9, emphasis in original). The second third was phrased in 'sex-unbiased form,' with '*Telephone Frameworker*' and '*Telephone Lineworker*' (1973, pp. 9-10, emphasis in original) as examples. And the final third was advertised in 'sex-reversed format,' such as '*Telephone Framewoman*' and '*Telephone Linewoman*' (1973, pp. 11-2, emphasis in

original). These terms were presented with matching sexed/gendered descriptions, such as 'WE'RE LOOKING FOR OUTDOOR MEN' (1973, pp. 9, emphasis in original). After reading the advertisements, participants rated their interest and Bem and Bem found that the use of 'frameman' and 'lineman' meant 'no more than 5% of the women were interested' while 'frameworker' and 'lineworker,' and their unbiased descriptions, resulted in a clear increase, '25% of the women were interested' (1973, pp. 13-4). 'And when the ads for lineman and frameman were specifically written to appeal to women, nearly half (45%) of the women in our sample were interested in applying for one or the other of these two jobs' (1973, pp. 14). In effect, this early study suggests that language impacts on readers' understanding: women seem to be able to picture themselves in the roles relative to whether or not they are linguistically represented. Schneider and Hacker's study backs these findings. Asking introductory sociology students to submit pictures which represented typical topic titles such as 'Social Man,' 'Urban Man,' 'Political Man,' 'Industrial Man' and 'Economic Man' (1973, p. 14), the evaluation of 306 images showed that '[a]mong all respondents, about 64 percent of those students receiving "man"-linked labels submitted pictures containing men only, whereas only about half of those receiving labels without the term submitted male-only pictures for the five labels' (1973, p. 14). Consequently, participants interpreted the term 'man' as specific and selected images accordingly.

Janice Moulton, George M. Robinson and Cherin Elias's 1978 study 'Sex Bias in Language Use: "Neutral" Pronouns That Aren't' extended this investigation to the use of pronouns. 490 college students, among them 264 women, were asked to create a story on the basis of 'his,' 'their' or 'his or her' given as pronouns. Moulton et al. found that 'when the pronoun *his* was used, 35% of the story characters were female; for *their*, 46% were female; and for *his or her*, 56% were female' (1978, p. 1034, emphasis in original), which indicates that pronouns equally influence interpretation. Furthermore, the choice of 'he' appears to skew interpretation toward male. The authors consider this bias to be a form of '*parasitic reference*' (1978, p. 1035, emphasis in original), '[t]o the extent that coming more readily to mind confers an advantage, females are disadvantaged when they are part of a population referred to by a parasitic "neutral" term' (1978, p. 1035). This is further supported by Martyna's 1980

study 'The Psychology of the Generic Masculine'. In the first part, the author set '400 students of all age levels, from Kindergarten through college' (1980b, p. 71) the task of completing sentences, which portrayed people in stereotypically 'male,' 'female' and 'neutral' roles, with a pronoun of their choice. She reports that '[w]hen the person was presumed male […], *he* was used 96 percent of the time. When the person was presumed female, *she* was used 87 percent of the time' (1980b, p. 71, emphasis in original), which again reveals a link between sex/gender and pronominal reference. In consequence, 'both sexes reported receiving imagery of males as they chose pronouns for the male-related topics, and imagery of females for the female-related topics' (1980b, p. 72). She concludes, '[t]he pronoun was picked to match the gender of image received, and thus seems to be a gender-specific rather than a generic term' (1980b, p. 72). The second part of her study confirmed these results. She asked 72 university students to decide whether an image of a woman or man matched the pronoun presented in a sentence. The use of 'he,' 'they' and 'he or she' resulted in the following: 'approximately 40 percent of the students reported that the female picture did *not* apply to the sentences with generic *he*' (1980b, p. 74, emphasis in original). These early findings set the stage for later advances in the feminist critique of language but also influenced developments in other linguistic contexts, including German. In the following I provide a brief overview of the history of German sex/gender and language debates. This illustrates similarities and points of divergence between the two languages in terms of the dominant linguistic representation of women and men, as well as opportunities for change.

Senta Trömel-Plötz and Luise F. Pusch

Senta Trömel-Plötz obtained her PhD in the U.S. and was strongly influenced by the local problematisation of women's and men's linguistic representation. Her 1978 essay 'Linguistik und Frauensprache' transferred the feminist critique of language to the German-language context. Similar to Lakoff and Spender, Trömel-Plötz believes that the societal power structure is reflected linguistically: '[e]s ist nur plausibel, daß eine weitreichende gesellschaftliche Diskriminierung sich auch sprachlich niederschlägt' (1978, p. 50). Furthermore, she considers

this linguistic reflection of society an act of discrimination in itself: '[d]ie Diskriminierung besteht gerade sehr oft darin, wie eine Frau angeredet oder nicht angeredet wird' (1978, p. 50). In effect, like Lakoff and Spender, the author proposes that language both mirrors society – with men as the privileged or 'favoured' group – and puts women at a disadvantage. However, German, due to its grammatical structure, employs additional means to communicate the disparate treatment of the sexes/genders. It is not only social gender which presumes male-as-norm in the German language, but grammar also. As a result, nouns employed to represent women and men, such as 'der Zuhörer, er,' Trömel-Plötz argues, are both grammatically and conceptually male.

'Male' is considered unmarked in each instance, therefore particular adaptations are necessary to evoke 'female'. So while the English, 'the listener, he,' can be adjusted to 'the listener, she' via a shift in pronoun, 'der Zuhörer, er,' as Trömel-Plötz explains, has to be extended to 'die Zuhörerin, sie' (1978, pp. 51-2). As the suffix '-in' highlights, any modification essentially implies a deviation from the norm, leading the author to conclude that 'das maskuline grammatische Geschlecht und der Mann als Referent [sind] die Norm ... und die femininen Formen mit der Frau als Referent die Abweichung. Der Mann dominiert auch in der Sprache' (1978, p. 56). And this hierarchy extends to innovations; while linguistic deviation is the norm for women, male terms are rarely linguistically linked to a female original. As the author shows, a possible 'Kindergärtnerin – *Kindergärtner' is reconfigured entirely: '*Erzieher*', with 'Krankenschwester – *Krankenbruder': 'Krankenpfleger' another example (1978, p. 56, emphasis in original). Trömel-Plötz comments: '[h]eute reflektiert unsere Sprache und unser Sprechen die Ungleichheit zwischen Frauen und Männern in unserer Gesellschaft' (1978, pp. 63-4). This disparity is part of wider social injustice: 'Sprechen [...ist] ein Großteil unseres Handelns' (1978, p. 64); consequently, Trömel-Plötz, in line with Spender, believes that linguistic revision is key to social change.

This position was controversial and as it was published in *Linguistische Berichte*, a prominent journal, it received considerable attention. For instance, Hartwig Kalverkämper, in his 1979 response to Trömel-Plötz, opposes her argument per se. As he opens his essay 'Die Frauen und die Sprache,' an appeal to 'Wissenschaft' underpins his main argument: '[d]abei geht es mir nicht

darum ... mich an dem plakativen Geschlechterstreit und Rollenkampf direkt zu beteiligen ...; es geht mir vielmehr darum, die linguistische Wissenschaftsposition, die methodologischen Implikationen des Beitrags unter die Lupe zu nehmen' (1979a, p. 56). With 'linguistic' and 'methodological' central to his critique, Kalverkämper aligns himself with linguistics as a science – which, he believes, is everything Trömel-Plötz's approach is not. He argues, for example, that semantics is 'logisch inspiriert' (1979a, p. 58) while Trömel-Plötz's methodology shows 'Verlorenheit der Gedankengänge' (1979a, p. 60). Secondly, Kalverkämper '[geht] die Problemlage, ein sprachliches Phänomen, linguistisch an' (1979a, p. 65) while Trömel-Plötz's approach is 'unlinguistisch' (1979a, p. 60). And finally, the author shows 'Verantwortung vor der Wissenschaft' (1979a, p. 60) whereas Trömel-Plötz's work is essentially 'unwissenschaftlich' (1979a, p. 67). To what extent Kalverkämper's evaluation is not participating 'an dem plakativen Geschlechterstreit' remains dubious, but the core of his opposition relates to Trömel-Plötz's linking of grammar and sex/gender. According to the author, grammatical gender is simply a linguistic feature and therefore entirely unrelated to reality. He explains the unmarked function of male generic terms as follows: 'für solche Fälle der Ausblendung spezieller Merkmale in der Textverwendung sieht das Sprachsystem die Neutralisation vor,' and elaborates that neutralisation erases sex/gender 'um die Komplexität der Welt sprachlich zu reduzieren und somit ökonomisches Kommunizieren zu ermöglichen' (1979a, p. 58). Trömel-Plötz's error, Kalverkämper explains, is that she 'vermischt die außersprachliche Kategorie "Sexus" mit der sprachlichen Kategorie "Genus", indem sie von Gegebenheiten beim Genus auf Gegebenheiten des Sexus schließt' (1979a, p. 60). Consequently, to the author's mind, her work can only be considered unlinguistic.

However, Kalverkämper immediately introduces a caveat to his argument: '[d]as soll allerdings nicht kategorisch besagen, daß die Sprachgemeinschaften in Einzelfällen nicht doch eine Beziehung zwischen Genus und Sexus, zwischen Sexus und Genus erstellten' (1979a, p. 60). In effect, grammar and sex/gender are interrelated; however, only in certain instances, such as 'der Vater, er' or 'die Mutter, sie,' the author states. While this might confuse the reader, it nevertheless redeems Kalverkämper's position: grammar and

sex/gender are essentially separate entities, and if they are linked, any relationship is an exception. However, from this point onwards his opposition to Trömel-Plötz begins to slip in logic. In fact, according to the author, 'Genus' and 'Sexus' correspond in other instances as well, '[d]ort, wo eine Spezifizierung, Differenzierung, schärfere Genauigkeit zur Darstellung der außersprachlichen Wirklichkeit vonnöten ist ..., wird eben auch unterschieden, meist mit Hilfe der Determination durch Kontext und/oder Situation' (1979a, p. 60). The unmarked 'Zuhörer,' for example, might indeed be either specifically 'male' or indeed 'female' – sex/gender is here revealed via context, Kalverkämper states. However, if the context is lacking in detail, the author adds, terms are to be interpreted as 'male' first and foremost. He explains as follows: '[e]rst in einer Zeit, in der Frauen in öffentliche Stellen, in die verschiedensten Berufssparten drängen, wird man sich der Notwendigkeit bewußt, für die neuen Inhaberinnen dieser Stellen neue Berufsbezeichnungen zu suchen' (1979a, p. 61). This seems to confirm Trömel-Plötz's argument, not refute it. In effect, he conceeds that male generic terms are not inclusive – they connote 'male'. And as a result, women need to become linguistically visible to counteract this underlying premise. In short, grammar and sex/gender are interconnected and moreover, to womens' disadvantage.

Kalverkämper's oppositional, albeit confused, response inspired Luise F. Pusch to counter. In her 1979 essay 'Der Mensch ist ein Gewohnheitstier, doch weiter kommt man ohne ihr,' she contends that 'TRÖMEL-PLÖTZ "verwechselt" nicht Sexus und Genus, sondern sie analysiert gezielt die Beziehungen zwischen der grammatischen Kategorie Genus und dem Sexus der Referent/inn/en' (1979, p. 96). Indeed Pusch believes Kalverkämper misunderstood Trömel-Plötz to begin with, since '[e]s geht ... eindeutig um ein referenzsemantisches Problem, um die Frage nämlich, ob Aussagen mit Personenbezeichnungen *aller* Art ..., *tatsächlich* in der postulierten Weise funktionieren' (1979, p. 94, emphasis in original). While, as illustrated above, Kalverkämper is easily defeated on grounds of logic he continues to have one final ace up his sleeve: the economy of male-as-norm. As I show later on in this thesis, linguistic economy remains a popular and decisive argument against inclusive language. In contrast to male generic terms, representing women and men equally is generally considered 'cumbersome' and 'unwieldy'. To this,

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Pusch responds as follows: '[e]s geht überhaupt nicht um sprachliche "Ökonomie" oder "Schwerfälligkeit", sondern um die Aufrechterhaltung der überkommenen sozialen Klassifizierungen, die in den Anrede- und Bezeichnungsasymmetrien ihren sprachlichen Niederschlag finden' (1979, p. 97). Nevertheless, this position remains powerful to this day.

However, at the time at least the debate was settled by Trömel-Plötz and Pusch. While Kalverkämper's final response to Pusch 'Quo Vadis Linguistica? – Oder: Der feministische Mumpsimus* in der Linguistik' brought no new insights, Trömel-Plötz and Pusch edited a special edition of *Linguistische Berichte* which laid the foundations for subsequent German feminist linguist explorations. With equal contributions from Ingrid Guentherodt and Marlis Hellinger, it succinctly sets out the key points of the feminist critique of the German language:

> Sprache ist sexistisch, wenn sie Frauen und ihre Leistungen ignoriert, wenn sie Frauen nur in Abhängigkeit von und Unterordnung zu Männern beschreibt, wenn sie Frauen nur in stereotypen Rollen zeigt und ihnen so über das Stereotyp hinausgehende Interessen und Fähigkeiten abspricht, und wenn sie Frauen durch herablassende Sprache demütigt und lächerlich macht. (1980, p. 15)

This understanding has inspired a wealth of research into the representation of women and men in German ever since. Before I present findings on the impact of male generics, I explore the contributions of Trömel-Plötz and Pusch in more depth. The work of both thinkers has been paramount in raising awareness in the German-language context and paved the way for future empirical studies.

More from Trömel-Plötz and Pusch

There have been many influential voices in the debate on women's and men's linguistic representation; however, due to their prolific and influential output in the early years of the feminist critique of language this section focuses once more on Trömel-Plötz and Pusch. Pusch's essay 'Das Deutsche als Männersprache – Diagnose and Therapievorschläge,' which appeared in the 1980 special edition of *Linguistische Berichte*, particularly set the tone for later developments. The text, which was the foundation for her book of the same title, argues that language change is necessary as the linguistic status quo

expresses that 'die männliche Hälfte der Menschheit als Norm gilt und im Zentrum des Interesses steht und die weibliche Hälfte von der männlichen abhängig ist und auch so wahrgenommen wird' (1980, p. 65). Therefore women need to become linguistically visible to challenge male-as-norm. However, Pusch seems conflicted how to best achieve female visibility. 'Das hochproduktive Suffix *-in* konserviert im Sprachsystem die jahrtausendealte Abhängigkeit der Frau vom Mann' (1980, p. 68, emphasis in original), thereby marking women as 'minus male'. To counteract this linguistic dependence and its implications, Pusch suggests a revision of the German grammatical structure altogether. Instead of the suffix '-in,' she proposes that the female grammatical gender could be employed to represent women, such as in '[s]*ie ist eine gute Student. Ihre Leistungen sind beachtlich und ihre Professor ist sehr zufrieden mit ihr. Früher war sie übrigens Sekretär bei einer Architekt*' (1980, p. 70, emphasis in original). But while this solution could result in linguistic parity, it is unlikely to catch on as yet. In the meantime, the suffix seems the most suitable alternative despite its associations with female deviation. The use of male generic terms, however, is resolutely rejected, '[f]ür das Deutsche gilt ... die Strategie: Beide Geschlechter benennen – nicht nur das männliche' (1980, p. 73).

Trömel-Plötz agrees. In her 1982 text *Frauensprache: Sprache der Veränderung* she states, 'wenn wir eine Gleichbehandlung der Frau in der Sprache wollen, [... müssen] Frauen explizit angesprochen werden' (1982, p. 17). The author explains, '[n]icht ausgeschlossen zu sein, sichtbar zu sein ist der erste Schritt, um nicht degradiert zu werden' (1982, p. 65), for '[d]ie gesellschaftliche Struktur, wie sie ist, mit den Statusbeziehungen und Machtverhältnissen, wie wir sie kennen, wird durch das übliche, normale verbale und nichtverbale Verhalten von Frauen und Männern aufrechtgehalten' (1982, p. 105). In short, language has a tangible impact on reality; it shapes speakers' understanding. As a result, Trömel-Plötz believes, linguistic change will enable a new understanding: '[d]urch neuen Gebrauch ändern wir die feststehenden Formulierungen ... und damit auch die ihnen zugrundeliegenden Mythen' (1982, p. 90). Another way to challenge the underlying androcentric myth, as advocated by Pusch, is to employ female generics. Pusch proposes in her essay 'Totale Feminisierung: Überlegungen zum umfassenden Femininum'

to use female terms inclusively to render women linguistically visible. This is tenable on a structural level: '[w]o, bitteschön, ist in dem Wort <u>Lehrer</u> das Wort <u>Lehrerinnen</u> enthalten? Die umgekehrte Behauptung ergibt **offensichtlich** viel eher einen Sinn' (1988, p. 10, emphasis in original). Furthermore, if, as many critics maintain, 'Sprachveränderung nichts bewirkt, dann wird es ihnen sicher egal sein, wenn sie feminisiert werden' (1988, p. 10). However, Pusch's 'Feminisierung' has yet to be implemented widely – one reason potentially being that 'die Bezeichnung von Frauen mit einem Maskulinum ... als Aufwertung interpretiert [wird], während die Bezeichnung von Männern mit einem Femininum als Degradierung empfunden wird' (1988, p. 4). As society is built on the premise male-as-norm, and language reflects this premise, then female-as-norm is unsurprisingly experienced as a violation.

Pusch confirms in *Das Deutsche als Männersprache: Aufsätze und Glossen zur feministischen Linguistik* that 'Sprache ist ... kein Natur-, sondern ein historisch-gesellschaftliches Phänomen' (1984, p. 10) and therefore originates in a certain sociocultural context. However, as this context is subject to change, so is language – a position which is not only expressed by Trömel-Plötz and Pusch, but can also be found in the 1993 German edition of the UNESCO guide 'Eine Sprache für beide Geschlechter: Richtlinien für einen nicht-sexistischen Sprachgebrauch'. The guide, devised by two other prominent thinkers, Marlis Hellinger and Christine Bierbach, agrees that the linguistic status quo is problematic. To enable a more inclusive linguistic representation the authors propose two techniques: 'sprachliche ... Sichtbarmachung': 'den Gebrauch schon vorhandener femininer Personenbezeichnungen oder deren Neubildung' (1993, p. 5), on the one hand, and 'sprachliche ... Symmetrie': 'durch das sog. *Splitting*' or 'geschlechtsneutrale Ausdrücke' (1993, p. 5, emphasis in original), on the other. But despite support from organisations such as UNESCO, the issue of sex/gender and language remained contested. Empiricists subsequently entered the debate to investigate whether there was any evidence for linguistic disparity or whether the feminist critique of the German language was little more than 'plakativ,' as Kalverkämper believed. The following studies mark the beginnings of four decades of empirical research.

First empirical evidence: German

Early empirical evidence is decidedly sparse in the German-language context. I have only been able to locate a handful of empirical studies published during the 1980s. This could be due to a lesser interest in feminist linguistic proposals, less funding available to conduct such studies, or potentially both. I have therefore extended the timeframe of my review to include the 1990s, as new research on women's and men's linguistic representation emerged at the end of the twentieth century. One key study of the 1980s, however, is Josef Klein's 'Benachteiligung der Frau im generischen Maskulinum – eine feministische Schimäre oder psycholinguistische Realität?,' which was published in 1988. Discontent with the polemic tone of the debate between Trömel-Plötz, Kalverkämper and Pusch, Klein investigated whether there was empirical evidence for either position. To this end, he conducted two tests: 'Test A' included 158 participants, among them 84 women, and 'Test B' 74 female and 54 male subjects. '[F]ür Test A [wurden] kurze Texte entworfen, deren Kopf-Satz jeweils ein generisches Maskulinum enthält, z.B. "Jeder Einwohner der Stadt Aachen ..."' (1988, p. 312), and participants asked to select the most suitable referent. To distract respondents from the subject of the study, the focus was placed on stylistic rather than specific choices. And these choices were presented as firstname-lastname or title-lastname options, such as 'Nicola Meier' or 'Frau Meier'. Klein reports that '[v]on der Gesamtgruppe werden 69 % der Lücken durch Nennung eines männlichen Vornamens oder der Anredeform "Herr" und nur 20 % durch Nennung einer entsprechenden weiblichen Form ausgefüllt' (1988, p. 315).

'Test B' acted as a point of comparison. Male generics were replaced with double forms, such as 'Jede Einwohnerin/jeder Einwohner der Stadt Aachen,' to allow for women's linguistic visibility. Nevertheless, Klein comments:

> [O]bwohl die grammatische Struktur der feminin/maskulinen Doppelform die Testpersonen geradezu aufdringlich darauf stößt, daß der jeweiligen Personengruppe Frauen in gleichem Maße wie Männer angehören, bleibt auch hier das Übergewicht männlicher Geschlechtsspezifizierung und damit eine deutliche Prädominanz der Assoziation 'Mann' .... (1988, p. 316)

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Consequently, the premise male-as-norm impacts on participants' ability to imagine female 'inhabitants' whether the male grammatical gender is used generically, or not. The author confirms that '[b]ei der Gesamtgruppe stehen 61 % männlichen Geschlechtsspezifizierungen nun 30 % weibliche gegenüber' (1988, p. 316). However, '[d]as generische Maskulinum hat allerdings eine deutliche Verstärkerwirkung. Bei seiner Verwendung liegt der Vorsprung männlicher Geschlechtsspezifizierung ... im Durchschnitt um 18 % höher' (1988, p. 319). '[D]ie primäre... Assoziation "Mann"' (1988, p. 319) might be evoked by both male generic and double forms, but it is associated with male generics in particular.

Lisa Irmen and Astrid Köhncke's 1996 study 'Zur Psychologie des "generischen" Maskulinums' supports Klein's findings. Their first experiment presented 45 participants, 27 of them women, with sentences in which a key term was underlined. Respondents were asked to decide whether the previously highlighted term corresponded with a certain category presented in the follow-up sentence. 'Die Target-Sätze enthielten bestimmte Berufsbezeichnungen, allgemeine Personenbezeichnungen (z.B. Radfahrerin, Kunde) oder die Indefinitpronomen "jemand" und "einer"' (1996, p. 157), Irmen and Köhnke summarise. Neutral job titles were selected to minimise male bias, while all nouns appeared '[a]ls maskuline Form in geschlechtsunspezifischem Kontext'; '[a]ls spezifisch maskuline Form' and '[a]ls feminine Form' (1996, p. 157). The results showed that '[d]er Itemtyp GM-F [generisches Maskulinum-Frau] wurde in der Regel mit "nein" beantwortet' (1996, p. 159). After the study, however, some participants commented that the presence of the male grammatical gender as specific led to the assumption that the generic version equally implied 'men only'. To avoid the possibility of leading interpretation, the authors split participants into two groups in the follow-up study, 'von denen eine nur maskuline Personenbezeichnungen dargeboten bekam' (1996, p. 160). 17 female and 26 male respondents were presented with a highlighted term as above, this time followed by an image. Participants were then asked to assess whether the image matched the term, again with similar results: '[d]ie verhältnismäßig langen Zeiten für die Bestätigung der Frauen-Bilder nach einem "generischen" Maskulinum sprechen für den maskulinen Bias dieses

Personenbezeichnungstyps' (1996, p. 163). In short, male generics evoke male-as-norm.

Klaus Rothermund's 1998 study 'Automatische geschlechtsspezifische Assoziationen beim Lesen von Texten mit geschlechtseindeutigen und generisch maskulinen Text-Subjekten' provides further evidence. Rothermund tested the time required to associate a female or male subject with a male generic term. The first experiment presented 48 participants, 24 of them women, with a text on a general topic followed by a female, male or neutral reference term. The results showed that '[f]ür die Singular-Formen des GM [generischen Maskulinums] findet sich eine signifikante Interaktion von *GM* und *Testphrasentyp* ..., die darauf zurückgeht, daß das GM im Singular hauptsächlich männliche Assoziationen auslöst' (1998, p. 190, emphasis in original). However, Rothermund comments that this association is evoked only when singular forms are employed; the plural, such as 'die Lehrer, sie,' seems to lessen predominantly male connotations. To explore this further, the author conducted a second study evaluating the association time between female or male referents and singular/plural male generic terms. 48 participants, half of them female, took part and the results showed that '[a]uf Beschreibungen, die das GM im Singular enthielten, wurden verstärkt männliche Assoziationen gebildet; für die im Plural dargebotenen GM-Phrasen fand sich ein Überhang weiblicher Assoziationen' (1998, p. 194). Consequently, participants seem to interpret a referent's sex/gender based on a term's grammatical gender. The author confirms that '[m]öglicherweise geht das Umkippen ... zu einer weiblichen Repräsentation in der Pluralform auf die begleitend eingesetzten Artikel und Pronomen zurück' (1998, p. 195). Just as the male grammatical gender is predominantly associated with 'Mann,' female generics seem frequently interpreted as referring to women. Kalverkämper's argument that sex/gender and grammar are separate entities is clearly without empirical evidence. However, does it matter if men rather than women are predominantly evoked through linguistic representation? Does it have any wider impact? Feminist linguists believe so, and this conviction is linked to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. In the following I present the central tenets of the theory of linguistic relativity to illustrate the significance of the relationship between language and thought. This expands the theoretical foundations of my argument.

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis

The notion that language influences thought is not unique to Edward Sapir or Benjamin Lee Whorf. In fact it goes back to thinkers of the Enlightenment period such as Wilhelm von Humboldt, who, in his *Schriften zur Sprache* already stated that '[j]ede Sprache setzt dem Geiste derjenigen, welche sie sprechen, gewisse Grenzen' (1810/11, p. 13). Language is, Humboldt elaborates, 'ein selbständiges, den Menschen ebensowohl leitendes, als durch ihn erzeugtes Wesen' (1810/11, p. 13). Sapir, a linguist who studied American Indian, Indo-European and Semitic languages, built on this understanding in the 1930s. Based on his observations of different linguistic systems, he states in his 1933 essay 'Language' that '[l]anguage is heuristic ... in the much more far-reaching sense that its forms predetermine for us certain modes of observation and interpretation' (Mandelbaum, 1949, p. 10). Sapir agrees with Humboldt that language shapes our comprehension of the world, and further, shapes it in correspondence with the norms of a given society. Thus '[l]anguage is a great force of socialization, probably the greatest that exists ... a common speech serves as a peculiarly potent symbol of the social solidarity of those who speak the language' (1949, p. 15). Created, and employed, to communicate a particular worldview, language, according to Sapir, reinforces this worldview by the very act of communicating. As the author states in his 1929 'The Status of Linguistics as a Science,' '[w]e see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation' (1949, p. 162). In short, speakers are unable to understand their environment, be it natural or cultural, extralinguistically but are bound by the particular preconceptions laid down in language. As '[f]or the normal person every experience, real or potential, is saturated with verbalism' (1949, p. 11), Sapir believes that this predisposition is difficult, if not impossible, to circumvent:

> Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of

communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. (1949, p. 162)

Whorf, a student of Sapir's, took the notion of linguistic coercion as his starting point, and located further evidence through his investigations of the Hopi language. As he comments in his 1936 essay 'An American Indian Model of the Universe,' the worldview of Hopi speakers is different to that of English speakers precisely because their language presents different conceptions, with time and space a central example. Taking these differences as the foundation for his argument, Whorf comments in his 1940 'Science and Linguistics': '[w]e dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face' (Carroll, 1956, p. 213). To paraphrase, established categories, such as time and space, guide speakers to label their perceptions in correspondence. This guiding function of language, according to Whorf, is laid down in the 'linguistic system' (1956, p. 212), such as grammar. Therefore grammar, he argues, 'is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas' (1956, p. 212). As a result, speakers of a certain language seem trapped: they are coerced to categorise according to one particular worldview and essentially unable to create any new categories. Whorf sees the cause for this inability in 'the difficulty of standing aside from our own language ... and scrutinizing it objectively' (1956, p. 138). In short, speakers are unable to perceive language and its implications.

In its strongest form, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis proposes that language determines thought, an understanding which attracted criticism from its very inception. One immediate counterargument offered by Julia M. Penn in *Linguistic Relativity Versus Innate Ideas: The Origins of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis in German Thought* is that '[t]he proponent ... must be prepared to accept the logical consequences of [her/]his position, i.e. that there is no prelinguistic thought in the individual and that human thought was not originally responsible for the creation of language' (1972, p. 18). Sapir himself expresses doubt whether this really was the case. As he states, '[l]anguage is primarily a cultural or social product and must be understood as such' (Mandelbaum, 1949,

p. 166). And as language is closely interlinked with society it therefore cannot exist prelinguistically. The strongest version consequently seems dubious even to its co-originator. However, as Penn highlights, a more general concern around the theory remains, that is, 'deciding just what "the" Whorf hypothesis is' (1972, p. 13). Whorf, maybe in anticipation of such a question, provides further clarification in his 1940 'Linguistics as an Exact Science':

> [T]he 'linguistic relativity principle,' ... means, in informal terms, that users of markedly different grammars are pointed by their grammars toward different types of observations and different evaluations of externally similar acts of observation, and hence are not equivalent as observers but must arrive at somewhat different views of the world. (Carroll, 1956, p. 221)

Language directs toward different understandings of the world, according to Whorf – his use of 'somewhat different,' rather than 'definitely different,' confirms that along with Sapir he positions himself at the lesser end of the determinist scale. However, to critics of Whorf's work it is the very notion of difference which is problematic. For example, reviewers take issue with the evidence Whorf used as the foundation for his theories. One criticism by Alan Garnham and Jane Oakhill, for example, points out that 'Whorf translated Native American languages into English in a "simplistic, word-by-word" fashion' (Tohidian, 2009, p. 69) . Equally, Ekkehart Malotki's 1983 *Hopi Time: A Linguistic Analysis of the Temporal Concepts in the Hopi Language* illustrates that Whorf's identification of linguistic differences between English and Hopi is highly problematic. The basis of linguistic relativity therefore seems questionable to begin with.

Nevertheless, many researchers were inspired by the premise of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and decided to investigate further. And as its strongest form is generally rejected, studies focused on exploring what Iman Tohidian terms in 'Examining Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis as One of the Main Views on the Relationship Between Language and Thought': '[t]he weak version [... which says] that language *influences* thought' (2009, p. 70, emphasis in original). This 'weak' version, according to the author, is divided into two sub-versions: firstly, the notion that 'language influences perception' and secondly, the concept that 'language influences memory' (2009, p. 70). Tohidian

highlights that both weaker forms are supported by early evidence. Language influencing memory is backed by Hogan Carmichael and Walter Carmichael's 1932 study of the link between labels and images in memory; and language influencing perception is supported by Eric Lenneberg and John Roberts's 1956 investigation into colour comprehension by English and Zuni speakers. However, despite these results, the weak versions of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis are not without problems either. Tohidian asks, for example, 'what is language influencing – all thoughts or certain types of thought? If the latter, then what sort of thoughts are influenced?' (2009, p. 72). To provide a partial answer, Whorf's own understanding of language is useful; '[it] first of all is a classification and arrangement of the stream of sensory experience which results in a certain world-order' (Carroll, 1956, p. 55). According to Whorf then, language shapes thought in relation to certain categories, which, in turn, shape a particular worldview.

Earl Hunt and Franca Agnoli agree with this labelling function of language in 'The Whorfian Hypothesis: A Cognitive Psychology Perspective'. They state that '[language] provides the coding system for transmission of an idea from one person to another. The codes must refer to prototypes' (1991, p. 386). This notion of prototypes is of particular interest to feminist linguists. If prototypes represent one sex/gender rather than the other, many argue, they lead speakers to equate this *one* sex/gender with the prototype for humanity. In short, as categorisation is essential for human understanding and equally shapes this understanding in turn, the category 'man,' if used to refer to all human beings, skews interpretation. As Sally McConnell-Ginet argues in 'Prototypes, Pronouns and Persons,' '[l]ive human beings are generally perceived as women or as men, not as androgynes' (1979, p. 77). Consequently, '[d]efinite singular generics that represent some human prototype are only with difficulty interpreted as gender-indefinite' (1979, p. 65). As speakers are unable to imagine a neutral being, they imagine a particular human being, a prototype. And 'he' and 'man,' as early empirical studies show, are associated with 'male' first and foremost, leading speakers to imagine 'man' rather than 'woman'. Fatemeh Khosroshahi's 1989 study 'Penguins Don't Care, but Women Do: A Social Identity Analysis of a Whorfian Problem' provides further evidence. The author presented 55 introductory psychology students, 28

of them women, with paragraphs 'includ[ing] any one of the three forms of the possessive third person generic pronoun (i.e., *his*, *his or her*, and singular *their*)' (1989, pp. 510-1, emphasis in original). Subsequently, Khosroshahi asked respondents to draw the associated mental image and found that '[t]he number of male images was much higher than the number of female images' (1989, p. 513). And while '*[h]e or she* and *they* did not differ significantly in the number of female ... and generic images,' '*he* evoked the lowest number of female images' (1989, p. 515, emphasis in original). In fact, 'he' was not interpreted generically at all – only '19%' (1989, p. 516) of the images, according to Khosroshahi's study, were of women. In line with McConnell-Ginet, 'he' is linked to the prototype 'male'.

Furthermore, in relation to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, the language use of the four different groups of respondents is telling. As Khosroshahi reports, 'whereas reformed- and traditional-language men did not differ significantly in the number of female, male, and generic images that they generated ..., reformed women produced significantly more female figures ... than traditional women' (1989, p. 514). To paraphrase, women who are aware of the impact of male generic terms chose to counteract this bias, whereas men with equal awareness did not. Both female and male traditional language users, on the other hand, interpreted 'he' according to its dominant connotation. The author reflects, 'if we consider the *weak* form of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis ... we can restate our conclusion in this form: *all groups conformed to Whorf's thesis except the men who had reformed their language*' (1989, p. 520, emphasis in original). In short, all groups interpreted in correspondence with their understanding of categories and therefore their worldview, except for the male group with reformed linguistic practices. While Khosroshahi's conclusion may not be particularly forceful – '[c]hanging language does not necessarily produce alteration at the cognitive level, but it doesn't seem to hinder it either' (1989, pp. 522-3) – her study makes an important point nevertheless. In fact, it shows in line with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that language influences thought. Therefore linguistic change is paramount. Empirical research provides further evidence for the bias of male generic terms. In the following I present recent studies for the English and German language; their findings further highlight the importance of inclusive language.

Recent empirical studies

English

As Blaubergs shows in her overview, there are many counterarguments to the feminist linguistic position; however, counter-evidence is much more difficult to find. In fact, none of the empirical studies I located supported the popular position that language is 'just' language, i.e. has no impact on speakers' understanding. Male bias in language, empirical studies generally conclude, evokes male bias in thinking. There has been a wealth of research since the feminist critique of language first entered academic debates – for space reasons I focus on developments since 2010. First of all, however, I offer a brief summary of the findings of five key studies conducted during the 1980s and 1990s. These studies highlight that research into nouns and pronouns has been continuous; they also provide a useful framework to contextualise later findings. Janet Shibley Hyde's 1984 study 'Children's Understanding of Sexist Language' is a useful entry point. Hyde investigated how children perceive the generic use of the pronoun 'he'. To this end, 310 participants, ranging in age from primary school to university level, were asked to create a story with 'he,' 'they' or 'he or she' as pronouns. Hyde found that '[w]hen the pronoun was "he" or "his," overall 12% of the stories were about females; when it was "they" or "their," 18% were female, and when the pronoun was "his" or "her" ("he" or "she"), 42% of the stories were about females' (1984, p. 700). In short, 'he' was rarely understood inclusively. Mykol C. Hamilton's 1988 'Using Masculine Generics: Does Generic "He" Increase Male Bias in the User's Imagery?' supports Hyde's results. 120 college students, 60 of them women, were asked to complete sentences with either the 'traditional, formal; *he*' or 'unbiased' pronouns (1988, p. 788, emphasis in original). Subsequently they were prompted to reflect on who they imagined when using 'he,' 'he or she' or 'they,' with the following results: 'across subject sex and dependent measures, subjects in the unbiased condition displayed less male bias than did subjects in the masculine generic condition' (1988, p. 793). Further, 'male subjects display[ed] more male bias ... than female subjects' (1988, p. 793). Again, male generics seem to evoke male-as-norm, and especially for male participants.

Two studies conducted in the 1990s, John Gastil's 'Generic Pronouns and Sexist Language: The Oxymoronic Character of Masculine Generics' and Sik Hung Ng's 'Androcentric Coding of *Man* and *His* in Memory by Language Users,' provide further evidence. Gastil investigated the image coming to mind when reading the pronouns 'he,' 'he/she' or 'they' in a variety of general sentences. 48 female and 45 male university students took part in the study, the results of which highlight that '*he* is the least generic pronoun of the three considered' (1990, p. 638, emphasis in original). Ng evaluated the link between male generic terms and male bias by asking 408 pupils between the ages of 11 to 17 years to remember word pairs. Female and male terms were presented along 'man' and 'his,' and the results showed that '*[m]an* and *his* were found to be coded in memory primarily in the masculine linguistic category. Their membership in the feminine linguistic category was marginal' (1990, p. 462, emphasis in original). Allen R. McConnell and Russell H. Fazio's 1996 study 'Women as Men and People: Effects of Gender-Marked Language' focused again on the comprehension of 'man'. The authors asked 135 undergraduate students, 67 of them women, to record whether the use of 'a man-suffix, a no-suffix, or a person-suffix occupation title' (1996, p. 1005) evoked a certain type of person. Additionally, they investigated whether the presumed sex/gender of the referent matched certain characteristics. McConnell and Fazio summarise their findings as follows: 'it was shown that man-suffix titles result in assessments consistent with masculine stereotypes (and less consistent with feminine stereotypes) and person-suffix titles result in assessments consistent with feminine stereotypes' (1996, p. 1008). In effect, the use of male generic terms evokes a certain sex/gender alongside expected behaviours, which maintains male-as-norm on two levels: biologically and socially.

This double bias is explored about fifteen years later by Marise Ph. Born and Toon W. Taris in their 2010 study 'The Impact of the Wording of Employment Advertisements on Students' Inclination to Apply for a Job'. Their study investigated 'how the profile of the desired applicant presented in employment advertisements affects male and female students,' and what role 'the wording of this profile' (2010, p. 486) played in their decision. Four job titles, deemed 'gender-neutral, in that in reality men and women are about equally represented in the job' (2010, p. 489), were presented to 78 university students.

'*Public relations officer,*' '*Junior journalist,*' '*Management trainee*' and '*Policy analyst*' were matched with 'gender-specific' descriptions and participants asked to reflect on their level of interest (2010, p. 490, emphasis in original). The results showed that 'women were less inclined to apply if a masculine profile ... rather than a feminine profile was given' (2010, p. 495). However, '[f]or men, the inclination to apply did not depend on whether a masculine or a feminine profile was presented' (2010, p. 495). Furthermore, the authors found that '[w]omen were sensitive to the gender-typicality as well as the presentation form of these requirements, whereas men were indifferent' (2010, p. 497). Born and Taris summarise that '[w]omen are possibly substantially more aware of their own gender than men ... This phenomenon is generally recognizable in minority group members, who are more aware of their lower status than majority group members' (2010, p. 497). Jane G. Stout and Nilanjana Dasgupta's 2011 study 'When *He* Doesn't Mean *You*: Gender-Exclusive Language as Ostracism' built on these results by 'examin[ing] the theorized link between linguistic bias and group-based ostracism' (2011, p. 759). Their first experiment evaluated how participants perceived job descriptions formulated in 'masculine gender-exclusive terms,' i.e. '*he,*' 'gender-inclusive terms,' i.e. '*him or her,*' or 'gender-neutral terms,' i.e. '*one*' (2011, p. 759, emphasis in original). 92 women and 72 men were asked to report on '(a) the extent to which [they] perceived the job description as sexist, (b) their feelings of exclusion versus inclusion in that work environment, (c) motivation to pursue the job, and (d) identification with the job' (2011, p. 759). The results are telling: 'participants in the gender-exclusive condition perceived the description to be more sexist' and 'women expected to feel more ostracized in the work environment' (2011, p. 760). Additionally, 'women in the gender-exclusion condition reported significantly less motivation to pursue the job' and 'less identification with the job' (2011, p. 761). In short, the use of exclusive language, such as generic 'he,' indicates to potential female applicants that the job is not for them. On the other hand, 'men reported being more motivated after reading gender-exclusive language' (2011, p. 761), the authors report. This once more confirms that male generic terms work in favour of male interpretation, and do so for men, in particular.

Stout and Dasgupta's follow-up experiments in a mock interview setting supported their initial results. In conclusion, they state that '[a]lthough the

language objectively seems passive and unintentional, our work suggests that it is experienced by women as rejection. ... linguistic cues can subtly inform women that their group does not belong in the given situation' (2011, p. 766). For women to feel addressed, they need to be addressed explicitly, which reminds of Spender's argument for linguistic visibility. As human beings continue to be categorised on the basis of sex/gender, women and men need to be mentioned specifically. Men already are, as highlighted by the dominant interpretation of 'he' and 'man' as 'male'. Women, on the other hand, remain linguistically, and therefore also conceptually, invisible. Caleb Everett confirmed this further in his 2011 study 'Gender, Pronouns and Thought: The Ligature Between Epicene Pronouns and a More Neutral Gender Perception'. By comparing the impact of exclusive language, such as the generic use of 'he,' versus neutral language, such as the Karitiâna neutral pronoun, he located androcentric bias in male participants, in particular. 11 female and 14 male Karitiâna speakers and 42 English speakers, 27 of them women, 'were asked to provide a name for the [ambiguous] face performing the action [such as crying or sucking on a pacifier]' (2011, p. 142). The visual stimuli were designed to evoke neither sex/gender; however, as Everett reflects, 'for each language, male respondents tended to use fewer female names than female respondents' (2011, p. 146). This might be due to each sex/gender selecting names in correspondence with their group; however, 'Karitiâna speakers['] ... construal of the figures, at least as reflected in a naming task following a clause-length description, is markedly less androcentric than the construal evinced by English speakers' (2011, p. 147). The author concludes that 'it appears that English speakers may have a more androcentric construal of certain gender-neutral stimuli than speakers of languages with epicene pronouns' (2011, p. 149). In short, English speakers appear to be linguistically primed to presume male-as-norm, with male speakers particularly biased.

More recent studies support feminist linguistic arguments as well as the results of earlier empirical research. Manizeh Khan and Meredyth Daneman's 2011 'How Readers Spontaneously Interpret *Man*-Suffix Words: Evidence from Eye Movements,' for example, reminds of Bem and Bem's 1973 investigation into the understanding of 'man' by potential job applicants. Khan and Daneman 'monitored eye movements as participants read one of four "role name-verb-

reflexive pronoun" constructions ... embedded in gender-neutral prose contexts'
(2011, p. 354). 64 participants, half of them female, were asked to 'rate the
gender stereotypes of each role and occupation' (2011, p. 357). The authors
report that '[b]oth younger and older participants rated *man* role names (e.g.
foreman; *chairman*) as being more strongly associated with a male referent than
the explicitly gender-neutral alternatives (e.g. *foreperson*; *chairperson*)' (2011,
p. 357, emphasis in original). Furthermore, '[f]or the reader who saw *chairman-himself*, the look-back time on the role name, verb, and reflexive pronoun were
all 0. For the reader who saw *chairman-herself*, the look-back time on the role
name was 504 ms' (2011, p. 359, emphasis in original). Khan and Daneman's
study highlights that male generic terms create a mismatch for female referents.
However, replacing the man-suffix with 'person' is far from an ideal solution. As
Karla A. Lassonde and Edward J. O'Brien investigated in their 2013 study
'Occupational Stereotypes: Activation of Male Bias in a Gender-Neutral World,'
neutral terms do not necessarily remove bias. Lassonde and O'Brien assessed
the speed with which 40 undergraduate students, 26 of them female, read a job
title, such as 'firefighter' or 'fireman,' in relation to a sentence specifying the
referent's sex/gender. They describe their findings as follows: '[r]eading times
were slower on target sentences containing the pronoun referent "she" than for
target sentences containing the pronoun reference "he." This was true both for
sentences containing gender-neutral nouns or male-biased nouns' (2013, p.
391). In effect, the use of a neutral term, such as 'firefighter,' does not
automatically result in a more neutral interpretation. As it also 'activate[d]
information in general world knowledge suggesting that the gender of the
occupation was male' (2013, p. 391), stereotypes proved another key factor.

A second experiment provided further insight by specifying 'the gender of
the target occupation character' (2013, p. 392). 22 female and 18 male
undergraduate students were presented with one of the four conditions:
'fireman/man/he, fireman/woman/she, firefighter/man/he, firefighter/woman/she'
(2013, p. 392), and their reading speed recorded. 'Reading times were equally
fast for target sentences containing either the stereotypically consistent pronoun
"he" or the stereotypically inconsistent pronoun "she" for passages containing
gender-neutral nouns' (2013, p. 392), Lassonde and O'Brien state. This was not
the case for terms containing the man-suffix, which maintained the

interpretation 'male' across both conditions. However, 'including an explicit mention that the target occupation character was female, in combination with a gender-neutral noun, was sufficient to override any interference from activation of male-biased information' (2013, p. 392). So while replacing 'man' with 'person' might not be enough to create a conceptual match between a stereotypically male term and the category 'woman,' explicit reference helps to override stereotype. Again, Spender comes to mind: linguistic visibility rather than (pseudo)neutrality is the most suitable solution to render women visible.

Chiara Reali et al.'s 2015 study 'Role Descriptions Induce Gender Mismatch Effects in Eye Movements during Reading' provides a useful counterpoint. Employing eye-tracking methodology, the authors investigated 'the interaction between the gender typicality of the occupational role (*typicality*: male, female, or neutral) and the gender of the anaphoric reference (*pronoun*: masculine or feminine)' (2015, p. 3, emphasis in original). 31 participants, 17 of them women, were asked to read sentences containing a job description and a linked pronoun, such as 'K.L. installs power lines and cables, checks electricity voltage. In this field he/she has a lot of experience' (2015, p. 4). Interestingly, the results show that 'gender mismatch was reliable only for the female condition, which produced an impairment in the sentence processing when followed by a masculine pronoun' (2015, p. 8). It seems the increasing linguistic visibility of women – as in pairings of traditionally male occupations with the female pronoun – is having an impact on respondents. While groupings such as 'doctor, she' might be more familiar today, 'nurse, he,' on the other hand, continues to jar readers' processing abilities. This is confirmed by a follow-up questionnaire in which participants stated that '[they] found it particularly difficult to associate the representation of a male referent to a female occupation' (2015, p. 8). Linguistic visibility is therefore crucial for both sexes/genders; however, as the dominant premise continues to be male-as-norm, female visibility is particularly important. As Reali et al.'s study highlights, the inclusion of the female pronoun is beginning to bear fruit.

Forty years of research have shown that terms such as 'he' and 'man' evoke 'male' first and foremost. The results clearly highlight that linguistic change is crucial to evoke women as well as men. I evaluate German-language

studies next to assess whether they equally sustain feminist linguistic concerns. The focus is again on speakers' understanding of male generic terms.

German

Since Josef Klein's early investigations, researchers have turned the spotlight on sex/gender in the German language. Again, I am considering an extended timeframe to the English-language context as German studies have been less prolific, at least until the beginning of this century. I focus on empirical studies published since 2000, but begin by evaluating some key studies from the 1990s as they provide a good introduction to later results. Karin M. Frank-Cyrus and Margot Dietrich are two authors who bridge the gap between early research and an increasing interest in feminist linguistics. In their 1997 'Sprachliche Gleichbehandlung von Frauen und Männern in Gesetzestexten: Eine Meinungsumfrage der Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache,' Frank-Cyrus and Dietrich investigated the perception of the 'Pflegeversicherungsgesetz' when presented in different versions. The first version employed male generics, such as 'der Vertreter'; the second was 'durchgehend geschlechtsneutral gestaltet,' e.g. 'Personen zur Vertretung'; the third used double forms, as in 'Vertreter oder Vertreterinnen' (1997, p. 56). 734 participants, 63% of them women, were asked to assess which version adequately represented women and men. The authors found that '88 % der Antwortenden finden Frauen beim Gebrauch generischer Maskulina ungenügend berücksichtigt ... 60 % halten sie sogar für überhaupt nicht berücksichtigt' (1997, p. 62). Male generic terms are therefore problematic, to say the least. A comparison with the results for the other two versions is telling: '44 % der Antwortenden [haben] die Berücksichtigung von Frauen in der geschlechtsneutralen Fassung positiv bewertet' (1997, pp. 63-4), while double forms resulted in '96 % der Antwortenden [bewerteten] die Berücksichtigung von Frauen positiv' (1997, p. 64). Referring to women explicitly seems most successful at evoking them conceptually. Despite these findings, a popular argument against inclusive language use is that double forms render communication 'difficult' and 'longwinded'. However, as Frank-Cyrus and Dietrich show, when asked to identify their preferred version, participants' responses reveal that '[f]ür die überwiegend maskulin formulierte

Originalfassung entschieden sich nur 19 % der Testpersonen, die überwiegend paarförmig gestaltete Fassung wählten 37 %, für die geschlechtsneutrale Fassung stimmten 42 %' (1997, p. 58). Consequently, male generic terms are neither effective in representing both sexes/genders nor ranked highly stylistically.

Friederike Braun et al.'s 1998 study 'Können "Geophysiker" Frauen sein? Generische Personenbezeichnungen im Deutschen' supports Frank-Cyrus and Dietrich's findings. The authors assessed how male generic, neutral and double forms are perceived by readers, and in particular, how they are perceived in a stereotypical context. 462 participants, half of them women, were asked to estimate the percentage of women and men after reading a short abstract about a scientific conference. 'Ökotrophologie als typisch weibliche Fachrichtung oder Geophysik als typisch männliches Fach' (1998, p. 272) provided the specific context. Braun et al. found that 'in der Bedingung Beidnennung ... wurde ein signifikant höherer Frauenanteil geschätzt als in der Bedingung neutrale Sprachform' (1998, p. 273); in effect, double forms not only triggered a higher estimation of women in female-specific contexts, '[d]er Wert in der Beidnennung überstieg tendenziell auch den der maskulinen Sprachform' (1998, p. 273). Consequently, even in male-specific contexts, women can be evoked if mentioned explicitly. For the second experiment the authors created three versions of a short text about a sports club meeting. 'Gymnastik als typisch weibliche Sportart, Hockey als typisch männliche Sportart oder Badminton als neutrale Sportart' (1998, p. 276) provided the contexts and were illustrated through male generic, neutral or double forms. The authors report that '[i]n der Beidnennung ... wurde ein signifikant höherer Frauenanteil geschätzt als in der neutralen Sprachform ... und der maskulinen' (1998, p. 277). Evaluating both studies, the overall results show that 'das generische Maskulinum [evozierte] Schätzungen von 17 % bis 65 %. Die Neutralform erreichte als niedrigsten Wert 23 % und als höchsten 53 %. Bei Beidnennung lagen die Schätzungen zwischen 27 % und 74 %' (1998, p. 280). Braun et al.'s study therefore confirms Frank-Cyrus and Dietrich's findings: double forms, such as 'Sportlerin und Sportler' are most successful at evoking women in speakers' minds.

Since 2000, researchers have increasingly investigated the impact of male generic terms. Dagmar Stahlberg, Sabine Sczesny and Friederike Braun's 2001

'Name Your Favourite Musician: Effects of Masculine Generics and of their Alternatives in German' is a good starting point. As Frank-Cyrus and Dietrich's study, the authors set out to assess the perception of male generic, neutral and split/double forms. 50 female and 46 male participants were presented with a questionnaire on 'favorite heroes in novels, real life, and history and their favorite painters, musicians, and athletes' (2001, p. 466). The results show that 'masculine generics ... triggered fewer female responses than alternative formulations'; furthermore, 'female participants mention[ed] more women than male participants' (2001, p. 466). This reminds of empirical results for the English language context: group membership, as delineated by sex/gender, has additional consequences for the perception of women – with men more likely to imagine other men. In a follow-up experiment the authors introduced 'Binnen-I' forms, such as 'PolitikerInnen,' to evaluate whether they had any further impact on speakers' imagination. 90 participants, half of them women, were asked 'to name the three famous people in a given category who first entered their minds' (2001, p. 467). The results showed that '[m]asculine generics triggered the fewest female responses, whereas feminine-masculine word pairs and especially capital *I* forms made participants respond with more female names' (2001, p. 467, emphasis in original). In effect, the more explicitly women are referred to, the easier they can be accessed conceptually.

Ute Gabriel and Franziska Mellenberger repeated Stahlberg et al.'s study in 2004, with particular focus on the noticeable difference in response between women and men. In 'Exchanging the Generic Masculine for Gender-Balanced Forms – The Impact of Context Valence,' Gabriel and Mellenberger asked 156 participants, 75 of them female to complete a questionnaire adapted from Stahlberg et al.'s material. The authors found that 'female personalities were named more often by female participants ... than by male participants' (2004, p. 275). Additionally, the impact of the linguistic version, i.e. male generic, neutral or split/double, was significant as 'more female personalities were named if the gender-balanced form was used than if the masculine was used as a generic' (2004, p. 276). This was particularly the case for male participants 'who chose almost no female personalities when the masculine-generic was used' (2004, p. 276). Female respondents, on the other hand, similar to their English language counterparts, were more likely to name other women, especially if women were

mentioned explicitly. However, group membership is not only signalled by terms, but also communicated extralinguistically as highlighted by Lisa Irmen and Nadja Roßberg's 2004 study 'Gender Markedness of Language: The Impact of Grammatical and Nonlinguistic Information on the Mental Representation of Person Information'. Building on Braun et al.'s study, Irmen and Roßberg evaluated the influence of stereotypes by 'test[ing] the effect of masculine grammatical gender in interaction with stereotypical gender of person denotations' (2004, p. 276). The reading speed of 49 female and 46 male participants was assessed when encountering 'a masculine plural that was either stereotypically feminine (e.g., *Telefonisten*/telephonists ...), stereotypically masculine (e.g., *Förster*/foresters ...) or gender neutral (e.g. *Künstler*/artists ...)' (2004, p. 280, emphasis in original). The authors report that '[f]or the stereotypically masculine nouns, reading times for feminine, masculine, and neutral continuations differ significantly between tasks: neutral as well as masculine continuations speed up compared to feminine continuations' (2004, p. 283). It seems readers save cognitive time when perceiving a match between male grammatical gender and stereotype but lose time when these do not match. In short, the link between grammar, sex/gender and stereotype puts women at a conceptual disadvantage.

A follow-up experiment extended the above by using 'splitting forms that comprise the feminine and the masculine ... or gender-unmarked forms' (2004, p. 285) instead of male generic terms. The reading speed of 98 participants, 51 of them women, was assessed and the results showed that 'masculine continuations are read faster than feminine continuations ... compared to feminine and neutral continuations, reading times for masculine continuations speed up' (2004, p. 290). While the norm might still be male, '[r]esults for the splitting forms confirm the assumption that an unambiguous gender-balanced grammatical input should prepare the reader equally well for all gender-related and unrelated continuations irrespective of the thematic subject's stereotypical gender' (2004, p. 291). The use of double forms therefore enables a more equal interpretation. In summary, the authors state, '[t]he assumption that formal grammatical gender generally does not contribute biological gender information to mentally represented person information is not confirmed by the results' (2004, p. 296). Kalverkämper's claim that grammar and sex/gender are

unrelated is therefore once more refuted empirically. Alan Garnham et al.'s 2012 study provides further support. In 'Gender Representation in Different Languages and Grammatical Marking on Pronouns: When Beauticians, Musicians, and Mechanics Remain Men,' the authors investigated whether 'stereotypically female role names,' 'stereotypically male role names,' and 'neutral role names' (2012, p. 488) are considered inclusive if presented in the male plural form. 36 university students, 31 of them women, took part in the English-language study, and 36 women participated in German. But whereas 'in English, the mental representation of gender when reading role names is solely based on the stereotypicality of those role names' (2012, p. 493), the results for German show that 'the presence of a pronoun morphologically identical to the feminine singular ['sie'] seems to have facilitated positive answers to continuation sentences about women' (2012, p. 494). This reminds of Rothermund's study which revealed that plural 'sie' increases female interpretation. Garnham et al. conclude that 'combining grammatical cues that do not match ... seems to distract readers from forming a specifically male gender representation' (2012, p. 498). Again, grammatical gender is not understood neutrally; furthermore, it can be employed strategically to evoke women.

Dries Vervecken, Bettina Hannover and Ilka Wolter's 2013 'Changing (S)expectations: How Gender Fair Job Descriptions Impact Children's Perceptions and Interest Regarding Traditionally Male Occupations' is another key study investigating the impact of male generic terms and its alternatives. Reminiscent of Hyde's 1984 English-language study, the authors assessed the impact of linguistic practices on children's understanding. The first experiment presented 99 German pupils between the ages of 7 and 12 with job titles 'in pair form or in generic masculine form … [among them] three stereotypically male, two female, and two gender neutral occupations' (2013, p. 212); the children were then asked to provide a name for each, imagining they were to cast a character for a film. As Vervecken et al. report, '[i]n the pair form condition, children – regardless of their sex ... assigned more female first names to movie characters acting in stereotypically male domains than in the generic masculine form condition' (2013, p. 212). Furthermore, '[g]irls generally assigned more female names than did boys' (2013, p. 212), again highlighting the impact of

group membership. In the follow-up experiment the authors extended the focus to asking '*Who can succeed in this occupation?*' (2013, p. 213, emphasis in original). 171 participants, between six and thirteen years old, responded as follows: '[w]hen stereotypically male occupations had been presented in pair forms, children of both genders perceived women's and men's success in a more balanced way than if occupational titles had been presented in generic masculine forms' (2013, p. 213). Children comprehend group division according to sex/gender from a very young age; a positive rating of women's success is therefore far from insignificant. This premise was further investigated in a third study asking 225 German children between six and thirteen years of age to rate '*How much would you like to be...?*' (2013, p. 214, emphasis in original). Vervecken et al. found that 'girls indicated more interest in male occupations presented in pair forms rather than generic masculine forms ..., boys' interest remained unaffected by the linguistic form' (2013, p. 215). These results reveal that girls benefit from inclusive language use, and furthermore, that it does not impair boys in their imagination. This seems a key argument for the implementation of inclusive language.

While empirical studies seem to have decreased in the English-language context in recent years, German-language researchers multiplied their efforts to evaluate the impact of male generic terms. Since 2014, in particular, several key studies have been published, such as Yulia Esaulova, Chiara Reali and Lisa von Stockhausen's 2014 study 'Influences of Grammatical and Stereotypical Gender during Reading: Eye Movements in Pronominal and Noun Phrase Anaphor Resolution'. Esaulova et al. asked 40 students, half of them female, to read sentences containing '[r]ole nouns … either in masculine or feminine form … [whose] stereotypical and grammatical gender could be congruent or incongruent' (2014, p. 784). The linked pronoun matched one or both of the cues for either sex/gender. Using eye-tracking methodology, the authors found that 'both masculine and feminine pronouns were fixated shorter after a grammatically congruent than a grammatically incongruent antecedent' (2014, p. 787). Furthermore, '[f]or both stereotypically male and stereotypically female role nouns, fixation times were shorter when grammatical gender was congruent with stereotypicality' (2014, p. 791). In effect, grammatical gender as well as stereotype proved significant for participants' understanding. A follow-up

experiment, during which Esaulova et al. asked 24 students, among them 15 women, to read the same sentences as above but with the pronoun replaced by '*dieser Mann*' or '*diese Frau*' (2014, p. 792, emphasis in original), provided further insight. The results showed that '[p]articipants regressed more frequently to the anaphor when it was incongruent with the stereotyped role noun' (2014, p. 798). According to the authors, this 'suggests that expectations of feminine and masculine grammatical gender after stereotypically female and male antecedents, respectively, were violated' (2014, p. 798). Respondents consequently rely on stereotype as much as on grammatical gender to identify a referent's sex/gender. If these are perceived to be incongruent, processing seems impaired.

However, the link between grammar, stereotype and sex/gender is not fixed and can be disrupted through inclusive language, as Dries Vervecken and Bettina Hannover showed in their 2015 study 'Yes I Can! Effects of Gender Fair Job Descriptions on Children's Perceptions of Job Status, Job Difficulty, and Vocational Self-Efficacy'. The authors 'explored the influence of pair form versus generic masculine job descriptions on children's perceptions' (2015, p. 80). In one experiment, 77 primary school pupils, of them 37 girls, between 7 and 12 years of age were presented with 'eight stereotypically male and five stereotypically female occupational titles' (2015, p. 83). Subsequently, the children were asked how difficult they considered the job to be and whether they could imagine passing the required qualification test, with the following results: '[w]hen male occupations were presented in pair forms, children – regardless of their gender … – perceived them as less difficult than when the jobs had been presented in masculine as generic' (2015, p. 85). Additionally, 'children – regardless of their gender … – felt more confident that they could pass a qualification test required to do this job' (2015, p. 85). In effect, the authors conclude, the use of inclusive language 'significantly attenuated girls' and boys' perceptions of difficulty to do and to learn a traditionally male occupation' (2015, p. 86). Supporting Vervecken et al.'s 2013 study, this provides further evidence for the positive impact of pair forms.

Lisa Kristina Horvath and Sabine Sczesny's 2015 study 'Reducing Women's Lack of Fit with Leadership Positions? Effect of the Wording of Job Advertisements' backs these results with focus on candidate evaluations. The

authors asked 319 business and economics students, 199 of them women, to assess a fictional applicant's aptitude for a low and high status position, based on 'linguistic versions of advertisements for a leadership position – masculine forms, word pairs, and masculine forms with (m/f)' (2015, p. 4). The results showed that '[f]emale applicants were perceived as significantly less suitable for the high-status position than male applicants when the masculine form was used …; this difference was marginal for the masculine form with (m/f)' (2015, p. 7). On the other hand, '[i]n the word pair condition, female and male applicants were rated as similarly suitable' (2015, p. 7). Consequently, not only self-efficacy is at stake but hiring decisions are equally informed by whether or not occupations are phrased in inclusive language. Horvath and Sczesny conclude, 'women's perceived fit with top management apparently increased when the position was advertised with a word pair in a gender-balanced or symmetrical way, compared with the masculine form (whether combined with (m/f) or not)' (2015, p. 8). The study therefore again confirms what Pusch already contended in 1980: '[f]ür das Deutsche gilt ... die Strategie: Beide Geschlechter benennen – nicht nur das männliche,' that is, female linguistic visibility is paramount for the conception of women.

Forty years of empirical research has once more illustrated a clear link between language and imagination. As male generic terms were proven to rarely evoke 'female,' linguistic visibility is crucial to allow speakers to perceive women as well as men. However, what impact are these findings having on current debates and usage? Are neutral or inclusive terms today replacing the linguistic male-as-norm? In the following, I evaluate contemporary perspectives from the English- and German-language context in order to investigate to what extent the linguistic representation of women and men has changed. This makes the case for a new approach to progress debates on sex/gender and language.

Current debates and usage

First of all, to locate current debates in the media on the issue of sex/gender and language, I conducted a *Google News* search on the British and German platforms of the search engine. I entered the keyword string '"gender-neutral"

OR "gender-inclusive" OR "gender-fair" AND "language"' into *news.google.co.uk,* and "'geschlechtergerecht" OR "genderfair" OR "gendergerecht" OR "gendersensib*" OR "geschlechtsneutral" AND "Sprache"' into *news.google.de.* I set the date range from 1ˢᵗ January 2013 until the day of my search, 12ᵗʰ January 2016, and evaluated the first five pages of results. A first noticeable difference is the cultural context of the returned features. While the English-language search predominantly listed news articles from the U.S. context, German-language articles were a mix of German, Austrian and Swiss news. This skewing of English results, in particular, is likely due to *Google*'s algorithm which ranks items according to their popularity. As the United States has a significantly larger population than any other English-speaking nation, U.S. news are read the most and therefore ranked the highest. However, the subsequent bias toward the U.S. context is not necessarily an issue. In fact, as concerns around sex/gender and language originated in the U.S., contemporary news features help to indicate how the debates have developed over the past forty years. One useful example is the debate on a neutral language bill considered by Washington state legislators. It was frequently reported on in 2013 and provides a key insight into current debates and usage.

 Fox News, for example, relays the proposals as follows in 'Washington state considers final gender-neutral language bill'. First of all, the opening line describes the project as 'the onerous task of changing the language used in the state's copious laws, including thousands of words and phrases' (2013, n. pag.). Furthermore, the unnamed author points out that many of the laws had been 'written more than a century ago when the idea of women working on police forces or on fishing boats wasn't a consideration' (2013, n. pag.). In doing so, she or he frames the reader's understanding: the changes are presented as 'onerous' affecting 'thousands of words and phrases,' which implies considerable time and effort. Secondly, this task is portrayed as unnecessary as it concerns laws for which 'women … [weren't] a consideration'. In effect, the author seems to say, a revision distorts history. However, counter-perspectives are provided; councilmember Sally Clark, for example, is quoted to state that 'language matters. It's how we signal a level of respect for each other' (2013, n. pag.). Additionally, sociolinguist and associate professor Crispin Thurlow, another supporter of the changes, is quoted affirming that '[c]hanging words can

change what we think about the world around us' (2013, n. pag.). Furthermore, the article points out that '[a]bout half of all U.S. states have moved toward such gender-neutral language at varying levels' (2013, n. pag.), indicating that other state legislators agree with Clark and Thurlow's position. And while the author quotes Republican state representative Shelly Short as saying 'I don't see the need to do gender neutrality' (2013, n. pag.), supporting the article's original frame, the piece ends with a quote by senator Jeannie Kohl-Welles. '[O]verall, it has important significance,' she states, 'I believe … that the culture has changed' (2013, n. pag.). The article therefore allows adequate space for both positions; and while it might initially seem biased against the revisions, in terms of direct quotes, at least, it provides the most opportunity to proponents to make their case.

This balanced style of reporting is particularly noteworthy as the article was published by what is generally considered a conservative-leaning news provider. It seems to indicate that considerable progress has been made in the U.S. context in relation to the issue of sex/gender and language. While it might traditionally have been reported on only in more progressive outlets, today it seems even those traditionally opposed to linguistic change provide a platform for a fair hearing. One article is of course not proof by any means; however, a comparison with the reporting of the legislation by a conservative-leaning UK news source, the *Daily Mail*, is useful to situate this development. The titles already provide a clear indication of divergence: the *Fox News* article's title is relatively neutral in contrast to the *Daily Mail*'s 'Farewell to freshman – Washington State to remove 40,000 pieces of legislation of "gender biased language"… but manhole survives'. One is relatively neutral, 'state considers gender-neutral bill,' while the other is sensationalist, 'farewell to freshman … state to remove'. Furthermore, the *Daily Mail* employs quotation marks for 'gender biased language,' whereas *Fox News* does not, indicating that the UK outlet considers the premise of neutral language questionable to begin with. Additionally, the *Daily Mail*'s reference to 'manhole' implies that linguistic change is essenatially ludicrous – a potential adaptation of 'manhole' to 'personhole' has been frequently employed as a ruse to ridicule feminist criticisms and crops up time and again to belittle any call for change.

The reporting style of the UK article underscores this position. In the opening paragraphs, the author, James Nye, describes the revisions as '[t]he politically correct crusade … [s]ignalling an end to hundreds of years of accepted language' (2013, n. pag.). Additionally, 'the move will now see the state's copious laws, including thousands of words and phrases re-written at tax-payers' expense' (2013, n. pag.). While this mirrors the frame provided by the *Fox News* piece, the use of 'politically correct crusade,' 'hundreds of years of accepted language' and 'at tax-payers' expense' indicate more fervent opposition. 'Crusade' evokes a violent struggle. Furthermore, this crusade is aimed at 'hundreds of years of accepted language' and thereby, the author seems to say, attacks the very foundations of English-speaking civilisation. To add insult to injury, this attack takes place 'at taxpayers' expense,' feeding into the wider discourse that inclusive language is not only unnecessary but wasteful. This frame is supplemented by highlighting that 'the laws will change many words in use that date back to when women did not even work on police forces or the idea of a lady on a fishing boat was unheard of' (2013, n. pag.). Like *Fox News*, Nye points out that linguistic change is essentially unnecessary. However, unlike *Fox News*, Nye employs 'lady' to ridicule the project. By contrasting 'lady' and 'fishing boat,' the author evokes a certain type of femininity directly at odds with the implied masculinity of the work. Moreover, by quoting code reviser Kyle Thiessen who states that words 'have been tediously scrubbed of gender bias' (2013, n. pag.), Nye cements the scale and futility of the task. 'Tedious' activities rarely evoke a worthwhile undertaking.

At this point, counter-perspectives have less impact than in the *Fox News* piece. Nye also quotes Thurlow and Kohl-Welles; however, readers are arguably less likely to give them consideration. And while the article ends on a quote by *National Women's Law Center* senior adviser Liz Watson, it retains the original antagonistic frame. Nevertheless, the *Daily Mail* allows the proponents' viewpoint to be heard. The reporting style might be decidedly more biased than that of a comparable U.S. news outlet, but at least pro-change positions are mentioned. This stands in stark contrast to debates in the German context, in particular. While my *Google News* search revealed that 'geschlechtergerechte' and 'geschlechtsneutrale Sprache' have been frequently reported on since 2013, the tone of conservative-leaning sources is not only oppositional but one-

dimensional in the main. Discussions around proposed changes to educational settings help to illustrate the lack of balance in reporting. For example, the title of a 2014 *FOCUS Online* article, 'Gender-Wahnsinn an Berliner Uni – Sprach-Experten lachen über "Mitarbeita" und "Doktoxs", clearly signals opposition. Moreover, it does so much more strongly than the *Daily Mail* piece; 'Gender-Wahnsinn' and 'Sprach-Experten lachen' communicate ridicule from the outset in contrast to the UK heading. In particular, the reference to 'Wahnsinn' and 'Sprach-Experten' conveys that proposals of inclusive language use are not only questionable, as the *Daily Mail*'s use of quotation marks indicates, but scientifically untenable if not outright folly.

The author elaborates this position in the following summary: 'die Vorschläge der Arbeitsgruppe für "Feministisch Sprachhandeln" der Berliner Humboldt-Universität sorgen für Empörung und Häme. Experten bleiben gelassen: Die deutsche Sprache wird auch diese Attacke politischer Korrektheit überstehen' (2014, n. pag.). The 'Arbeitsgruppe' is here presented in contrast to general language-users and experts; its proposals provoke 'Empörung und Häme' in the former and are met with 'Gelassenheit' by the latter. And while their responses might differ, both speakers and experts are portrayed as united in their opposition to the 'Gender-Wahnsinn'. The use of 'Attacke politischer Korrektheit' reminds of the *Daily Mail* article; the *FOCUS Online* piece equally depicts the proposals as a form of crusade. However, in contrast to the UK source, the German feature indicates confidence that the status quo will prevail: '[d]ie deutsche Sprache wird auch diese Attacke ... überstehen'. The author bases this judgment on the position of 'Sprach-Experten' who allegedly consider the proposals too laughable to be a serious threat.

However, the quotations provided do not match the title's assertions. In fact, instead of ridiculing the proposals, Ludwig Eichinger, director of the *Institut für Deutsche Sprache*, for example, 'begrüßt …, dass die durch den Feminismus angestoßene Diskussion über den Gebrauch von Sprache sensibler gemacht habe für mögliche Diskriminierungen' (2014, n. pag.). Furthermore, as Eichinger illustrates with the example 'man denke nur daran, wie oft sich Frauen heute noch als "Fräulein" ansprechen lassen müssten' (2014, n. pag.), linguistic change does indeed take place – even if this change might have originally been considered ludicrous. Consequently, the expert

seems to be supporting, rather than opposing, the revisions. The antagonistic frame therefore appears informed by editorial choices rather than expert opinion. Matthias Heine writes on the same subject in *Die Welt*, but at least spells out that his position is subjective rather than common sense. As he states in 2014 article 'Professx statt Professor? So irre ist das nicht!': '[i]ch halte Gender Studies für einen großen pseudowissenschaftlichen Humbug. Die Existenz von nach BAT-Tarifen bezahlten Professorinnen in jenem Voodoo-Fach ist ein unschlagbares Argument für Kürzungen' (2014, n. pag.). The use of 'ich' is significant; it confirms that any views provided are his own. Nevertheless, the use of 'pseudowissenschaftlich' and 'Voodoo-Fach' feeds into the wider argument that the issue of sex/gender and language is, as Kalverkämper argued some forty years earlier, 'unscientific'. Furthermore, the specification of 'Professorinnen' discredits female researchers, in particular. So while Heine might state his own viewpoint only, he contributes to negative discourse. In fact, as I show with the following examples, discrediting the feminist critique of language as 'pseudowissenschaftlich' remains decidedly popular.

For example, Jan Fleischhauer, in his 2013 piece for *Spiegel Online* 'S.P.O.N. – Der Schwarze Kanal: Dummdeutsch im Straßenverkehr,' refers to 'Generationen von Sprachwissenschaftlern [welche] … darauf hingewiesen [haben], dass Genus und Sexus in der deutschen Sprache nicht ein und dasselbe sind' (2013, n. pag.). To support his argument that inclusive language is unnecessary, Fleischhauer evokes history, 'Generationen,' and, in particular, the history of linguistic science, 'Generationen von Sprachwissenschaftlern'. Furthermore, this 'Sprachwissenschaft' is portrayed in opposition to the proposals which are framed as 'Dummdeutsch'. In short, like Kalverkämper, the author implies that the feminist critique of language is essentially unscientific. Ludwig Briehl takes this position one step further. As is visible already in the title of his 2015 *FOCUS Online* article, '"Saalmikrofoninnen und –mikrofone" Gendergerechtes Schreiben – weil ungebildete Ideologen sich beleidigt fühlen!,' Briehl discredits proponents of inclusive language as both 'ungebildet' and 'Ideologen'. He elaborates:

Gendergerechtes Schreiben, definiert von Unfähigen, von vorgeblichen Experten, die sich erdreisten, die wahre Bedeutung von Sprache ignorierend bestimmte Formative als diskriminierend zu diskreditieren, soll

mit aller Macht und gegen jede wissenschaftliche Erkenntnis zum Dogma erhoben werden. (2015, n. pag.)

First of all, Briehl reproduces Fleischhauer's argument that inclusive revisions contradict linguistic insight. '[G]egen jede wissenschaftliche Erkenntnis' here corresponds with Fleischhauer's reference to 'Generationen von Sprachwissenschaftlern,' and the use of 'Unfähigen' and 'vorgeblichen Experten' with 'Dummdeutsch'. But Briehl adds another layer to support his viewpoint: by appealing to 'die wahre Bedeutung von Sprache' which is altered 'mit aller Macht' and these alterations 'zum Dogma erhoben,' the author, akin to the *Daily Mail*, evokes the notion of an ideological crusade. However, at stake are not only 'hundreds of years of accepted language,' as proposed in the UK news feature, but the 'true' meaning of language. And this true meaning eludes proponents because they are, according to Briehl, 'Pseudowissenschaftler' and the subject of their enquiry 'gendergeleitete Pseudowissenschaft' and 'Gender-Pseudowissenschaft' (2015, n. pag.).

Other popular counterarguments include that linguistic changes negatively impact communication, that they are ridiculous and essentially ineffective – all of which remind of Blaubergs' 1980 collation. Fleischhauer employs all three, in addition to his appeal to science. He states that '[a]m Ende steht die Unlesbarkeit und damit die Lächerlichkeit des Unterfangens' (2013, n. pag.), combining the first two positions. His final summary, '[m]öglicherweise hat ja der Feminismus doch wichtigere Projekte als die Sprachumerziehung. Wer die reale Ordnung verändert, muss sich irgendwann über die symbolische keine Sorgen mehr machen' (2013, n. pag.) refers to the third. Inclusive language, according to the author, is not only 'Dummdeutsch' but 'unleserlich,' 'lächerlich' and, as implied by his reference to 'wichtigere Projekte,' insignificant in comparison to other issues. This combination of arguments is also favoured by other authors, with Ingrid Thurner a key example. First of all, the author points to the negative impact on form and function in her 2013 *Die Welt* article, 'Der Gender-Krampf verhunzt die deutsche Sprache'. As the title indicates, Thurner believes that linguistic change essentially ruins the German language. As she elaborates, inclusive language is 'ein Holzhammer [der] die Sprachmelodie zertrümmert' (2013, n. pag.), with the opposition of 'Holzhammer' and 'Sprachmelodie' here poignant. Just as a piece of art cannot be fixed with a

mallet, the author seems to imply, linguistic change destroys language. In addition to the destructive impact of any revision, Thurner highlights that 'drei Jahrzehnte sprachlicher Gleichbehandlung haben unschöne Texte, aber keine gesellschaftliche Gleichstellung gebracht' (2013, n. pag.). Counterargument one and three are effectively combined to make the author's case.

Werner Doralt takes these two positions one step further still. In his 2015 *Die Presse* piece 'Verpflichtendes Gendern verfassungswidrig?,' the author responds as follows to the proposed use of inclusive language at Austrian universities. Firstly, he argues that '[w]eder das Binnen-I noch zerhackte oder aufgeblähte Sätze entsprechen dem herrschenden Niveau der deutschen Sprache' (2015, n. pag.). By contrasting the violent impact of inclusive language, 'zerhackte oder aufgeblähte Sätze,' with the accepted norm, 'dem herrschenden Niveau,' Doralt forcefully points out the aesthetic implications of linguistic change. In fact, this evocation of violence is of particular importance to his argument. As the author continues, inclusive language is 'Vergewaltigung der Sprache' (2015, n. pag.) to his mind[2]. Furthermore, Doralt appeals to the ineffectiveness of this attack, as '[n]icht Sätze wie "Mein/Meine Vater/Mutter ist Arzt/Ärztin" werden die überholten Rollenbilder gendergerecht aufbrechen, sondern nur die Inhalte wie "Meine Mutter ist Ärztin, mein Vater ist Krankenpfleger"' (2015, n. pag.). Not linguistic revision affects societal change; this key counterargument goes, but vice versa. Again, position one and three are employed to highlight the detrimental consequences of inclusive language.

The presented arguments might remind of the reporting style of the *Daily Mail* piece; however, a key difference emerges in terms of proponents' quotations. For example, while Fleischhauer mentions the 'stellvertretende grüne Ratsfraktionsvorsitzende Ingrid Wagemann' as an advocate for inclusive language, he does not quote her point of view at any length. Instead, the author selects certain proposed changes and frames them as follows: '[w]eil "Fußgänger" männlich ist und "Zone" militaristisch, wünscht sich … Wagemann, dass dieses Wort aus dem Sprachgebrauch gestrichen wird' (2013, n. pag.). The use of 'wünschen' and 'streichen' evoke a caricature of a person who is prone to both unreasonable desires and ruthless cuts. Additionally,

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[2] Senta Trömel-Plötz's 1984 *Gewalt durch Sprache: Die Vergewaltigung von Frauen in Gesprächen* provides a useful point of comparison. In fact, Trömel-Plötz considers the linguistic status quo an act of violence against women.

Fleischhauer states, 'Frau Wagemann möchte, dass fortan nur noch von "Flaniermeile" die Rede ist – das sei atmosphärisch besser geeignet, wie sie "Bild" anvertraute' (2013, n. pag.). Quoting 'Flaniermeile' in conjunction with 'atmosphärisch besser geeignet' indicates that, to the author, Wagemann's suggestions are questionable. This is further underscored by the use of 'anvertrauen,' evoking female confidences of little significance. Thurner equally refrains from quoting the counter-perspective adequately; in fact, she does not provide any direct viewpoints at all. The author summarises the proponent position instead as 'eine feministische Linguistik, die beteuerte, dass Machtstrukturen in der Sprache festgeschrieben werden, und eine feministische Sprachkritik, die dagegen zu Felde zog' (2013, n. pag.). This description frames the readers' understanding: while 'beteuern' connotes dramatic declarations, 'zu Felde ziehen' evokes battle and war. Again, the notion of an ideological crusade is a key tool to discredit feminist linguistics.

Doralt also fails to provide space for other perspectives. He partially quotes the Bildungsministerium; however, the statements lack context to clarify what was actually said. Furthermore, the author refers to an imagined proponent of feminist linguistics rather than quoting directly: 'wenn z. B. eine Professorin in ihren eigenen Publikationen von "Notar/e/innen" und "Rechtsanwält/e/innen" schreibt und damit dokumentiert, dass Aktionismus ihr wichtiger ist, als verständlich zu schreiben' (2015, n. pag.). The use of 'z.B.' highlights that this is pure speculation, which, moreover, presumes a link between sex/gender, 'Professorin,' and ideology, 'Aktionismus'. Again, this leads the reader to draw conclusions without evidence. As Fleischhauer, Thurner and Doralt are published in official outlets, *Spiegel Online*, *Die Welt* and *Die Presse* respectively, this lack of counter-perspectives is puzzling. However, it is also indicative of the derisory nature of contemporary German debates. One prominent example of the polarisation of opinions is the use of female generic terms in the Universität Leipzig's statues. In the following I evaluate the exchange between Hans-Martin Gauger and Luise F. Pusch, in particular, to assess the rhetorical tactics employed by each position. This provides a deeper insight into the contemporary context of German-language proposals as well as a useful point of comparison with English-language debates.

Hans-Martin Gauger and Luise F. Pusch

In June 2013 the Universität Leipzig decided 'in ihrer Grundordnung nur noch die weibliche Anrede für Studenten und Dozenten [zu] verwenden' (2013, n. pag.), as Marc Felix Serrao reports in his *Süddeutsche Zeitung* article 'Sprachreform an der Uni Leipzig – "Wir waren nüchtern"'. As the title indicates, this declaration received considerable interest in the German-language context and, in particular, changes were perceived negatively. The quote 'wir waren nüchtern' clearly implies that the university's decision-making process must have lacked rationality and rigour. In an interview with Serrao, Beate Schücking, the university's rector, is asked to elaborate on the logic behind the revisions. She states:

> Die Schrägstrichvariante – Professor/Professorin – fanden alle schrecklich. Dann die klassische Variante: Man nimmt die männliche Form und schreibt am Anfang eine kleine Fußnote, dass die Frauen sich bitte mitgemeint fühlen sollen. An dem Punkt haben mehrere Teilnehmer darauf hingewiesen, dass wir in vielen Statusgruppen, etwa bei den Studierenden, mehr Frauen haben. Deshalb wäre die klassische Variante ungerecht und die weibliche Form besser. Da haben sogar Mathematikprofessoren in der Runde gesagt: stimmt, geht beides. Ja, und dann hat sich die Mehrheit für die weibliche Version ausgesprochen. (2013, n. pag.)

First of all, Schücking employs the aesthetics argument to explain the decision against split forms, 'die Schrägstrichvariante … fanden alle schrecklich'. However, this introduction does not serve to justify the use of male generics; as Schücking adds, the decision-makers considered this option equally lacking. '[M]ehrere Teilnehmer [haben] darauf hingewiesen,' she states, 'dass wir in vielen Statusgruppen, etwa bei den Studierenden, mehr Frauen haben. Deshalb wäre die klassische Variante ungerecht'. The next logical step, Schücking explains, was to employ female generic terms endorsed by the majority of participants. However, Serrao seems dissatisfied with the explanation and probes for further details, '[w]ie viele Mitglieder hat das Gremium? ... Davon Männer?' (2013, n. pag.) to which Schücking responds, 'etwa 80' and '[d]ie Mehrheit' (2013, n. pag.). Presumably, the proportion of male decision-makers, in particular, is considered important as they might potentially hold more

oppositional views. But as the outcome highlights, male participants equally supported the use of female generic terms. In fact, as Schücking elaborates unprompted, 'sogar Mathematikprofessoren [haben sich] für die weibliche Version ausgesprochen'. Consequently, not only male decision-makers endorsed the changes, but also experts trained in logical evaluation.

Nevertheless, the university's decision provoked heated responses by both general language-users and linguists. 'Lächerlich,' 'peinlich,' 'Wahnsinn,' 'Irrsinn' (2013, n. pag.) are some of the most frequent comments quoted by Serrao and Schücking. Many German speakers expressed their opposition via online comments and forums, while adverse linguists wrote features for the national press. Hans-Martin Gauger's 2013 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* article 'Wir fahren jetzt vierzehn Nächte in den Sprachurlaub'[3] is a key example ridiculing the changes. The title already frames the proposal; employing the argument that certain terms are able to represent others, such as 'Tage' being inclusive of 'Nächte' and male generics of women respectively. According to the author, it is the lack of linguistic expertise of the university's decision-makers which resulted in the use of female generics: '[i]nteressant wäre es aber schon zu wissen, ob bei jener Sitzung auch ein Sprachwissenschaftler, weiblich oder männlich, zugegen war' (2014, n. pag.). The male 'Mehrheit' supported by 'Mathematikprofessoren' seems insufficient evidence to Gauger's mind for an informed assessment. More interesting still, however, is Gauger's specification of 'Sprachwissenschaftler' as 'weiblich oder männlich'. If the male generic term indeed functioned like 'Tage,' as the title implies, then any reference should surely be unnecessary.

Despite this confusion, Gauger frames the debate on inclusive language as follows:

> Von der Sache her gibt es, was jene Entscheidung angeht, eigentlich nur vier Möglichkeiten: man kann entweder die männliche Form generisch oder neutral gebrauchen, so wie es unsere Sprache und sehr viele andere Sprachen vorschreiben, oder man kann umgekehrt – und also *gegen* die Sprache – die weibliche Form generisch neutral verwenden oder man greift drittens auf die schwerfällige, weil monoton verlängernde

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[3] In the following I evaluate an extended version provided in the 'Forum Sprachkritik' published 2014 by the *Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung*. The original newspaper article is not publicly available.

Schrägstrichlösung *Professoren/Professorinnen* (oder *Professorinnen/Professoren*) zurück oder schließlich auf das merkwürdige, mit dem sogenannten Knacklaut beginnende und groß geschriebene Binnen-I, also *Professor-Innen* (man kann dieses 'I' also schon auch hörbar machen). Diese letztere Lösung ist eine für jeden Sprachempfindlichen unschöne Lösung (also keine)… (2014, n. pag., emphasis in original)

The author employs two distinct arguments to support his opposition. Firstly, like most of the journalists quoted above, he discredits split forms and 'Binnen-I' on aesthetic grounds; the former being, to his mind, 'monoton verlängernd' and the latter 'merkwürdig' and 'unschön'. Secondly, Gauger appeals to linguistic standards. He explains that male generic terms are employed 'wie es unsere Sprache und sehr viele andere Sprachen vorschreiben,' while female generics are '*gegen* die Sprache'. In short, they deviate from the agreed male-as-norm. Gauger, like Kalverkämper, evokes science to support his argument: '[r]ein sprachwissenschaftlich ist die Sache eigentlich einfach. Unsere deutsche Sprache hat sich, wie sehr viele andere Sprachen, für die *männliche* Form entschieden, wenn es um das Generische geht' (2014, n. pag., emphasis in original). Interestingly, his reference to 'sprachwissenschaftlich' seems a rhetorical tool rather than involving a particular methodology. Gauger states, rather than shows, that language has 'decided' to use male terms generically. To underscore the scientific validity of this argument, he employs linguistic terminology, '[m]an redet da sprachwissenschaftlich auch, je nach Schule, von einer "inklusiven Opposition"' and '[g]enau gegen dieses sprachliche Verfahren, das fest zur Grammatik auch *unserer* Sprache gehört (das Kapitel heißt traditionell "Femininmotion") verstößt die Leipziger Entscheidung' (2014, n. pag., emphasis in original). Without providing any concrete evidence, linguistics as a science, according to the author, fundamentally opposes revision.

Akin to the news features analysed above, Gauger combines standard counterarguments to further make his case. Beside his appeals to science and the aesthetics of the linguistic status quo, Gauger also proposes that any changes are essentially ineffective. He considers them '[s]prachlich folgenlos sowieso, folgenlos aber auch in der Wirklichkeit *außerhalb* der Sprache. Es wird wegen dieser Entscheidung sicher nicht mehr Professorinnen in Leipzig oder anderswo geben' (2014, n. pag., emphasis in original). Linguistic alteration is

without impact, Gauger replicates the popular argument, as language does not affect reality. Nevertheless, the author acknowledges that language certainly mirrors reality, 'dass die neutralisierte Form auch die *männliche* ist – eine Bevorzugung des Männlichen ganz ohne Zweifel' (2014, n. pag., emphasis in original). He explains that '[u]nsere Welt ist nun einmal von sehr weither durch die männliche Sicht geprägt – und dies muss sich doch in unseren Sprachen, die auch von sehr weit her sind, spiegeln' (2014, n. pag.). Gauger therefore admits that the use of male generic terms is not a neutral linguistic 'decision'. However, while language might reflect reality, i.e. male-as-norm, this linguistic domination is, to the author's mind, of no consequence:

> [D]ie Sprechenden wissen, intuitiv zumindest (und dieses Wissen ist entscheidend), dass ihre Sprache die Wirklichkeit nicht einfach abbildet wie ein Spiegel, sie unterscheiden zwischen Sprache und Wirklichkeit, genauer: sie unterscheiden zwischen der Wirklichkeit ihrer Sprache und derjenigen, auf die ihre Sprache *zielt*. Die feministische Sprachkritik überschätzt gewaltig die bewusstseinsbildende Macht einer Sprache. Man muss die Wirklichkeit außerhalb der Sprache verändern. Leicht erreichbare und möglichst kostenlose Kitas sind für die Gleichstellung ungleich wichtiger und auch bewusstseinsbildender als der zudem utopische Versuch, sprachwidrige Regelungen durchzusetzen. (2014, n. pag., emphasis in original)

According to Gauger, speakers rely on intuition to differentiate between language and reality, or more specifically, between the 'Wirklichkeit ihrer Sprache und derjenigen, auf die ihre Sprache *zielt'*. 'Sprache' then, indicated by the possessive pronoun as the speakers' property, represents reality two-fold: one remains contained 'in-language' while the other refers to extralinguistic reality. This is confusing. How do speakers decide which reality is 'real'? And if all decision-making is based on intuition rather than on rules such as 'inklusive Opposition,' how can the study of language be scientific?

Gauger does not respond to these concerns but once more refers to the ineffectiveness of linguistic change, '[m]an muss die Wirklichkeit außerhalb der Sprache verändern'. Furthermore, he asserts that any alteration of the status quo is essentially 'sprachwidrig'. And this 'Sprachwidrigkeit,' to follow Gauger's argument, presumably stems from a clash with speakers' intuition. Despite this unscientific detour, the author cements that '[d]ie Sprachwissenschaft, so wie

sie ist, bewertet nicht' (2014, n. pag.). In contrast, Gauger concludes, 'die feministische Sprachwissenschaft … hat sich sehr einseitig an anderem, vor allem an der Femininmotion, festgebissen' (2014, n. pag.). So while 'Sprachwissenschaft' is presented as a neutral undertaking, which '[nicht] bewertet,' feminist linguistics is portrayed as 'festgebissen'. In effect, despite a complete absence of empirical evidence, Gauger, like Kalverkämper, dismisses the feminist critique of language as 'unscientific'.

Considering the wealth of research conducted since the 1980s, this one-dimensional proclamation seems unsound. Nevertheless it was published in a key national news outlet, and moreover, without any substantial engagement with the proponents' position. Instead, counter-viewpoints remained segregated and marginalised. As she did in 1979, Luise F. Pusch responded to these claims against the feminist critique of language. However, her argument was not printed in a national paper and therefore much less widely available to speakers. In her article 'Generisches Femininum erregt Maskulinguisten, Teil 1,' published on her blog *Laut & Luise*, Pusch counters Gauger as follows:

> Männer haben kein Problem mit dieser Sprache, sie werden ja auch von ihr bestens bedient und verwöhnt. Sie sagen aber nicht 'wir wollen unsere unverdienten Privilegien beibehalten', sondern: 'Diese Frauen tun der Sprache Gewalt an'. So formulieren es die meisten antifeministischen Sprachschützer. Gauger drückt sich etwas gemäßigter aus und sagt lieber, wir 'stellten uns gegen die Sprache' oder unsere Vorschläge seien 'sprachwidrig'. Und was ist, wenn diese Sprache Frauen Gewalt antut, sich 'gegen Frauen stellt' oder 'frauenwidrig' ist? Soll dann immer noch 'die Sprache', ein Abstraktum, gegen das weibliche Recht auf Gleichberechtigung verteidigt werden? (2013, n. pag.)

First of all, by pointing out that male generic terms privilege men, Pusch highlights the central source of conflict between feminist and revision-sceptic linguists. While the former consider this language use discriminatory and advocate change, the latter prefer the status quo exactly because it ensures male privilege; they are 'bestens bedient und verwöhnt'. However, as Pusch shows in reference to Gauger's argument in particular, anti-feminist linguists rarely express this underlying viewpoint as bluntly: they appeal to notions such as 'gegen die Sprache' and 'sprachwidrig' instead. However, this position is hard to maintain in the context of its 'frauenwidrige' consequences. Language,

Pusch elaborates, is 'ein Abstraktum,' and moreover, a social tool, and therefore secondary to the rights of (female) human beings.

Pusch further teases out the bias of Gauger's argument by analysing his denigration of the feminist critique of language as 'festgebissen'. As she explains, '[i]n "festgebissen" klingt das bekannte Klischee für Feministinnen an ("verbissen") und jenes andere für streitbare Frauen ("Stutenbissigkeit")' (2013, n. pag.). By dismissing feminist linguistics as 'overinvolved' and 'obstinate' in contrast to a neutral 'Sprachwissenschaft,' Gauger betrays his own ideological position – the lack of evidence provided is further proof of his prejudice. However, Pusch also fails to refer to any studies to support her argument. In effect, despite a multitude of empirical findings both parties continue to make their case rhetorically, just as Trömel-Plötz, Kalverkämper and Pusch did in the late 1970s. And as empirical research remains separate from theoretical linguistics, general language-users continue to be influenced by the force of argument rather than evidence. In the following I present a brief overview of current attitudes and usage in the English- and German-language context. This situates the relevance and impact of the arguments and findings, and positions how literary texts might be a useful tool to progress debates.

Usage and attitudes

National anthems are good indicators of the extent to which the debates on sex/gender and language have shaped public understanding. In the following I focus on the UK, U.S. and Canadian, and German, Swiss and Austrian anthems to assess how women and men are linguistically represented in an official context. To begin with the UK anthem, the first verse specifies only one sex/gender, 'God save our gracious Queen!' (The Royal Family, n.d., n. pag.). But while the Queen is clearly female[4], as is confirmed by the pronoun 'her' in line four, the people she reigns over are represented by 'us'. As a result, the nation, if not its monarch, seems inclusive of both sexes/genders. However, the fourth verse of the anthem shifts this interpretation: line four and five, in particular, indicate that 'us' might be specific rather than generic, 'Lord make the nations see – That men should brothers be' (Goodfellow, 2015, n. pag.). The

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[4] This will of course shift as the next monarch in power is likely to be male.

reference to 'men' and 'brothers' effectively equates the neutral plural pronoun 'us' with 'male'. The U.S. anthem performs a similar transformation. The first verse addresses the nation as 'we,' 'O say can you see, by the dawn's early light – What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming' (Smithsonian, n.d., n. pag.), thereby connoting both women and men. However, as the fourth verse specifies, 'O thus be it ever when freemen shall stand – Between their lov'd home and the war's desolation!' (Smithsonian, n.d., n. pag.), the neutral 'we' is effectively specific, 'freemen,' i.e. 'he'. The Canadian anthem, on the other hand, clarifies from the outset which sex/gender it represents. As the first two lines state, 'O Canada! Our home and native land! – True patriot love in all thy sons command' (Government of Canada, n.d., n. pag.). The use of 'sons,' just like 'men,' 'brothers' and 'freemen,' implies that the anthem is sung by, and for, men.

The German national anthem is no exception. As the third verse states, 'Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit für das deutsche Vaterland! – Danach lasst uns alle streben, brüderlich mit Herz und Hand!' (Die Bundesregierung, 1991, n. pag.), 'Vaterland' and 'brüderlich' clearly exclude women both linguistically and conceptually. When women are mentioned, as in the second verse, they are listed alongside 'Treue,' 'Wein' and 'Sang,' 'Deutsche Frauen, deutsche Treue – Deutscher Wein und deutscher Sang … Uns zu edler Tat begeistern – Unser ganzes Leben lang' (Deutschlandlied.de, 2012, n. pag.), i.e. act as inspiration and reward for the brotherhood of man. The Swiss anthem might not be as blunt, but nevertheless refers only to 'Vaterland,' 'Gott im hehren Vaterland' (Der Bundesrat, n.d., n. pag.), thereby evoking once more 'men' not 'women'. Effectively, all five anthems convey that the U.S., UK, Canada, Germany and Switzerland are nations of men only. One notable exception is the Austrian national anthem. Adapted in 2012 from 'Heimat bist du großer Söhne,' the first verse now states, 'Heimat großer Töchter und Söhne' (Bundeskanzleramt Österreich, 2012, n. pag.). By including 'Töchter' as well as 'Söhne,' the 'Bundeshymne' allows for the conception of both sexes/genders. Furthermore, it indicates a commitment to linguistic equality. However, as a cursory comparison with the other anthems reveals, this is far from the norm in either German- or English-speaking contexts. Additionally, it is worth noting that the inclusive

adaptation of the Austrian anthem was not received amiably – it caused heated debate, and continues to be contested to this day.

While national anthems might provide a first indication of attitudes to the question of women's and men's linguistic representation, they arguably remain the last bastions of change due to their historical significance. In fact, other instances of usage might not only be easier to revise but prove to be more significant. Educational material, for example, shapes the understanding of the importance of either sex/gender from a young age and moreover, does so on a daily basis. To assess how women and men are represented in schoolbooks today, Franziska Moser and Bettina Hannover evaluated eighteen texts in their 2014 study 'How Gender Fair are German Schoolbooks in the Twenty-First Century? An Analysis of Language and Illustrations in Schoolbooks for Mathematics and German'. In contrast to earlier studies the authors found that 'the proportions of female and male persons were comparably more equal' (2014, p. 399). Debates on inclusive language have therefore shaped wider discourse and understanding. However, as Moser and Hannover add, 'in todays' books we found males to still be more frequent than females, particularly among adults and in books for mathematics' (2014, p. 399). The bias toward male-as-norm still remains. Another key instance is job advertisements: Marek Cieszkowski (Bydgoszcz)'s 2015 study 'Zum geschlechtergerechten Sprachgebrauch am Beispiel deutscher und polnischer Stellenausschreibungen' investigated how inclusively job adverts are worded today. Among 100 descriptions the author located 'geschlechtergerechte (71 %),' 'geschlechtsspezifische (14%)' and 'inkonsequente (diskriminierende) … (15 %)' (2015, p. 30). And while inclusive terminology is certainly predominant, 29% of the descriptions remain exclusive or discriminatory. Consequently, equal linguistic representation of women and men in schoolbooks and job advertisements remains an ongoing project.

Other types of language use seem even more immune to changes, with legal language a central example. Christopher Williams assessed the wording of legislation in his 2008 study 'The End of the "Masculine Rule"? Gender-Neutral Legislative Drafting in the United Kingdom and Ireland' and found that 'the Capital Allowances Act 2001 contains 48 occurrences of *he* and zero of *she*; the Incomes Tax (Earnings and Pensions) Act 2003 contains 20

occurrences of *he* and zero of *she*' (2008, p. 146, emphasis in original). The official explanation, as quoted by Williams, maintains that '[i]n principle, we would like to draft using gender-free language. In practice, however, we are uncertain of how easy this will be to achieve without making the law more clumsily expressed, and as such harder to grasp' (2008, p. 146). In effect, the popular premise, as put forward by critics some forty years ago, remains that linguistic change is 'awkward' and 'hinders communication'. To evaluate whether this really is the case, Christopher Blake and Christoph Klimmt's 2010 study 'Geschlechtergerechte Formulierungen in Nachrichtentexten' investigated 'Lesbarkeit und sprachliche Ästhetik' of inclusive and exclusive terms (2010, p. 295). The authors presented 204 participants with a newspaper article worded in 'generisch maskuline Formen,' 'Binnen-I-Formen,' 'Paarformen' or 'genusneutrale Formulierungen' (2010, p. 296). Blake and Klimmt found that '[s]owohl in Relation zur generisch maskulinen Artikelversion als auch bezogen auf den absoluten Indexwert bewerten die Versuchspersonen … auch die Lesbarkeit der Texte mit alternativen Formen positiv' (2010, p. 298). Furthermore, Blake and Klimmt report, '[h]insichtlich der sprachlichen Ästhetik zeigten sich aus Publikumssicht keine bedeutenden Unterschiede zwischen den verschiedenen Textversionen' (2010, p. 298). Consequently, neither understanding nor text style seem impaired by inclusive terminology.

This is confirmed by Vera Steiger and Lisa Irmen's 2011 study 'Recht verständlich und "gender-fair": Wie sollen Personen in amtlichen Texten bezeichnet werden? Ein Vergleich verschiedener Rezipientengruppen zur Akzeptanz geschlechtergerechter Rechtssprache'. The authors asked 'Juristische Fachleute,' 'ältere Personen ("Generation 60 +")' and 'Personen mit nicht-akademischem Bildungshintergrund' to complete gaps in a legal text with their preferred term. The subsequent evaluation showed that '[a]llgemein bevorzugten die Teilnehmenden – und zwar unabhängig davon, ob sie Laien oder Fachleute im Bereich Rechtswissenschaft waren – im Text neutralisierende Formulierungen' (2011, p. 314). Additionally, Steiger and Irmen found, '[d]as GM [generische Maskulinum] verschlechterte … die Beurteilung dessen, wie stark Frauen im Text berücksichtigt und ob beide Geschlechter gleichmäßig repräsentiert sind' (2011, p. 315). In effect, respondents preferred neutral terminology and considered male generic terms discriminatory; thereby

providing further counter-evidence to the argument that linguistic change is necessarily 'clumsy'.

However, despite positive perceptions, not only official linguistic practices are slow to adapt but general language users equally fail to employ more inclusive terms. Elisabeth A. Kuhn and Ute Gabriel evaluated potential reasons for the lack of inclusive terms in everyday language in their 2014 study 'Actual and Potential Gender-Fair Language Use: The Role of Language Competence and the Motivation to Use Accurate Language'. The authors asked native German speakers: 38 university students, 24 of them women, and 82 trainees, 36 female, to complete sentences with 'either a gender-fair or gender-biased personal noun' and reflect 'on their motivation to use accurate language' (2014, p. 218). Kuhn and Gabriel found that '[s]pontaneous gender-fair language use was lower for university students than for trainees,' even though '[u]niversity students reported a significantly stronger motivation' (2014, p. 218, p. 220). However, overall the results showed that 'people spontaneously used gender-fair language infrequently' (2014, p. 220). The authors prompted respondents to use inclusive terms in one condition which increased usage. Nevertheless, the authors conclude, 'the participants in both samples used gender-fair forms in less than 70% of the cases' (2014, p. 221). In effect, whether prompted or not, respondents predominantly employed exclusive language.

Sabine Sczesny, Franziska Moser and Wendy Wood's 2015 study 'Beyond Sexist Beliefs: How Do People Decide to Use Gender-Inclusive Language?' explored this bias further. The authors presented 278 native German speakers, 206 of them women, with a general-subject text and prompted them to complete blanks with a personal noun. The evaluation showed that '[o]n average, participants used gender-inclusive language forms in about 4 of the 10 texts' (2015, p. 947). A follow-up assessment after two weeks brought further insight, 'participants were more likely to use gender-inclusive language … when they had used it frequently in the past and thus had formed language-use habits' (2015, p. 948). Additionally, Sczesny et al. found that intention also influenced language use to some extent. Both familiarity and motivation therefore play a role in speakers' linguistic choices. To assess how sexist beliefs, in particular, impact on inclusive language use, Sczesny et al. conducted a second study. Employing the same materials as above, as well as

three sexist belief measures, the authors assessed 203 native German speakers, 141 female, and again found that '[p]articipants used gender-inclusive language forms in about 4 of the 10 texts on average' (2015, p. 947). However, the results also showed that 'participants with stronger sexist beliefs had less favorable attitudes toward using gender-inclusive language' (2015, p. 951). Nevertheless, habit also proved once more a key motivator to use inclusive terms. Consequently, Sczesny et al. recommend that 'successful interventions to increase such language use could focus on simple repetition of non-sexist language terms so that these become established habits' (2015, p. 952). Furthermore, the authors believe, 'interventions could address people's understanding of the consequences of gender-inclusive language as a means of altering explicit intentions to use it' (2015, p. 952). A combination of repeated usage and increased awareness could help to implement inclusive language use more widely.

In their 2015 study 'Just Reading? How Gender-Fair Language Triggers Readers' Use of Gender-Fair Forms,' Sara Koeser, Elisabeth A. Kuhn and Sabine Sczesny investigated the impact of exposure to inclusive terms on language use. The authors asked 102 native German speakers, 46 female, to read a text containing 'gender-fair forms,' 'masculine generics' or 'passive voice or omissions' and subsequently complete blanks (2015, p. 346). Koeser et al. found that '[p]articipants used gender-fair forms rarely'; however, 'presenting gender-fair forms … revealed an effective strategy to increase readers' own use of gender-fair language' (2015, p. 346). In a follow-up study, the authors evaluated whether the 'additional text condition, i.e. gender-fair with raised awareness' might increase usage (2015, p. 349). Koeser et al. asked 305 native German speakers, 194 of them women, to follow the same instructions as above, and once more found that '[p]articipants used gender-fair forms infrequently' (2015, p. 349). However, the results also showed that 'women used significantly more gender-fair forms after reading the gender-fair text (without raised awareness)' (2015, p. 349). Men, on the other hand, 'used more gender-fair forms only after reading the gender-fair text with raised awareness' (2015, p. 350). Consequently, the authors conclude, 'awareness raising might be a promising strategy to increase their [men's] use of gender-fair language' (2015, p. 350). This supports Sczesny, Moser and Wood's hypothesis that

increasing awareness of the implications of inclusive language promotes usage and by men, in particular.

These findings are of particular interest to this thesis. As I propose in the following chapters, literary texts are a useful tool to raise awareness of the importance of inclusive language.

Conclusions

The feminist critique of language has had a profound impact on speakers' understanding of and attitudes toward the issue of sex/gender and language. From the first debates ignited by the civil rights movement in the U.S., taken on by linguists such as Robin Lakoff, Dale Spender, Senta Trömel-Plötz and Luise F. Pusch, women's and men's linguistic representation has captured the imagination of English- and German-language activists, theorists and empiricists alike. Positions have always varied. Lakoff, for example, believed male generic terms, such as 'he' and 'man,' to be irrelevant, whereas Spender countered that they rendered women linguistically and therefore conceptually invisible. These debates continue to flourish in the English- and German-language context. However, despite a wealth of evidence that male generic terms negatively impact on the conception of women, inclusive terminology remains contested. Discussions are particularly heated in the German-language context where prominent voices, including academics and journalists, continue to deride the feminist critique of language. Nevertheless, linguistic change has certainly taken place. Schoolbooks are revised to represent women and men more equally, job advertisements employ more inclusive terminology, and even national anthems are adapted to reflect an inclusive society.

However, general language users continue to refrain from using inclusive language. As studies have shown, linguistic practices are shaped by exposure, habit and motivation. Equally, awareness of the significance of women's and men's linguistic representation seems key to promote linguistic change. In this thesis I propose that literary texts are a useful tool to make speakers more aware of the importance of inclusive language use. In particular, I investigate how different literary texts engage with women's and men's linguistic representation, and how this engagement can help to influence attitudes and

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debates. In the following I evaluate three approaches employed by literary authors to highlight the issue of sex/gender and language: 'Problematising the linguistic status quo,' 'Proposing linguistic neutrality' and 'Reversing the linguistic status quo'. I discuss fiction in relation to philosophical and etymological perspectives and thereby assess the texts' wider significance. I begin by evaluating two early texts to question dominant linguistic practices: Ursula K. Le Guin's 1969 *The Left Hand of Darkness* and Verena Stefan's 1975 *Häutungen*. These texts lay the foundation for the literary frame of my argument.

Chapter 2: Problematising the linguistic status quo

The Left Hand of Darkness and *Häutungen*

Concerns voiced by activists and linguists regarding the representation of women and men inspired literary writers to engage with the issue of sex/gender and language. Ursula K. Le Guin's 1969 *The Left Hand of Darkness* and Verena Stefan's 1975 *Häutungen* were two early texts to question the generic use of male nouns and pronouns in English and German. In this chapter I compare Le Guin's and Stefan's approaches to putting the spotlight on the linguistic status quo. The philosophical frame for my discussion is provided by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's work on language and logic, and in particular, his *salva veritate* principle. Leibniz's approach complements Le Guin's and Stefan's problematisation by providing an analytical perspective on the authors' literary explorations. The *salva veritate* principle, as I show in the following, can be applied to investigate the concerns raised in *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Häutungen*. Supported by an etymological assessment of male generic terms, my inquiry shines a light on the issues inherent in the linguistic status quo and how literary texts engage with them.

Leibniz's *salva veritate* principle

Leibniz applied himself to a wide range of fields, including mathematics, philosophy, and philology. While his most famous work remains within disciplinary boundaries, the occasional crosspollination of thought led to fruitful discoveries. Leibniz's 1686 *Generales Inquisitiones de Analysi Notionum et Veritatum* (GI) is a prime example of the insights gained by interdisciplinary work. Applying mathematical principles to linguistic inquiry, Leibniz developed a calculus which aimed to reduce 'irregularities and unnecessary complexities in the grammar of ordinary language' (1990, p. 122), as Hidé Ishiguro states in *Leibniz's Philosophy of Logic and Language*. With the help of this calculus, or *salva veritate* principle, Ishiguro adds, Leibniz 'wanted to construct a formal language with a syntax which reflected the logical relation of concepts' (1990, p.

54). In short, Leibniz set out to make language more 'logical'. A relatively recent work in Leibniz scholarship – the *Generales Inquisitiones* were not published until the early twentieth century – the GI, according to Franz Schupp's introduction, 'stellen die wichtigste geschlossene Arbeit von Leibniz zu Fragen der Logik dar' (1982, p. VII). And this work, I show in the following, remains useful for linguistic inquiry to this day. I refer to Schupp's 1982 German translation *Allgemeine Untersuchungen über die Analyse der Begriffe und Wahrheiten* to illustrate how and why.

At the most basic level, Leibniz's *salva veritate* principle says that '*A deckt sich mit B* wenn eines an des anderen Stelle unbeschadet der Wahrheit substituiert werden kann' (Leibniz, 1686, p. 21, emphasis in original). Borrowing the notion 'sich decken' from geometry, Leibniz believes that 'A' is congruent with, or the same as, 'B' if one can be replaced by the other. However, for 'A' and 'B' to be congruent a central requirement has to be met: any replacement has to take place 'unbeschadet der Wahrheit'. But what does Leibniz mean by this? First of all, it is important to note that 'A' and 'B' are referents, not the actual entities. Ishiguro interprets this as follows, 'what can be substituted for one another are names (or descriptions) of things, and what is or is not identical is the thing that the name names or the description refers to' (1990, p. 19). Consequently, 'A' and 'B,' as terms, do, or do not, refer to the same 'thing'. Secondly, the requirement 'unbeschadet der Wahrheit,' rephrased as 'truth-value' by Ishiguro (1990, p. 31), is met 'wenn durch die Analyse beider [Begriffe] durch die Substitution der Werte (d.h. der Definitionen) an die Stelle der Begriffe an beiden Stellen dieselben Begriffe sich ergeben' (Leibniz, 1686, p. 21). To paraphrase, 'A' is congruent with 'B' only when each definition can take the other's place, that is, when 'definition of A' is congruent with 'B' and vice versa. In fact, Leibniz's calculus demands that this congruence extends to both definitions, so that 'an die Stelle der Begriffe ihre Definitionen gesetzt werden' (1686, p. 221), i.e. that 'definition of A' is the same as 'definition of B'.

Ultimate proof of congruence is only achieved, however, if 'für jeden der beiden [Begriffe] ihre Definition substitutiert wird, und für jeden Bestandteil derselben wiederum seine Definition, bis man zu den primitiven einfachen Begriffen gelangt' (1686, p. 21). To confirm then that '*A deckt sich mit B* ... unbeschadet der Wahrheit,' each replacement has to be 'true' to the level of

'primitive einfache Begriffe'. As these terms are 'unzerlegbar' (1686, p. 9), no further analysis is required or indeed possible. Consequently, the notion 'A' is congruent with 'B' is either proven or disproven, and, if confirmed, 'A' able to take the place of 'B'. The subsequent linguistic saving, as is Leibniz's intention, reduces 'irregularities and unnecessary complexities in the grammar of ordinary language'. One such presumed saving is the use of the male noun 'man' in place of 'human'; the assumption being that both terms are one and the same. But are the two terms really congruent? As Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* and Verena Stefan's *Häutungen* illustrate, the equation of 'man' with 'human' is problematic. In fact, it is this literary problematisation of the linguistic status quo which inspires my later application of Leibniz's *salva veritate* principle to male generic terms. First of all, however, I compare how Le Guin and Stefan put the spotlight on dominant linguistic practices.

The Left Hand of Darkness and *Häutungen*

Le Guin and Stefan employ distinct approaches to problematise the linguistic status quo. While *The Left Hand of Darkness* is fictional and told by an extradiegetic narrator, *Häutungen* is based on personal experiences and written from an author-narrator perspective. To provide a brief summary of each narrative: Le Guin's narrator, Genly Ai, a male representative from a planetary union, is sent to Gethen on a diplomatic mission. The inhabitants of Gethen, however, complicate his quest – arguably most of all because they are androgynous beings. Originating from a planet similar to Earth, Genly struggles to understand his counterparts' androgyny and classifies them according to his own sociocultural categories. This is expressed linguistically by his predominant use of male nouns and pronouns to refer to the Gethenians, who, to his mind, become female only in the specific. *Häutungen*, on the other hand, describes the experiences of the, initially unnamed, narrator as a woman and an activist in 1970s Berlin. Stefan/narrator is familiar with the same norms as Genly, but encounters these from the opposite position: that of the categorised 'woman'. Becoming increasingly aware of her limited position throughout the narrative, Stefan/narrator tries to shed herself of these imposed constraints. This

shedding is expressed linguistically through experimentation with grammatical norms, such as capitalisation, and the questioning of male generic terms.

The below excerpts from the opening sections of *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Häutungen* provide a clear introduction to Le Guin's and Stefan's techniques:

> I was in a parade. I walked just behind the gossiwors and just before the king. ... Next come the lords and mayors and representatives, one person, or five, or forty-five, or four hundred, from each Domain and Co-Domain of Karhide ... Next, forty men in yellow, playing gossiwors. ... Next, the royal party, guards and functionaries and dignitaries of the city and the court, deputies, senators, chancellors, ambassadors, lords of the Kingdom... (Le Guin, 1969a, pp. 9-10)

> Der mann lehnt sich über die balustrade und starrt mich unverwandt an. Ich starre unverwandt zurück, während ich näherkomme. Etwas alarmiert mich an dieser situation mehr als sonst. Der mann gafft nicht lüsternd oder genüßlich, sondern er macht ein eindeutig empörtes gesicht. Als ich an ihm vorbeigehe, sagt er aufgebracht: Also, sag mal, mädchen, wo hast du denn deine brust hängen? (Stefan, 1975, p. 37)

While each text is narrated from the perspective of the central 'I,' a key difference immediately emerges: Genly is 'in the parade' looking out, whereas Stefan/narrator is 'looked at'. The context both narrators find themselves in, however, shares similar features. According to Genly's description, the Gethenians appear predominantly either explicitly male, as indicated by terms such as 'king,' 'lords,' 'men'; or male by implication, 'mayors,' 'guards,' 'senators,' 'ambassadors'. While the latter group of nouns, in particular, might be open to debate – some might argue that 'mayor' and 'senator' are able to connote 'woman' as well as 'man' – their historic use sways interpretation. To give an example, 'senator' is defined as '[a] member of a senate' (OD, 2016, n. pag.), which seems neutral at first instance. However, originating from 'Latin *senatus*, from *senex* "old man"' (OD, 2016, n. pag., emphasis in original), the term is clearly androcentric: 'old man' certainly did not connote 'woman' in Ancient Rome. Furthermore, the term continues to be understood exclusively. In 2015 only twenty percent of U.S. senators were women, underscoring a predominantly male interpretation and application to this day.

While Stefan/narrator is female, her context is equally androcentric. She might claim the 'I' of the narrative akin to Genly, however, in contrast to his insider-position, Stefan/narrator finds herself in opposition to her environment. In fact, she is threatened by it. 'Der mann lehnt ... und starrt,' Stefan/narrator states, and while she 'starr[t] unverwandt zurück,' she feels 'alarmiert' by his 'Gaffen'. Furthermore, she feels alarmed that the man does not stare 'lüsternd oder genüßlich,' which she seems to expect in the sociocultural context, but 'eindeutig empört'. The man expresses his 'Empörung' by stating: '[a]lso, sag mal, mädchen, wo hast du denn deine brust hängen?'. Similarly to Genly's description, the men in *Häutungen* seem to be in positions of power. And while 'der mann' might not be a 'lord' or 'senator,' he asserts his authority nevertheless – an authority which is signified by his stance toward Stefan/narrator. He stares at her, he makes her feel alarmed, he is 'empört' or 'aufgebracht'. He addresses her, and further, addresses her as 'mädchen' and thereby disparages her. He comments on her breasts. Stefan/narrator might be able to stare 'unverwandt zurück' but this is little more than a reaction to his provocation, and one which is essentially without effect. He is able to put her in her place: a female body to be observed and judged by *him*.

Critics received the different narrative styles and perspectives of *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Häutungen* in equally distinct ways. While both texts were highly influential, *The Left Hand of Darkness* received considerably more critical attention. This difference could be explained as follows. Firstly, the authors differed in publishing profile: *Häutungen* was Stefan's first publication whereas Le Guin had several texts in print already. Secondly, the style of each author required different reading approaches: the personal tone of *Häutungen* potentially appealed less to critics than the (science) fictional narrative of *The Left Hand of Darkness*. Thirdly, the publishing context differed: due to the women's liberation movement following on from the civil rights movement, U.S. critics were perhaps more ready to receive a feminist text than those in Germany. But *Häutungen* was popular among readers nevertheless. In effect, demand for the book helped to build the feminist publishing house *Verlag Frauenoffensive*. However, those who did critically engage with *Häutungen* remained divided over its success.

Jürgen Serke's review 'Ein Buch, das den Markt für Frauen öffnete' reflects the ambiguous response by critics. While Serke refers to *Häutungen* as 'das Identifikationsbuch schlechthin für eine im Aufbruch befindliche neue Frauengeneration,' he also mentions that Stefan is 'von Beruf Krankengymnastin' (1982, p. 343) in the same sentence. While some might argue that this detail simply confirms Stefan's qualification to write 'das Identifikationsbuch schlechthin,' precisely because she is not an author by profession; others might counter that 'von Beruf Krankengymnastin' puts Stefan in 'her place'. She is a 'physiotherapist,' not a 'writer,' and therefore need not be taken seriously. This ambiguity toward the text also filters down into more in-depth critical evaluations. Sophie von Behr, for example, comments in her review 'Etwas an seiner Seite' that while '"Häutungen" ist ein beunruhigendes Buch' – 'beunruhigend' here in a positive sense – the ending is 'mißlungen' (1975, n. pag.). And while 'mißlungen' might refer to the portrayal of a lesbian relationship, in particular, the notion of failure equally strikes a chord with reviewers in other aspects. Stefan's problematisation of language, for example, is criticised by Brigitte Classen and Gabriele Goettle in '"Häutungen" – eine Verwechslung von Anemone und Amazone'. '[Das Buch] weist den Frauen eine Zukunft,' the authors state, 'in der die Verwechslung von Worten und Begriffen als neue Erfahrung und neue (weibliche) Sprache verstanden sein will' (1976, p. 46). Classen and Goettle consider Stefan's linguistic project ineffective as, to their minds, her problematisation of language does not lead to any fundamental revision.

On the other hand, reviewers such as Ricarda Schmidt applaud Stefan's engagement with of the issue of sex/gender and language. As Schmidt states in her review 'Körperbewusstsein und Sprachbewusstsein: Verena Stefans "Häutungen",' 'Stefan [problematisiert] die vorgefundene Sprache als ein System, in dem patriarchalische Werte und Normen reflektiert und perpetuiert werden' (1982, p. 60). She elaborates that '[Stefan macht] das Weibliche als das in der Sprache Abwesende sichtbar' (1982, p. 60), confirming the positive impact of *Häutungen*'s linguistic experiments. Jeanette Clausen agrees in 'Our Language, Our Selves: Verena Stefan's Critique of Patriarchal Language': 'her experiments with language should be seen as a serious inquiry into the oppressiveness of everyday language' (1982, p. 400). To this Christa Reinig

adds in 'Das weibliche Ich': '[d]ieser Autorin ist es gelungen ... die Sprache der Männer aufzubrechen und ihre Vokabeln den Frauen nutzbar zu machen' (cited in Plowman, 1998, p. 139). Clausen and Reinig clearly deem Stefan's problematisation of the linguistic status quo a success. And while reviews might be divided, *Häutungen* is certainly commented on to engage with the issue of sex/gender and language – a lack of which is a common complaint of *The Left Hand of Darkness*. In contrast, critics of Le Guin's text are concerned precisely because it seems to employ male generic terms unquestioningly.

As Elizabeth Cummins summarises in *Understanding Ursula K. Le Guin*, 'persistent criticism of the novel has been that the androgynes are not presented as menwomen. Le Guin is faulted for using the pronoun "he" to refer to them' (1990, p. 78). To this Susan M. Bernardo and Graham J. Murphy add in *Ursula K. Le Guin: A Critical Companion*: 'some critics contend that Le Guin has effectively eliminated the female altogether and presented nothing but a male society. This assessment stems, in part, from Le Guin's use of language, and, more specifically, the masculinized language of "he" and "him"' (2006, p. 33). In contrast to Stefan's critics then, it is Le Guin's perceived failure to challenge linguistic norms which is a key concern for reviewers. Critics seem to feel that Le Guin's persistent use of male nouns and pronouns conceptually excludes women and androgynes, which in turn cements the sociocultural premise male-as-norm. Reviewers are divided, however, over the origins of the author's linguistic choices. On the one hand, the androcentric language use is considered an expression of Genly's bias. As Pamela J. Annas states in 'New Worlds, New Words: Androgyny in Feminist Science Fiction,' '[Genly Ai's] problems with the inhabitants of [Gethen/]Winter come from his inability to judge them as human beings without first defining them as men or women' (1978, p. 151), and indeed people of either sex/gender. Bernardo and Murphy agree: '[a]s a Terran ... Genly cannot escape gendered designations' (2006, p. 22). In short, it is Genly who is conceptually trapped by the division of his own context and coerced to express this linguistically.

Another line of reasoning is that it is Le Guin's (unconscious) androcentricity which informs her choice of language. 'Perhaps ... Le Guin's imagination was limited by her own cultural conditioning' (1983, p. 117), Jewell Parker Rhodes observes in 'Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*:

Androgyny and the Feminist Utopia'. Meryl Pugh concurs in '"You canna change the laws of fiction, Jim!" A Personal Account of Reading Science Fiction' and argues that 'it is the use of the masculine pronoun to describe a race of persons to whom gender is presumably irrelevant, that reveals the text's androcentricity' (1999, pp. 26-7). But in contrast to Parker Rhodes, Pugh feels it is the text, rather than the author, that expresses androcentric leanings. A third possible explanation is readers' interpretations. '[T]he Catch-22 Le Guin finds herself in when attempting to create a world of androgynes,' John Pennington states in 'Exorcising Gender: Resisting Readers in Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*,' 'she is controlled by language and the gender conventions of the reader's world' (2000, p. 1). He elaborates, 'male and female readers cannot escape their own gendered perspectives conditioned by society' (2000, p. 2); consequently, readers seem bound to interpret male *or* female.

To these speculations critics add concerns around the impact of male nouns and pronouns. Parker Rhodes, for example, asks, '[i]f as an artist she can invent a new futuristic world ... then, can't she invent new words to depict accurately her vision of the androgyne?' (1983, p. 115), thereby implying that Le Guin's use of male terms impedes the message of the novel. Pugh also feels that *The Left Hand of Darkness* fails in fulfilling its potential; however, not due to the lack of inventing new terms but by '[evading] the issue of language's gendered nature' (1999, p. 27) altogether. In response Mona Fayad argues in 'Aliens, Androgynes, and Anthropology: Le Guin's Critique of Representation in *The Left Hand of Darkness*,' that this 'evasion' can also be interpreted as an attack. By consistently employing male nouns and pronouns, Le Guin can be argued to highlight the inadequate function of androcentric language to represent both women and men. In fact, Fayad believes that 'the novel can be seen as a parody of the patriarchal need for assimilation and sameness, one in which the male eye is incapable of seeing anything other than what it wishes to construct' (1997, p. 4). And what the male eye is revealed to see, and to construct, is male-as-norm. '[R]eaders are invited to question' this 'parody' (1997, p. 4), according to Fayad, and thereby the linguistic status quo. Consequently, the persistent use of male terms to refer to the androgynes can also be interpreted as an effective strategy. Anna Livia agrees in *Pronoun Envy: Literary Uses of Linguistic Gender*, that '[t]he laughter produced by the clash

between the generic masculinity ... and the biological or cultural traits usually restricted to the opposite sex point to the subversiveness of Le Guin's pronoun choice' (2001, p. 141). What is considered Le Guin's failure by some can equally be interpreted as a destabilising measure.

In the following I compare Stefan's and Le Guin's distinct approaches to problematising the linguistic status quo, with particular attention to the use of nouns, pronouns, names and titles. The aim is to identify how each author highlights the issues inherent in male generic language use.

Nouns and pronouns

As shown in the introductory paragraphs above, Genly predominantly employs male terms to refer to the Gethenians. Consequently, planet Gethen seems to be peopled by men, rather than women and men, or indeed androgynes. This can be observed throughout the narrative, with a particularly prominent example being Genly's description of his prime diplomatic contact, Estraven. Initially, the reader encounters Estraven from a neutral perspective. 'I ask the person on my left,' Genly says in reference to his contact. As 'person' is by definition '[a] human being regarded as an individual' (OD, 2016, n. pag.), the term seems open to either a female or male interpretation, and therefore also androgyny. However, Genly's subsequent depiction negates any potential neutrality. 'Wiping sweat from his dark forehead the man – *man* I must say, having said *he* and *his* – the man answers' (1969a, p. 12, emphasis in original). While some might argue that 'man' and 'he' can be used inclusively, Genly's understanding of the terms, as highlighted by the association of 'he' with 'man,' is clearly 'male'. This links back to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: language seems to influence Genly's thought. In fact, Genly seem to feel coerced to say 'man,' not 'woman,' when using the male pronoun – '*man* I must say'. Furthermore, he feels coerced to say 'man,' not 'woman' or 'human'. This specific understanding is underscored by the following elaboration: '[Estraven] is one of the most powerful men in the country; ... He is lord of a Domain and lord of the Kingdom, a mover of great events' (1969a, p. 12). As the use of 'one of the most powerful men' and 'lord' underpins, Estraven is, to Genly's mind, male to all intents and purposes.

Genly explains his conceptual struggle with androgyny as follows: 'my efforts took the form of self-consciously seeing a Gethenian first as a man, then as a woman, forcing him into those categories so irrelevant to his nature and so essential to my own' (1969a, p. 18). He seems to consider it 'essential' to identify whether someone is female or male; it is his own sociocultural context that demands classification. Furthermore, the categorisation of Gethenians 'first as a man' reveals the underlying premise male-as-norm. But, even though Genly acknowledges that the androgynes consider sex/gender 'irrelevant' and, furthermore, recognises that 'he' is linked to 'man,' he employs the male pronoun to refer to the Gethenians. Another representative sent to Gethen, Ong Tot Oppong, gives some insight as to why this might be the case:

> Lacking the Karhidish [one of the languages spoken on Gethen] 'human pronoun' used for persons in somer [non-reproductive phase], I must say 'he', for the same reasons as we used the masculine pronoun in referring to a transcendent god: it is less defined, less specific, than the neuter or the feminine. But the very use of the pronoun in my thoughts leads me continually to forget that the Karhider I am with is not a man, but a manwoman. (1969a, p. 85)

While Ong considers the male pronoun 'less defined, less specific, than the neuter or the feminine,' like Genly, she feels coerced to associate 'he' with 'man'. In fact, she states, 'the very use of the pronoun in my thoughts leads me continually to forget that the Karhider I am with is not a man'. As a result of male generic language use, Ong classifies the androgynes as 'male' first and foremost. Judging from their reflections, both Genly and Ong believe 'he' to be inadequate as a neutral pronoun. However, both seem unable to imagine an alternative. Conditioned by the understanding that 'it is less defined, less specific, than the neuter or the feminine,' Genly and Ong seem trapped into using the male pronoun generically.

That 'he' is unable to represent both sexes/genders equally, however, is highlighted again at other instances in *The Left Hand of Darkness*. For example, when Genly takes part in a foretelling led by a Gethenian, he describes the central character, Faxe, as follows: '[h]e was as tall as I, and slender, with a clear, open, and beautiful face' (1969a, p. 55). While some might argue that 'he' could be interpreted neutrally; the male pronoun is, as illustrated above, to

Genly's mind specific. This is confirmed when the foreteller undergoes a key change; 'in the centre of all darkness,' Genly observes, 'Faxe: the Weaver: a woman, a woman dressed in light' (1969a, p. 61). Along with Genly's perception of Faxe as 'a woman,' his narrative undergoes a pronominal shift, '[t]he light burned sudden and intolerable, the light along her limbs, the fire, and she screamed aloud in terror' (1969a, p. 61). If 'he' was inclusive, the implication of Genly's adjustment seems to be, there would have been no need to use 'she'. However, Genly clearly feels that the male pronoun is unable to represent 'Faxe, a woman'. Equally when Faxe reverts back to his/her 'original self,' Genly also resumes his use of the male pronoun. 'I knelt down beside Faxe,' Genly says, '[h]e looked at me with his clear eyes' (1969a, p. 62), which highlights that Genly never understood 'he' generically, but as specifically male.

Arguably, Le Guin's problematisation of the linguistic status quo is subtle and becomes instructive only on close reading. In fact, the above shifts and reflections easily disappear in the overwhelmingly androcentric narrative. Stefan, on the other hand, questions the use of male generic terms much more directly. And this direct engagement is an integral part of the narrative; as is visible in her 1975 introduction to *Häutungen*:

> Mit dem wörtchen 'man' fängt es an. 'Man' hat, 'man' tut, 'man' fühlt...: 'Man' wird für die beschreibung allgemeiner zustände, gefühle, situationen verwendet – für die menschheit schlechthin. Entlarvend sind sätze, die mit 'als frau hat "man" ja...' beginnen. 'Man' hat als frau keine identität. Frau kann sie nur als frau suchen. (1975, p. 34)

The third person pronoun 'man,' according to Stefan, is equated with 'die menschheit schlechthin,' and excludes 'Frau' precisely because it is specific. As Stefan/narrator confirms by extending 'man' to 'mann' in the narrative, 'mann würde mich als vollwertig behandeln' (1975, p. 42), to her mind, both are essentially interlinked. As a result, 'Frau' is negated by male generic terms and needs to locate her own identity – and this location Stefan sets out to enable in *Häutungen*. She states in the 1994 introduction: '[w]ir wollten vorkommen, als Subjekte, nicht als die Beschriebenen aus männlicher Sicht' (1994, p. 8). However, in order to 'become' subjects, Stefan believes new terms are needed; terms which are free from androcentric preconceptions. This is tricky as in the German language male-as-norm not only infiltrates the conceptual but also the

grammatical level. This additional hurdle becomes poignant when Stefan/narrator refers to her body, '[i]rgendwie hing das alles mit meinem körper zusammen. ... Er entsprach nicht den vorschriften. Er sah nicht jugendlich aus. Er hatte keine gute Figur' (1975, p. 40). Removing the first sentence containing the referent 'Körper,' the subsequent three would simply read as 'er entsprach,' 'er sah' and 'er hatte'; thereby shifting the male pronoun from potentially neutral to specific. 'Er hatte keine gute Figur' arguably evokes 'male,' rather than 'female'. Of course, whenever a referent is removed the original meaning is lost, but it is telling to 'read' the male pronoun as it would be read in many other contexts: as specific.

Read as an anaphor for 'man,' the male pronoun seems to negate Stefan/narrator's specifically female experiences. However, in contrast to the third person pronoun 'man,' she seems to employ 'er' unquestioningly. And this lack of engagement with the generic use of the male pronoun is not a solitary occurrence; as Stefan/narrator states in relation to the lower half of her body: '[e]igentlich habe ich gar kein gefühl für meinen unter leib' (1975, p. 46). While indicating a split relationship by visibly separating 'unter' and 'leib,' Stefan/narrator does not comment on the term's grammatical gender: 'der Unterleib,' as 'der Körper,' is grammatically male. However, Stefan/narrator is certainly not unaware of the impact of the generic use of the male pronoun. In reference to the term 'Mensch,' for example, she says, '[s]o muß es gewesen sein, als der erste mensch geschaffen wurde, dachte ich. Genau so muß sie sich gefühlt haben!' (1975, p. 40). Here Stefan/narrator consciously adjusts the default 'er' to 'sie,' and thereby reveals that 'Mensch' seems implicitly linked to 'man,' not 'woman'. And this link, Stefan/narrator clearly feels, needs to be grammatically severed to allow for the concept 'female human'.

Genly similarly plays with expectations. For example, he describes his 'landlady' as 'a voluble man' (1969a, p. 46), proclaims '[t]he king was pregnant' (1969a, p. 89), and finds it 'difficult to imagine him [another contact on Gethen] as a young mother' (1969a, p. 104). Genly thereby illustrates the specificity of language as well as highlights that the Gethenians are not men, but androgynes. However, such conscious ambiguity seems too rare an occurrence to override the dominant associations provided in the narrative. In one passage alone, for example, Genly refers to Estraven as 'sir,' the representatives of the

planetary union as 'patient men,' and the union overall as 'the rest of mankind' (1969a, p. 21). Furthermore, siblings are referred to as 'brothers' (1969a, p. 26), children as 'sons' (1969a, p. 67), and the wider community as 'fellow men' (1969a, p. 170). Additionally, as illustrated above, the Gethenians are consistently pronominalised with 'he,' and 'she' generally used only in the specific. In fact, if mentioned at all, female terms are used mainly in comparison, and one which is predominantly unfavourable to women. One revealing example is Genly's assessment of his diplomatic contact: 'Estraven's performance had been womanly, all charm and tact and lack of substance, specious and adroit' (1969a, p. 18). Another is his explanation of his use of the term 'landlady'; 'I thought of him as my landlady, for he had fat buttocks that wagged as he walked, and a soft fat face, and a prying, spying, ignoble, kindly nature' (1969a, pp. 46-7). In effect, women, to Genly's mind, seem essentially inferior to men. And this understanding is reflected in his androcentric language use.

While Stefan's and Le Guin's approaches might differ, both authors highlight the issues inherent in the linguistic status quo. This problematisation also includes names and titles. I explore in the following how naming practices underpin the authors' engagement with the linguistic representation of women and men.

Names and titles

As in narrative style, *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Häutungen* differ also in naming practices. Firstly, Stefan uses existing names while Le Guin invents new names altogether. Secondly, Stefan refers to characters by their first names only while Le Guin creates family names as well. Starting with the main characters, the reader does not learn the name of Stefan's narrator, 'Veruschka' (1975, p. 135), a nickname for the author's first name 'Verena,' until fairly late in the novel. Le Guin, on the other hand, already provides the name of her narrator, 'Genly Ai,' in the prelude to the narrative. And while 'Veruschka/Verena' is not of the author's choosing and therefore difficult to analyse in terms of intent, 'Genly Ai' invites speculation. First of all, it seems, 'Genly' could refer to either a female or male character – the ending 'y' is used

for women and men alike, with 'Tracy' and 'Andy' just two examples. Additionally, 'Genly' contains phonetic resemblance to 'gentle,' allowing for ambiguity also in connotation. However, the opening paragraph already implies a certain sex/gender. For example, Genly predominantly employs male terms to refer to the Gethenians, which seems to signify a male point of view. As Fayad argues, 'the male eye is incapable of seeing anything other than what it wishes to construct' – and while androcentric cultures train women as well as men to perceive male-as-norm, the conceptual absence of women seems to speak against a female narrator. Furthermore, Estraven's reference to 'Genly' as 'Mr Ai' (1969a, p. 14) confirms Genly as male. 'Mister,' defined as 'title of courtesy for a man' (1986, p. 296) in T. F. Hoad's *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, is etymologically linked to 'master,' 'man having control or authority' (1986, p. 284). The association of 'Mr' with 'man' and furthermore, 'man having control or authority,' negates both a female and neutral understanding. Genly's sex/gender is confirmed by Le Guin in an interview with Larry McCaffery and Sinda Gregory. 'Genly's name Henry evolved over time,' she explains, '[w]hat happened to the "h" is what the Russians do, and then the "r" became "l"' (Freedman, 2008, p. 42). Equally organic was the development of the narrator's surname, '[h]e first came to me as "Genly Ao," but I thought that sounded too much like "ow"' (Freedman, 2008, pp. 42-3), Le Guin elaborates. 'You listen until you hear it,' she states, 'until it sounds right. You go: Eye, I, Aye, Ai' (Freedman, 2008, p. 43). This phonetic resemblance with 'I' and 'eye' is borne out in the narrative: 'Ai' is the narrator, the 'I' of the story, as well as the central observer, the 'eye'. 'Thus Genly Ai's name itself … brings to the fore the relation between subjectivity ("I") and perception ("eye")' (1997, p. 65), Fayad comments. And 'Ai' is only able to perceive the androgynes in relation to himself, a self which is essentially shaped by his specifically male 'I/eye'.

In contrast, 'Cloe,' the replacement for 'Veruschka/Verena' at the end of *Häutungen*, is clearly intended to be female. Curiously, the name 'Cloe,' or 'Chloe,' from Greek, meaning 'Beiname der Erd- und Muttergöttin Demeter' (Kohlheim and Kohlheim, 2013, p. 92), is linked to 'fertility'. This seems both in sync and at odds with the character's role in the narrative. On the one hand, Cloe seems at one with her specifically female body; 'sie [hatte] die brüste zu lieben begonnen' (1975, p. 153), she states. On the other, the name's inherent

link to 'fertility' seems restrictive, especially as it confines 'woman' to the reproductive role assigned to her culturally. In effect, Cloe's declaration, '[d]er mensch meines lebens bin ich' (1975, p. 158), seems to counteract the role of 'Erd- und Muttergöttin' exactly by claiming the subject position of 'ich'. As this position is usually reserved for 'man' in androcentric cultures, 'Cloe' seems a puzzling choice. However, Stefan's selection might not have been motivated by etymology to begin with; as she indicates in her 1994 introduction, '[w]ir wollten wissen, daß Virginia Woolf schon 1928 überlegt hatte, was es für die moderne Literatur bedeutete, wenn in einem Buch zu lesen wäre: *Chloe liebte Olivia*' (1994, p. 8, emphasis in original). A 'Cloe,' modelled on Woolf's 'Chloe,' provides a more plausible explanation – it encapsulates Stefan/narrator's 'shedding' of heterosexual norms.

The naming of 'Estraven,' Genly's counterpart in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, is equally puzzling at first instance. 'Therem Harth rem ir Estraven' in full; 'Therem' refers to Estraven's 'hearth' or personal name, while 'Estraven' stands for 'the Lord of Estre' (1969a, p. 109). 'Therem,' phonetically similar to female and male names, such as Bethan or Callum, seems to imply that the Gethenian is a neutral, or at least an ambiguous, being. However, Genly's consistent reference to Estraven as 'he' and 'man' counteracts this interpretation; to Genly, Estraven is male first and foremost. But this understanding is not necessarily shared by all, as Le Guin reports in an interview with Rebecca Raas, '[i]n "Estraven" people heard "estrogen"' (Freedman, 2008, p. 75). Whether this phonetic resemblance overrides the predominantly male imagery of Genly's narration, however, is questionable. To Genly at least, 'the Lord of Estre' seems most certainly male and 'estrogen,' as the narrative shows, only relevant in terms of Estraven's control over his/her female hormone levels.

While the shifting relationship between Genly and Estraven is central to *The Left Hand of Darkness*, 'Veruschka,' on the other hand, engages with several other main characters throughout *Häutungen*. To begin with two of her male partners, 'Dave,' short for 'David,' and 'Samuel,' each name holds a key significance. For example, Stefan/narrator feels deeply connected to 'David,' linked to Hebrew 'Liebling' (Kohlheim and Kohlheim, 2013, p. 105); however, potentially to her detriment: '[d]u liebst Dave zu sehr' (1975, p. 62), comments

her friend. In contrast to his biblical battle against Goliath, 'die herr schaft der weißen über die schwarzen' (1975, p. 65), Dave does not challenge 'die herr schaft der männer über die frauen' (1975, p. 65). While Samuel might seem more inclined to question androcentricity; true to his name's meaning, linked to Hebrew 'Gott ist erhaben' (Kohlheim and Kohlheim, 2013, p. 328), his approach seems top-down. 'Mit mir schlief er,' Stefan/narrator reports, '[s]prechen denken diskutieren erforschen – das geschah mit anderen' (1975, p. 97). Similarly to Dave then, Samuel does not engage with Stefan/narrator as equally human.

The names of the female characters are as revealing. Ines, for example, linked to 'Agnes,' Greek 'keusch' or 'rein' (Kohlheim and Kohlheim, 2013, p. 38), is 'keusch/rein' in the sense that she does not conform to heterosexuality. 'Ines, mit der ich zu der zeit viel zusammen war, war anders,' Stefan/narrator comments, '[s]ie ging mit keinem, sie ging mit sich' (1975, p. 41). And while Ines initiates Stefan/narrator into the possibilities of same-sex relations, she feels as yet unable to engage in them. 'Ines war doch eine frau,' Stefan/narrator explains, 'wie hätte sie meinem leben einen sinn geben, wie hätte sie mich erobern sollen?' (1975, p. 41). Nadjenka, on the other hand, a nickname for 'Nadja', linked to Russian 'Nadeschda' meaning 'Hoffnung' (Varnhorn, 2008, p. 114), breaks down these barriers. 'Eine andere frau konnte ich mir nicht vorstellen,' Stefan/narrator states, '[i]ch wollte es mit einem mann so gut haben wie mit Nadjenka' (1975, pp. 73-4). Nevertheless, this relationship does not fully develop either, possibly because '[w]ir sind doppelgängerinnen. Treffe ich sie, treffe ich zugleich auf einen teil meiner selbst' (1975, p. 139). Nadjenka provides hope, if not fulfilment. Fenna, short for names beginning with 'Frede' or 'Friede' (Varnhorn, 2008, p. 55), on the other hand, becomes the narrator's eventual lover. Stefan/narrator explains, '[w]ir wollten nicht nachahmen' (1975, p. 112), which represents their intention to meet as equals: as women and as partners. Furthermore, Fenna is the only character in Stefan's novel to name the narrator, 'Veruschka' (1975, p. 135), and by naming her to recognise her. And this recognition constitutes a central turning point in their relationship; bringing closure, 'Friede,' to Stefan/narrator's shedding.

The names chosen by Le Guin and Stefan support each author's problematisation of the linguistic status quo; however, it is male generic terms which exemplify concerns around dominant language use. In the following I

apply Leibniz's *salva veritate* principle to the noun 'man,' in particular, as it remains prominent in the debates on sex/gender and language. This illustrates the validity of Le Guin's and Stefan's literary problematisations from a philosophical perspective.

Applying the *salva veritate* principle

As illustrated above, 'A' is congruent with 'B' if one can replace the other 'unbeschadet der Wahrheit'. But is this actually the case for the terms 'man' and 'human'? To investigate whether 'man' and 'human' are indeed interchangeable, I apply Leibniz's *salva veritate* principle. Beginning with each noun's definition, the *Oxford Dictionaries*' online platform primarily defines 'man' as '[a]n adult human male'. However, the term also holds a secondary definition, '[a] human being of either sex; a person' (2016, n. pag.). While the dictionary notes that 'the [generic] use is now often regarded as sexist or at best old-fashioned' (2016, n. pag.), 'man,' as per definition, seems to be able to replace 'human'. 'Human,' on the other hand, is defined as '[a] human being' only; with 'human being' further defined as '[a] man, woman, or child of the species *Homo Sapiens*' (2016, n. pag., emphasis in original), the term therefore represents both women and men. Moving on to the first level of analysis of Leibniz's *salva veritate* principle, 'A' should be replaceable with the 'definition of B'; and 'B' with the 'definition of A' without compromising each term's truth-value. Sure enough, 'man' can be substituted with '[a] human being' on account of both its primary and secondary definition. In short, 'man' seems congruent with 'human'. A reversal, however, is decidedly more problematic: while 'human' can be substituted with the secondary definition of 'man,' i.e. '[a] human being of either sex; a person,' the term is not congruent with its primary definition. As '[a]n adult human male' does not contain 'woman,' 'man' as 'male' is unable to replace 'human being'. Consequently, 'man' and 'human' are congruent when 'man' is understood as '[a] human being of either sex; a person,' but not when 'man' means 'male'. However, can the *salva veritate* principle be true and false at the same time? Does this not undermine its central premise 'unbeschadet der Wahrheit'?

As Leibniz states, '[e]s gehört daher zu den ersten Prinzipien, daß die Begriffe, die wir als in ein und demselben Subjekt existierend erfassen, keinen Widerspruch enthalten' (1686, p. 61). As 'man' seems at once congruent and incongruent with 'human,' the dual-relation of 'man' and 'human' clearly contains such a 'Widerspruch'. However, Leibniz also reserves the possibility of particular cases. For example, he divides between a 'universell affirmative Aussage "A ist B"' and a 'partikulär affirmative Aussage "Ein A ist B",' as well as a 'partikulär negative Aussage' and a 'universell negative Aussage' (1686, p. 93). Following on, 'man' is congruent with 'human' in the particular if the secondary definition of 'man,' '[a] human being of either sex; a person,' is used; and incongruent in the particular if the primary definition, '[a]n adult human male,' comes into play. While this could potentially help to explain the dual function of 'man' it seems to contribute to complicating language rather than reducing its complexities as is Leibniz's aim. Additionally, an important caveat has to be introduced at this stage. As Ishiguro explains, '[i]n Leibniz's terminology, the concept of genus is included in the concept of species, or the concept of a species contains the concept of a genus, not vice versa' (1990, p. 45). To paraphrase Ishiguro, 'man is human' is true because the notion of 'human' is included in the notion of 'man'. In turn, 'human is man' cannot be true because 'man' is a subcategory of human. The genus 'man' is essentially unable to take the position of 'species,' i.e. be replaceable with 'human,' whatever its secondary definition might be. Therefore 'man' and 'human' cannot be congruent as this violates the species/genus hierarchy.

As Ishiguro confirms, '[c]oncepts are the same if they play the same role; they play the same role if the words that express them are interchangeable without affecting the truth-value of the propositions in which they occur' (1990, p. 17). 'Man' and 'human' are not congruent as they do not play the same role, i.e. they are unable to be one and the same. However, how did 'man' as genus, '[a]n adult human male,' come to be equated with the species 'human,' '[a] human being'? In the following I investigate the history and etymology of 'man' and 'human' as well as other key terms to shed light on the origins of their (illogical) equation. This provides further insight into the impact and extent of male generic terms and confirms the effectiveness of Le Guin's and Stefan's problematisations from an etymological perspective.

The history and etymology of male generic terms

First of all, consulting the dictionary brings some surprising insights. In fact, according to the *Oxford Dictionaries*' online platform, 'man' used to mean '[a] human being of either sex; a person' only. '[I]n Old English the principal sense of **man** was "a human being",' the dictionary states, 'and the words **wer** and **wif** were used to refer specifically to "a male person" and "a female person" respectively' (2016, n. pag., emphasis in original). At some point, however, it seems '**man** replaced **wer** as the normal term for "a male person"' (2016, n. pag., emphasis in original). While 'the older sense "a human being" remained in use' (2016, n. pag.), 'man' and 'male' became interlinked, which is reflected in today's primary understanding of the term as '[a]n adult human male'. Julia Penelope (Stanley) and Cynthia McGowan investigate in 'Woman and Wife: Social and Semantic Shifts in English' how the meaning of 'man' transferred from the generic, 'a human being,' to the specific, 'a male person'. This shift, Penelope (Stanley) and McGowan propose, took place 'as a consequence of increased patriarchal influence' (1979, p. 499). In short, men must have been considered increasingly significant in the sociocultural setting. And as 'wer,' i.e. 'a male person,' came to be understood as the representative 'man/human,' the authors argue, 'the semantic range of <u>man</u> was narrowed' to 'the male-specific use of the once-generic <u>man</u>' (1979, p. 499-500, emphasis in original). The term 'wer' was eventually dropped out of usage altogether; with the primary understanding of 'man' now 'a male person,' and the secondary 'a human being'. This new conceptual link between 'man' and 'male' was not without consequence, however. In fact, according to Dennis Baron's *Grammar and Gender*, it led in '[a]ll the Germanic languages except English' to the transferral of 'the original, generic sense of *man* to a new derivative word – for example, German and Dutch *mensch*' (1986, p. 138, emphasis in original). In line with Leibniz's *salva veritate* principle then, 'man' was presumably deemed unable to function both as genus and species.

This can be traced in the German noun 'Mann,' which is today defined as 'erwachsene Person männlichen Geschlechts' only, while 'Mensch' means 'mit der Fähigkeit zu logischem Denken und zur Sprache, zur sittlichen Entscheidung und Erkenntnis von Gut und Böse ausgestattetes

höchstentwickeltes Lebewesen'; 'menschliches Lebewesen, Individuum' (Duden, 2016, n. pag.). But while a new term might exist in German, 'Mensch,' as '*derivative* word' as Baron indicates above, might not be entirely neutral either. In fact, as the online *Duden* shows, the term's etymology, 'mannisco, eigentlich = der Männliche' (2016, n. pag.), essentially leads back to 'Mann'. Friedrich Kluge's 1883 *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* seconds this interrelation and describes 'Mensch' as 'Substantivierung eines Zugehörigkeitsadjektivs zu *Mann* in der alten Bedeutung "Mensch"' (1883, p. 473, emphasis in original). Additionally, Wilhelm Hoffmann's 1871 *Vollständiges Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* argues that the term is 'zusammengezogen aus Mann ... und der Silbe isch' (1871, p. 38). Consequently, the German 'Mensch' is as linked to 'male' as 'man'.

This is illustrated by Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm in their 1878 *Deutsches Wörterbuch*. According to the authors, the Old High German 'Mensch,' 'mannisko, mennisko [*ist*] *in jedem falle nur männlichen geschlechtes*' (1878, p. 2021, emphasis in original). And while the term underwent a shift in Middle High German from specific to generic, to 'Mensch,' 'im allgemeinen Sinne' (1878, p. 2021), it often remained restricted to the '*erwachsenen männlichen menschen, ... wo das weib ausdrücklich durch ein anderes substantiv oder fürwort hervorgehoben wird*' (1878, p. 2022, emphasis in original). This is highlighted by the grammatical neutralisation of 'Mensch,' i.e. 'das Mensch,' to refer to female human beings. Rather than employ 'der Mensch' inclusively, 'das Mensch' was created as a female alternative. Furthermore, 'das Mensch' was, and still often is, used 'verächtlich' (1883, p. 473), as Kluge points out, which underscores the conceptual separation into full and partial 'Menschen'. In fact, Peter Braun's 1997 *Personenbezeichnungen: Der Mensch in der deutschen Sprache* illustrates that this essential distinction remains to this day. Braun entitles one of his sections 'Frauen,' whereas no such counterpart exists for 'Männer'. And while '[a]llen Personenbezeichnungen gemeinsam ist das Hyperonym Mensch,' he elaborates, '[f]ür alle weiteren Betrachtungen werden zusätzliche semantische Merkmale konstitutiv, z.B. das Merkmal "weiblich"' (1997, p. 71). The use of 'zusätzlich' is here poignant; consequently, 'female' is still considered an additional, rather than intrinsic,

feature. 'Male,' on the other hand, seems to be the default 'semantisches Merkmal,' underscoring the term's continuing link to 'Mann'.

The interrelation between the two concepts is arguably visible also in the pronominalisation of 'Mensch' with 'er'. According to the *Duden*, the pronoun 'steht für ein männliches Substantiv, das eine Person oder Sache bezeichnet' (2016, n. pag.); the Brothers Grimm equally define it as '*das männliche pronomen dritter person*' (1878, p. 680, emphasis in original). And while some might argue that this definition refers to grammar rather than sex/gender, the use of 'männlich' is telling. Defined as 'dem zeugenden, befruchtenden Geschlecht angehörend'; 'zum Mann als Geschlechtswesen gehörend'; and 'für den Mann typisch, charakteristisch' (Duden, 2016, n. pag.), 'männlich' clearly implies a specific interpretation. '[*V*]on altersher pflegt unsere sprache die pronomina er *und* sie *substantivisch für mann und weib* ... *zu gebrauchen*' (1878, p. 690, emphasis in original), confirm the Brothers Grimm. Still, as Gisela Zifonun argues in '"*Man lebt nur einmal.*" Morphosyntax und Semantik des Pronomens *man*,' '[m]askulines Genus ist aber nicht mit dem Bezug auf das männliche Geschlecht gleichzusetzen' (2000, p. 235); a separation which is confirmed by the fourth definition of 'männlich,' '(Sprachwissenschaft) dem grammatischen Geschlecht Maskulinum zugehörend' (Duden, 2016, n. pag.). Nevertheless, Zifonun also admits that '[d]ass auf Personen mit morphologischen Maskulina und nicht mit Feminina Bezug genommen wird, ist allerdings historisches Produkt einer androzentrischen Kultur' (2000, p. 235). As Stefan problematises in *Häutungen*, '"[m]an" hat als frau keine identität' – like the term 'Mensch' itself, the male pronoun seems essentially linked to 'Mann'.

In contrast to the English noun 'man,' 'Mensch' shifted from specific, 'a male person,' to generic, 'a human being'. However, similarly to 'man,' this transfer is at odds with Leibniz's *salva veritate* principle: 'Mensch/Mann' as genus is essentially unable to represent the species 'human'. While 'Mann,' according to the Brothers Grimm, like 'man,' used to represent '*den menschen ohne rücksicht auf das geschlecht*' (1878, p. 1553, emphasis in original), the term's generic function is contested. In German as well as English, and in line with Penelope (Stanley) and McGowan's proposals, the Brothers Grimm confirm that '*nach der altgermanischen rechtlichen anschauung nur der mann im vollbesitze des menschlichen wesens sich befindet*' (1878, p. 1553,

emphasis in original). Consequently, in line with the key shift in meaning, the Grimms elaborate, '*liegt von uralter zeit her in dem worte bereits die heutige bedeutung beschlossen*' (1878, p. 1553, emphasis in original), i.e. 'erwachsene Person männlichen Geschlechts'. The derivative 'Mensch' is therefore a problematic term for women. In fact, as is 'human'; now defined as 'human being,' '[a] man, woman, or child of the species *Homo Sapiens*,' the term originates 'from Latin *humanus*, from *homo,* 'man, human being' (OD, 2016, n. pag., emphasis in original). Consequently, the term is as linked to 'male' as 'Mensch'. Samuel Johnson's 1755 *A Dictionary of the English Language* seconds this connection, and defines the term as '[h]aving the qualities of a man' and '[b]elonging to man' (1755, n. pag.). While Johnson might give 'man' the primary meaning '[h]uman being,' the term is also defined as '[n]ot a woman' (1755, n. pag.). In short, as with 'Mensch,' 'female' is considered a 'zusätzliches semantisches Merkmal,' rather than intrinsically 'human'.

The common pronominalisation of 'human' with 'he' underpins this understanding. Primarily defined as '[u]sed to refer to a man, boy, or male animal,' the pronoun also means '[u]sed to refer to a person or animal of unspecified sex' (OD, 2016, n. pag.). 'He,' like 'man,' therefore stakes claim to the specific as well as the generic. However, in contrast to 'man,' the male pronoun never was inclusive to begin with. For example, Walter W. Skeat's 1882 *A Concise Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* links 'he' to the Anglo-Saxon 'hē' (1882, p. 235). And while Skeat lists the female pronoun as 'hēo' (1882, p. 235), the male pronoun is not indicated to function generically. Furthermore, Johnson's definition exclusively associates 'he' with 'man,' and Hoad considers 'he' the 's[ingular] m[asculine] pers[onal] pron[oun]' (1986, p. 212). Ann Bodine investigates in 'Androcentrism in Prescriptive Grammar: Singular "They", Sex-Indefinite "He", and "He or She"' how the male pronoun came to be equated with 'person'. '[P]rior to the nineteenth century,' Bodine states, 'singular "they" was widely used in written, therefore presumably also in spoken, English' (1975, pp. 131-3). However, 'nineteenth-century prescriptive grammarians' felt this usage was incorrect on account of 'number' (1975, p. 133). Consequently, the grammarians advocated changing 'they' to 'he,' although the male pronoun also 'fails to agree with a singular, sex-indefinite antecedent by one feature – that of gender' (1975, p. 133). Bodine

argues that '[a] non-sexist "correction" would have been to advocate "he or she"'; however, grammarians considered this alternative '"clumsy", "pedantic", or "unnecessary"' (1975, p. 133). The male pronoun was simply declared to be generic, as eventually enshrined in an 1850 UK Act of Parliament.

However, the underlying ideology for generic 'he' was in place long before. In line with 'Mann/man' being considered the representative 'human,' *nach der altgermanischen rechtlichen anschauung*,' Thomas Wilson argues in 1560 that 'the worthier is preferred and set before. As a man is sette before a woman' (cited in Bodine, 1975, p. 134). To this Joshua Poole adds in 1646, '[t]he Masculine gender is more worthy than the Feminine' (cited in Bodine, 1975, p. 134). In fact, the premise male-as-norm, as reflected in language, has stubbornly persisted over the centuries – Paul Roberts' 1967 *The Roberts English Series*, for example, contends that 'grammatically, men are more important than women' (cited in Bodine, 1975, p. 139). But how did 'man' come to be regarded as 'more worthy' than 'woman'? And why did the term shift from generic to specific to begin with? I take a brief detour to Hesiod's *Theogony* next to explore the context for the equation of '[a]n adult human male' with 'human'. This provides an insight into the history of male-as-norm from a literary perspective – illuminating both the longevity of androcentric thinking and the role of fiction in perpetuating it. It will also make the case for how literary texts can help to challenge the linguistic status quo.

Detour: Theogony

As Penelope (Stanley) and McGowan argue, a shift in worldview might have contributed to the shift from specific 'wer' to the generic 'man'. And as Bodine's study underscores, the understanding of 'man' as 'human' remains persistent. Literary texts can provide a useful indication of how the premise male-as-norm came into being, and Hesiod's works, in particular, seem a good starting point. Hesiod wrote around 700 BC and is considered 'the oldest repository of Western culture' (2004, p. xii), according to Apostolos N. Athanassakis's introduction to *Hesiod: Theogony, Works and Days, Shield*. Hesiod's texts, Athanassakis adds, provide insight into 'the origin of the cosmos and the many divinities in it, as well as ... the social values and practices that make human

culture and human survival possible' (2004, p. xii). Robert Lamberton agrees with the central role of Hesiod for Western culture. '[He] is our principal source for the earliest recorded phase of Greek ideas about the gods and the relations of gods and men' (1988, p. xiii), he states in his introduction to *Hesiod*. He elaborates, '[Hesiod] also gives us what appears to be the first picture of the society and economy of rural Greece as it emerged from the dark age that separates European prehistory from European history' (1988, p. xiii). Hesiod's texts therefore seem a valuable source for understanding the context for man's ascent to the top of the sex/gender hierarchy. In the following I work with Stanley Lombardo's 1993 English translation of *Theogony* to trace how Hesiod perceives 'man' and 'woman'.

First of all, Hesiod considers the origins of 'female' and 'male' as essentially distinct: while 'Zeus' is named 'the Father of gods and men' (1993, p. 62), 'Pandora' is presented as the source of 'the race of female women' (1993, p. 77). Without a mother even, 'men' seem an entirely separate species from 'women,' a distinction which continues throughout the narrative. According to Hesiod, 'gods and men' lived happily together until Prometheus defied Zeus' wishes. In response to Prometheus' disobedience, Zeus created Pandora and 'the race of female women'. In effect, 'woman,' to Hesiod's mind, is little more than Zeus' revenge on 'man'. The process of Pandora's creation is here significant; she is 'plastered up [from] some clay' and made '[t]o look like a shy virgin' (1993, p. 77). So not only is Pandora considered to be artificial, 'plastered up'; she clearly holds sexual significance, 'a shy virgin'. And it is her sexuality which encapsulates man's punishment:

> And they were stunned
> Immortal gods and mortal men, when they saw
> The sheer deception, irresistible to men
> From her is the race of female women
> The deadly race and population of women
> A great infestation among mortal men (1993, p. 77)

The use of 'deception' and 'irresistible' underscores Pandora's artificiality and sexual function. Pandora deceives, according to Hesiod, because she is created from 'clay' and made to 'look like,' instead of being, 'a shy virgin'. This deception, however, is also what makes Pandora 'irresistible'; she *represents*

what 'men' desire, i.e. 'a shy virgin'. The sexual desire for Pandora traps 'mortal men' to accept the 'race of female women' into their midst. And as 'deadly race' and 'great infestation' highlight, this acceptance is, to Hesiod's mind, the downfall of 'man'.

Nicole Loraux confirms in *The Children of Athena: Athenian Ideas about Citizenship and the Division between the Sexes* that *Theogony* presents women 'in contrast to the collectivity that is already an established principle of mankind' (1993, p. 74). Furthermore, '[t]he manufacture of the first woman,' as Pietro Pucci highlights in *Hesiod and the Language of Poetry*, 'debases and humiliates woman in comparison to man' (1977, p. 88): it not only separates men and women into two distinct species, but reduces 'woman' to an artificial construct created to punish 'man'. Essentially then, Hesiod presents the female sex/gender not only as inferior to the male, but as a 'deadly' intrusion to the unity of 'man'. Lamberton agrees, 'the *Theogony* dramatizes the construction of a realm that excludes woman – and that realm is first of all the world of discourse itself (the sphere of *logos* as that of agora)' (1988, p. 102, emphasis in original). While 'woman' is presented as other, belonging to the 'plastered up race of female women,' 'man' is asserted as the original 'human,' fathered by Zeus into the unity of 'gods and men'. This understanding might have played a key role in fostering an environment which encouraged the eventual shift from 'wer-man' to 'man,' i.e. male-as-norm. Furthermore, the generic use of 'man,' 'Mensch,' 'er' and 'he' continues to perpetuate the presumed superiority of 'a male person' to this day. Lamberton confirms that 'we are deeply implicated in this discourse' (1988, p. 101). 'What took place in a dusty little Boeotian town some 2,500 years ago,' he states, 'already embodies in full-blown form attitudes in which the whole subsequent tradition of European literature is implicated' (1988, p. 101). What is now considered a (linguistic) norm once had sociocultural origins, and *Theogony* provides a valuable insight into the workings of androcentric ideology. The resulting notion male-as-norm was/is perpetuated by the majority of the Western canon, as Lamberton highlights. In contrast, Le Guin and Stefan employ fiction to problematise the linguistic status quo. By exposing the dominant use of 'he' and 'man' as a sociocultural product, they highlight that literary texts can equally challenge norms. Thereby Le Guin

and Stefan illustrate that fiction is not 'just' art, but has powerful political potential.

Conclusions

The Left Hand of Darkness and *Häutungen* both effectively engage with and problematise the linguistic status quo. While Le Guin's and Stefan's approaches might differ at surface level, each narrative highlights the exclusive function of male generic terms. Genly perceives 'he' as linked to 'man,' and consequently feels unable to associate the male pronoun with 'woman' or 'person'. Ong agrees with this essential connection. She comments that the use of the male pronoun erases women from her imagination. In effect, both Genly and Ong express that 'he' fails women. While these instances of reflection might be rare against the backdrop of a seemingly unquestioned use of male nouns and pronouns, they show that Le Guin's narrator is certainly aware of the impact of male generic terms. *Häutungen*, on the other hand, seems more direct in its problematisation of the linguistic status quo. The inadequacy of the third person pronoun 'man' to represent women and men, and indeed androgynes, equally is challenged in the introduction and confirmed in its extension to the male noun in the narrative. Additionally, Stefan/narrator shifts the male generic pronoun 'er' to 'sie' to question the underlying link between 'Mensch' and 'Mann'. She thereby exposes the premise male-as-norm and its impact on imagination.

Both *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Häutungen* illustrate the issues inherent in the linguistic and conceptual equation of 'man' and 'human'. And this equation, when approached with the help of Leibniz's *salva veritate* principle, is problematic also in relation to the logical function of language. According to Leibniz, a genus is essentially unable to replace the species, i.e. 'a male person' cannot represent 'humanity'. Consequently the terms 'man' and 'human' are not congruent. In effect, 'man' does not only exclude 'woman' conceptually, but is essentially unable to represent both sexes/genders to begin with. As Benson Mates highlights in *The Philosophy of Leibniz: Metaphysics and Language*, '[u]nderlying Leibniz's entire logic, metaphysics, and philosophy of language is the traditional view that the essential role of language is to represent our thoughts about the extralinguistic world' (1986, p. 47). And male

generic terms, as illustrated in *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Häutungen*, do not communicate 'woman', nor androgyne, as well as 'man'. In fact, they predominantly convey 'man' only. While 'a male person' might have been deemed to be the representative 'human' previously, as illustrated in Hesiod's *Theogony*, 'our thoughts about the extralinguistic world,' in this case 'humanity,' now include 'woman'. As Le Guin and Stefan illustrate, by failing to communicate these 'thoughts' appropriately, male generic nouns and pronouns fail 'the essential role of language'.

Language matters, as 'not only are we unable, according to Leibniz, to talk about concepts or ideas without words, we cannot even think in concepts or ideas without words' (Ishiguro, 1990, p. 24). To think in 'new concepts,' such as 'woman' as equally 'human,' new 'words' seem to be needed – 'words' which are not based on male-as-norm. Stefan/narrator recognises this need in *Häutungen*: 'ich muß neue worte schaffen, begriffe aussortieren, anders schreiben, anders benutzen'; the existing terms are 'zu dürftig' (1975, pp. 146-7). Equally Le Guin has experimented with language; she suggested to replace 'he' with the neutral 'a' in a 1985 screenplay version of *The Left Hand of Darkness* (Livia, 2001, p. 142). Le Guin and Stefan therefore clearly understood the limitations of the linguistic status quo, and each narrative is a pioneering text in the literary problematisation of androcentric language. In particular, both texts engage with the representation of women and men by putting the spotlight on male generic terms. Building on this, writers have tried to conceive ways to represent women, androgynes and men more inclusively. June Arnold's *The Cook and the Carpenter* and Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, for example, employ epicene pronouns to challenge the linguistic and conceptual male-as-norm. In the next chapter I compare their linguistic innovations and situate them in relation to Le Guin's and Stefan's problematisation. I thereby assess the effectiveness of Arnold's and Piercy's calls for linguistic neutrality.

Chapter 3: Proposing linguistic neutrality

The Cook and the Carpenter and

Woman on the Edge of Time

The problematisation of the linguistic status quo by linguists and novelists alike prompted literary writers to push the boundaries of representation. Pronouns, in particular, took centre stage and June Arnold's 1973 *The Cook and the Carpenter* and Marge Piercy's 1976 *Woman on the Edge of Time* are two key texts to reimagine anaphors. In this chapter I evaluate Arnold's and Piercy's inventions – with reference also to the German translations – as a proposal for an alternative understanding of sex/gender and language. This discussion is framed by Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept 'eine Sprache vorstellen heißt, sich eine Lebensform vorstellen'. Wittgenstein suggests that linguistic representation can help to conceive other forms of being; he thereby interlinks language and imagination. This relationship is played out in Arnold's and Piercy's narratives. In fact, *The Cook and the Carpenter* and *Woman on the Edge of Time* not only present a potential alternative to the status quo but also illuminate boundaries of linguistic expression. An assessment of existing epicenes provides an additional dimension to the authors' proposals. By exploring neutral terms from an etymological and historical perspective, I gauge opportunities as well as limitations. This further expands the literary frame of this thesis.

Wittgenstein's *Lebensform*

Ludwig Wittgenstein, like Leibniz, applied his mind to diverse fields of inquiry. In fact, it was his studies in mechanical engineering which inspired him to pursue the philosophy of mathematics and logic, and later the philosophy of language. Wittgenstein's *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (PU) are of particular interest to this thesis. Published in 1953, the PU are, according to Wolfgang Kienzler, 'eines der bedeutendsten philosophischen Werke des 20. Jahrhunderts' (2007, p. 9). This standing relates to Wittgenstein's exploration of the social function of language, which had a profound impact on later thought. First of all, Wittgenstein believes that language-learning is highly regimented. He explains

that '[d]as Lehren der Sprache ist hier kein Erklären, sondern ein Abrichten' (1953, p. 4); meaning that language-learners are not taught via explanation. Wittgenstein elaborates, '[d]ie Kinder werden dazu erzogen, *diese* Tätigkeiten zu verrichten, *diese* Wörter dabei zu gebrauchen, und *so* auf die Worte des Anderen zu reagieren' (1953, p. 4, emphasis in original). And as children are trained, that is 'abgerichtet,' to perform certain tasks, to use certain terms and respond to others in a certain way, they are trained to function within the boundaries of a certain sociocultural understanding.

This concept of language-learning reminds of Stefan/narrator's evaluation of the overall socialisation process. 'Wir sind *abgerichtet*,' she states, '[d]ieses kümmerliche wort sozialisation! Dieser beschönigende begriff konditionierung!' (Stefan, 1975, p. 111, emphasis in original). It is the particular social training of human beings, Stefan implies, which results in a particular behavioural performance. Language plays a central part in the practice of 'Abrichten,' as Wittgenstein confirms. However, neither language nor behaviour is fixed. He explains, '[m]an kann sich leicht eine Sprache vorstellen, die nur aus Befehlen und Meldungen in der Schlacht besteht. – Oder eine Sprache, die nur aus Fragen besteht und einem Ausdruck der Bejahung und der Verneinung' (1953, p. 8). Such languages are tied to particular 'Tätigkeiten'. For example, a language 'der Schlacht' requires a certain environment to operate effectively; a language of giving and receiving orders is particular to the context of war. As a language is inextricably linked to a particular context, Wittgenstein concludes, 'eine Sprache vorstellen heißt, sich eine Lebensform vorstellen' (1953, p. 8). However, while Wittgenstein illustrates his understanding of 'imagining a language,' his use of 'Lebensform' is obscure. What does Wittgenstein actually mean by it? Marie McGinn gives one explanation in *The Routledge Guidebook to Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations*. '[T]he term "form of life",' she states, 'is intended to evoke the idea that speaking a language is a way of conducting oneself with words in a life with others' (2013, p. 55). Understood as such, 'Lebensform' refers to the social function of language – speakers employ language to communicate with others. This communication takes place in the context of 'life,' and as this 'life' is shared with others, speakers have to be able to communicate in a mutually accepted way to be able to effectively 'conduct oneself with words'.

Wittgenstein elaborates that 'in der *Sprache* stimmen die Menschen überein. Dies ist keine Übereinstimmung der Meinungen, sondern der Lebensform' (1953, p. 88, emphasis in original). In short, the particular context, a particular 'Lebensform,' is agreed upon and reflected in the collective language. Consequently, 'Lebensform,' as Karl Brose coins it in *Sprachspiel und Kindersprache: Studien zu Wittgensteins "Philosophischen Untersuchungen"*, signifies 'den "gesellschaftlichen" Handlungs-Spiel-Raum ..., in dem sich Sprechen und Sprache abspielen' (1985, p. 31). As mentioned above, 'Sprache' and 'Lebensform' are flexible. 'The idea of a form of life,' McGinn states, 'applies ... to historical groups of individuals who are bound together into a community by a shared set of complex, language-involving practices' (2013, p. 55). These groups, the author highlights, are shaped by a particular set of circumstances. As circumstances are 'historical,' i.e. bound to a certain context, any shift is therefore accompanied by an adaptation of the 'language-involving practices'. Equally, '[t]he techniques that constitute a language take their point from what lies around them, in the lives of those who use the language ... New techniques arise and others fall away ... in response to the needs and purposes of those who employ them' (2013, p. 54). As a result, Wittgenstein explains, 'neue Typen der Sprache ... entstehen und andere veralten und werden vergessen' (1953, p. 11). Linguistic change is therefore not only a possibility but a necessity in some instances. As language is a tool to communicate it has to be fit for purpose – and this purpose is determined by the requirements of the speech community.

June Arnold's *The Cook and the Carpenter* and Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* imagine a radically different 'language' and 'form of life' to the status quo. Following on from Stefan's and Le Guin's problematisation of male generic terms, Arnold and Piercy experiment with the linguistic representation of women and men, and, in particular, with epicene terms. Before I evaluate the authors' innovations in relation to Wittgenstein's proposal, I present their literary approaches first. The aim is to assess how a neutral 'form of life' is imagined in language and what the consequences of such an imagination might be.

The Cook and the Carpenter and Woman on the Edge of Time

June Arnold's *The Cook and the Carpenter* and Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* were both written around the same time, 1973 and 1976 respectively, and both experiment with the representation of women and men. However, the texts differ in narrative perspective. To begin with a brief summary of the novels: *The Cook and the Carpenter*, narrated by 'the carpenter,' tells the story of a commune in Texas. Against the backdrop of dominant social and linguistic practices the group tries to create an egalitarian alternative. The attempt to establish co-habitation unmarred by biological markers is communicated by the group's use of the epicene pronoun 'na,' as well as names which aim to obscure the sex/gender of the referent, such as 'cook,' 'Stubby' and 'Chris'. Those on the outside of the commune, on the other hand, remain predominantly specific in the carpenter's narrative – this linguistic separation signifies the central conflict between the status quo and neutrality. Connie, the narrator of *Woman on the Edge of Time*, also belongs to a separate community; however this group is not of her making or choosing. Deemed 'not normal,' Connie is interned in a mental hospital. The narrative follows her experiences in the confined environment as well as in a future society, which Connie accesses through contact with Luciente, one of its inhabitants. Luciente lives in a reality where sex/gender no longer matter and this irrelevance is expressed through the neutral pronoun 'person'. In contrast, Connie employs traditional pronouns, thereby highlighting her role as insider/outsider to both the dominant norms and the egalitarian society.

The following excerpts from *The Cook and the Carpenter* and *Woman on the Edge of Time* illustrate this central difference in perspective:

> The carpenter walked around to the east side of the porch and started the sander up again. ... The sander screeched across the worn boards, pulling up the patches of thick deck paint in gluey streaks, melting it, mixing the smell of burning lead and color into the air already thick with grit and dampness. The carpenter's breathing was protectively shallow. Na wore a strip of diaper around nan forehead to catch the sweat and prevent it from streaking nan glasses. (Arnold, 1973, p. 4)

'... Magdalena is unusual. Person does not switch jobs but is permanent head of this house of children. It is per calling. Sometimes a gift expresses itself so strongly, like Jackrabbit's need to create color and form, like Magdalena's need to work with children, that it shapes a life. … person must do what person has to do.' A small figure with velvety black skin – she had to be a woman from the delicacy of her bones – a long neck, hair cut to her scalp in an austere tracery of curls, descended toward them, smiling slightly. (Piercy, 1976, p. 136)

Both passages are narrated in the third person; the pronoun 'na,' replacing 'she' or 'he,' is used to refer to the 'carpenter'. Equally the use of 'them' in Piercy's narrative, rather than 'us,' confirms a third-person narrator. However, the use of the third person perspective also marks a key difference between the two texts. While 'na' is an integral part of the narrative of *The Cook and the Carpenter*, the epicene pronoun 'person' is only employed in reported speech. Connie's pronoun usage remains specific; 'she had to be a woman,' 'her bones,' and 'her scalp' highlight that the narrator of *Woman on the Edge of Time* continues to employ the traditional pronominal system. But the names and actions given in each neutral description seem to equally guide interpretation: the 'carpenter,' 'start[ing] the sander up' and '[wearing] a strip of diaper around nan forehead,' arguably evokes one particular sex/gender, while 'Magdalena,' 'permanent head of this house of children' which is 'per calling,' evokes another. This seems to defy conceptual neutrality; however, the conflict between 'na'/'person' and interpretation might also be what each narrative aims to achieve. As Arnold states in the preface to *The Cook and the Carpenter*, '[s]ince the differences between men and women are so obvious to all ... I have therefore used one pronoun for both, trusting the reader to know which is which' (1973, n. pag.). While withholding sex/gender on the pronominal level, Arnold's narrative also expects readers to 'identify' it.

The need to identify whether a character is female or male reflects the norms of the wider sociocultural context. If sex/gender is culturally and linguistically significant, neutrality can only be an alien concept. Genly poignantly comments on this dilemma in *The Left Hand of Darkness*: 'my efforts took the form of self-consciously seeing a Gethenian first as a man, then as a woman, forcing him into those categories so irrelevant to his nature and so essential to my own' (Le Guin, 1969a, p. 18). Equally Connie seems to feel

coerced to ascertain sex/gender: 'she had to be a woman,' Connie observes in relation to Magdalena, despite Magdalena's neutral context. And as Genly finds 'clues' to aid categorisation, Connie classifies on the basis of names, 'Magdalena,' and physicality, 'the delicacy of her bones'. Even though sex/gender might be pronominally absent, neutrality seems bound to fail against the weight of Connie's own sociocultural environment. She seems to have to identify 'which is which,' as Arnold terms it.

Connie's role as an indirect commentator on the neutral pronoun marks another key difference between the two passages. While Connie interprets Luciente's use of 'person' from within her own context, the carpenter provides no such filter: the epicene 'na' is presented without qualification. Jan Hokenson argues in 'The Pronouns of Gomorrha: A Lesbian Prose Tradition' that it is this immediate replacement which makes the text 'profoundly unsettl[ing]' (1988, p. 67): '[w]ith ciphers instead of common subject pronouns, we are unable to imagine the body. Unable to imagine the body, we are unable to relate to the "self"' (1988, p. 67). However, this failure to link pronoun and body highlights norms that often remain unnoticed. In effect, it shows how interconnected 'she' and 'he' are with a certain understanding. By constantly asking 'is it female? is it male?,' Hokenson states, '[readers come] face to face with every shred of our own sexism' (1988, p. 67). The direct encounter with neutral pronouns therefore unsettles any easy assumptions linked to anaphors. Julia M. Allen and Lester Faigley agree in 'Discursive Strategies for Social Change: An Alternative Rhetoric of Argument'. 'This lack of gender definition [in Arnold's text],' the authors argue, 'forces readers to guess at the gender of each character – and to reflect upon their need to know' (1995, p. 148). This 'need to know,' to identify 'which is which,' reveals specific expectations which the epicene 'na' both highlights and disturbs: 'because pronouns are the most direct representation of the subject, a change in pronoun will necessarily affect the cultural construction and expectations of the subject' (1995, p. 147). A neutral pronoun then demands a reassessment of the significance of the biological markers 'female' and 'male,' as well as the social behaviours linked to them.

Pamela J. Annas confirms this disruption in 'New Worlds, New Words: Androgyny in Feminist Science Fiction' also in relation to Piercy's text. '[N]eutral terms, "person" and "per" tend not to carry with them a whole set of

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assumptions and expectations, based on sex, about what is possible for a given character' (1978, p. 154), she says. The subsequent lack of 'assumptions' and 'expectations' connected to neutral pronouns is therefore, as in *The Cook and the Carpenter*, a clear illustration of the (over)importance of sex/gender. As Annas argues, '[i]n a society that defines people by sex, sex is a social and political issue' (1978, p. 155); and the adjustment of 'she/he' to 'person,' Sarah Lefanu adds in *In the Chinks of the World Machine: Feminism and Science Fiction*, is an expression of 'the interconnection of language and politics' (1988, p. 63). The linguistic presence or absence of sex/gender is consequently linked to a particular worldview. Anna Livia agrees in *Pronoun Envy: Literary Uses of Linguistic Gender* that '[g]endered pronouns are clearly established as the status quo, while the epicene forms are an egalitarian development' (2001, p. 152). As a result of this linguistic development, Connie, and readers, realise that the egalitarian society no longer needs to differentiate between 'female' and 'male' – in contrast, the status quo relies on this categorisation.

Critics agree that Arnold's and Piercy's narratives both highlight the essential link between sex/gender and language. Equally, they seem to agree on the success of each text; as shown above, *The Cook and the Carpenter* and *Woman on the Edge of Time* generally received positive reviews regarding their linguistic innovations. This might have several reasons, such as the particular publishing context as well as their readership. Arnold's narrative was published by Daughters Inc., a publisher Arnold founded with Parke Bowman. As Kayann Short describes the focus of Daughters Inc. in 'Do-It-Yourself Feminism,' '[it] published nineteen of the most experimental novels found in the feminist lesbian movement' (1990, p. 21). Readers of *The Cook and the Carpenter* might have been familiar with experimentation and therefore supportive in the main. This is illustrated in Sam Stockwell, Carol Anne Douglas and Margie Crow's piece 'Four by Daughters Inc.': while '[o]ne of the criticisms ... is that the carpenter gets too didactic, rather than experiential,' they also add, '[t]rue, the politics are expressed didactically, but they are the setting, not the focus' (1974, p. 20). Critics who engaged with the novel seem positively predisposed toward it, whatever the narrative's limitations.

Woman on the Edge of Time was equally well-received. Initially published by Alfred A. Knopf in the U.S., the novel was soon taken on by The Women's

Press in the UK, a feminist publisher. Reviewers therefore perhaps shared a similar value system as presented in the novel. Additionally, critics were able to compare Piercy's novel with the work of authors who had first problematised the linguistic status quo, such as Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*. As Annas argues, '*Woman on the Edge of Time* ... [is] more immediately threatening to the reader than Ursula Le Guin precisely because ... [it is] describing the present more explicitly than Le Guin is' (1978, p. 155). To this Meryl Pugh adds in '"You canna change the laws of fiction, Jim!" A Personal Account of Reading Science Fiction': '[i]n contrast to *The Left Hand of Darkness*, ... it tackles the issue of language's gendered nature' (1999, p. 27). The groundwork provided by authors such as Le Guin therefore might have contributed to the particular reception of Arnold's and Piercy's texts.

The longevity of each author's pronominal choice, on the other hand, is decidedly more contested. Livia, for example, feels that the pronouns fundamentally diverge in potential uptake: '[w]hile Piercy's pronouns *per* and *person* are clearly related to the epicene noun *person*, ... Arnold's *naself* stands out, not readily assimilated' (2001, p. 147, emphasis in original). In the following I evaluate the use of nouns and pronouns, and names and titles in more depth. I thereby assess the effectiveness of *The Cook and the Carpenter* and *Woman on the Edge of Time* in relation to proposing linguistic neutrality.

Nouns and pronouns

As quoted above, each text employs a slightly different perspective. *The Cook and the Carpenter* is narrated from within the context of an egalitarian commune, while *Woman on the Edge of Time* provides access to a future society through Connie's perceptions. This difference can already be seen in the opening sections. '"You know Texas. Do you think it's true?" the cook had asked an hour ago. The carpenter's answer was forgotten now in nan pursuit of truth: do I know Texas? Na surrounded this fact in the usual way' (Arnold, 1973, p. 3). In contrast, *Woman on the Edge of Time* opens as follows: 'Connie got up from her kitchen table and walked slowly to the door. Either I saw him or I didn't and I'm crazy for real this time, she thought' (1976, p. 9). In accordance with their positions as insiders or outsiders to the neutral community, the carpenter is

referred to by the epicene 'na' and Connie by the traditional 'she'. However, neither usage is fixed: the carpenter employs specific pronouns at the end of *The Cook and the Carpenter*, and while Connie might not use 'person' to refer to her counterparts in the future society, her assignment of 'female' and 'male' is fluid. This fluidity is most obvious in her interactions with Luciente – as the opening line quoted above indicates, Connie initially identifies Luciente as male: 'Either I saw *him* or I didn't'. This classification is further established by subsequent references to Luciente: 'Dolly had heard her talking with Luciente: therefore he existed' (1976, p. 10); 'she had been hallucinating with increasing sharpness a strange man' (1976, p. 31), and '[y]oung man of middling height with sleek black hair to his shoulders' (1976, p. 33) are just three examples of the linguistic identification of Luciente's sex/gender. Taking the cue from either the androcentric premise male-as-norm, Luciente's physicality, Luciente's behaviour or all three, Connie categorises Luciente as one sex/gender rather than the other. This is expressed linguistically through the use of 'man' and 'he'.

However, this identification is less stable than it might initially seem, and Connie soon begins to waver in her assessment: 'He lacked the macho presence of men in her own family'. Furthermore, Luciente's voice seems to her mind '[h]igh-pitched, almost effeminate' (1976, p. 36). This destabilisation continues throughout her encounters with Luciente; however, Connie does not adjust her pronoun usage until she has physical evidence:

> Pressed reluctantly, nervously against Luciente, she felt the coarse fabric of his shirt and ... breasts! She jumped back. 'You're a woman!' '... Of course I'm female.' Luciente looked a little disgusted. She stared at Luciente. Now she could begin to see him/her as a woman. (1976, pp. 66-7)

Connie seems to require bodily proof to shift away from male nouns and pronouns. Nevertheless, her decision is far from final even at this stage. Despite confirmation of Luciente's 'breasts!', Connie continues to be puzzled by Luciente's behaviour. 'Luciente spoke, she moved with that air of brisk unselfconscious authority Connie associated with men. Luciente sat down, taking up more space than women ever did' (1976, p. 67); and 'Luciente's face and voice and body now seemed female if not at all feminine' (1976, p. 99) are just two examples of the perceived conflict between social gender and biological

sex. However, it is sex which ultimately determines the terms of reference: from the moment of Connie's identification, Luciente remains 'she' and 'woman'. 'Although she could sense in Luciente a bridled impatience, the woman held her gently ... A woman who liked her: she felt that too' (1976, p. 68), Connie confirms. In fact, just as Luciente remained 'male' until proven otherwise, it is the physical categorisation of Luciente as 'female' which overrides social expectations.

Like Genly who shifts from 'he' to 'she' in his encounter with Faxe, Connie's pronominal shift highlights the importance of sex/gender in her sociocultural context. She has to identify Luciente as either 'male' or 'female,' and this need is expressed through the pronouns 'she' or 'he'. This linguistic separation stands in direct opposition to Luciente's pronoun usage: in her future society human beings are not categorised as one or the other, and this egalitarian understanding is represented by the neutral pronoun 'person'. In contrast to Connie, Luciente consistently employs 'person,' and as 'person' encompasses the whole of humanity, her classification does not get compromised or swayed. To give just one example, 'I was also mother to Neruda, who is waiting to study shelf farming. Person will start in the fall' (1976, p. 74), Luciente says. However, despite being a consistent linguistic feature, the epicene pronoun is certainly not without history. In fact, it marks a shift from the traditional system used by Connie: 'we've reformed pronouns' (1976, p. 42), Luciente explains. 'It was part of women's long revolution. When we were breaking all the old hierarchies' (1976, p. 105). Luciente might here be referring to 'breaking the hierarchies' of reproduction in particular but her statement is also transferrable to linguistic changes. The replacement of the specific pronouns 'she' and 'he' by the neutral 'person' is nothing if not 'revolutionary'.

A similar linguistic revolution took place in the Texan commune in *The Cook and the Carpenter*. The narrative is set in the present rather than a possible future, and therefore directly at odds with the traditional pronoun system: members employ 'na' to obscure sex/gender. This opposition is visible in the following: '[t]hey were planning to come Saturday, the woman said,' the carpenter recounts, '[t]here was no doubt in the cook's mind, one knew from the way na told the story, that na not only believed the woman but admired na tremendously' (1973, p. 4, p. 6). On the basis of 'na,' the 'cook' could be either

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'female' or 'male' whereas 'woman' cannot. But the pronoun does not exist in isolation; as the name 'Magdalena' in *Woman on the Edge of Time* potentially contributes to one particular interpretation, so does 'cook' come with certain connotations – the German term 'Koch', due to its default grammatical gender, arguably even more so. As nouns, such as 'cook,' are intertwined with names in Arnold's novel I address these in more detail in the following section. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that pronouns are necessarily interpreted as part of the wider narrative; consequently, 'na,' like 'person,' inevitably struggles to erase sex/gender completely. Just as Connie is forced to linguistically categorise 'she' or 'he,' so are readers of *The Cook and the Carpenter* bound by their sociocultural contexts.

The essential significance of sex/gender is highlighted in Arnold's novel. For example, by referring to the outsider as 'the woman,' 'she' is specifically categorised as 'female' which points out the importance of this biological marker beyond the commune. At the same time, however, 'the woman' is referred to as 'na' just like the group's members; the cook 'admired na tremendously,' the carpenter states. This pronominalisation seems to imply a hybrid status; 'the woman' seems at once part of the group and outside of it. While sex/gender might matter in her sociocultural context, the text seems to imply, she is identified as open to transition. However, this position is rare; most are presented in direct opposition to the commune's neutrality. In fact, a key part of the narrative is the threat of violence, and male violence in particular. '[T]he men were talking and laughing and carrying on about what they would do' (1973, p. 5), the woman explains. The cook's question, '[b]ut what were ... are the men planning to do' (1973, p. 6), might not be answered in the specific; however, the woman's response implies some form of confrontation, '[w]hatever it was last night, they're liable to think up eight different things by Saturday' (1973, p. 6). As to the root cause of the threat of violence – 'we should find out why these men feel threatened and explain to them that they're wrong to feel threatened' (1973, p. 16) –, group members understand that the threat stems from their alternative existence. But while this alternative is established peacefully, 'the men' and 'these men' feel the need to respond with violence.

Violence is also a key component of Luciente's egalitarian society; the inhabitants of her community are forced to defend the gains of 'women's long

revolution'. In fact, this struggle results in death for many of them, including Luciente's lover 'Jackrabbit'. Nevertheless, giving in might result in succumbing to an extreme version of the status quo. As Connie learns in her encounter with Gildina, who exists in a parallel reality to that of Luciente, the sex/gender division Connie is familiar with can also be revised in other ways. In Gildina's society, the 'female,' '[c]osmetically fixed for sex use' and 'ashed' when no longer needed (1976, p. 299, p. 290), exists only to service the 'male,' who, like a machine, 'turns off fear and pain and fatigue and sleep' (1976, p. 297). This essential difference is embodied in the pronouns 'she' and 'he' which represent two extreme ends of the sex/gender hierarchy. Establishing, and defending, neutrality, *Woman on the Edge of Time* seems to say, might help to prevent this ultimate division and denigration of human beings. *The Cook and the Carpenter* makes a similar case; however, in Arnold's narrative the status quo is shown to succeed. As a result, the commune reverts back into a 'group of women' (1973, p. 139), and as 'women' they are linked to the specific 'she'. 'The accusation sent the carpenter's mind back into a reinterpretation of her past; her imagination offered up a flood of faults' (1973, p. 151) marks the end of consistent neutral pronominalisation. In a context which categorises people according to their sex/gender, the narrative seems to indicate, human beings can only be divided into either 'female' or 'male'.

Of course, pronouns such as 'na' and 'person' are only one means to express neutrality in language; nouns are another tool to do so. To give a few examples: 'permanent head of this house of children' (1976, p. 136), which is Magdalena's role in *Woman on the Edge of Time*, has neutral connotations at first instance. This is confirmed by the *Oxford Dictionaries*' online platform: 'head' is defined as '[a] person in charge of something; a director or leader' (2016, n. pag.). Furthermore, 'person,' defined as '[a] human being regarded as an individual' (2016, n. pag.), refers to either sex/gender. However, the historical connotations of 'director,' '[a] person who is in charge of an activity, department, or organization' (2016, n. pag.); 'leader,' '[t]he person who leads or commands a group, organization, or country' (2016, n. pag.), and indeed 'head,' seem to sway interpretation. While Connie's observation that 'Magdalena' is a 'woman' might override any male-specific interpretation, Magdalena is introduced as the 'head' in a field which is considered female-specific to begin

with: she is 'head of this house of children'. In short, the term remains unchallenged in its dominant associations; it seems to correspond with the norms of Connie's context, i.e. 'woman' in charge of children only. The German translation, 'Leitungsperson' (2012, p. 163), causes a similar dilemma. While neutral at surface level – 'Person' is defined as 'Mensch als Individuum' (2016, n. pag.) by the online *Duden* – 'Leitung' has certain historical connotations; 'Tätigkeit, Funktion, Amt des Leitens' and 'leitende Personen, Führungsgruppe' (2016, n. pag.) are traditionally associated with 'Mann' rather than 'Frau'. Interestingly, however, both 'Person' and 'Leitung' are grammatically female which, in conjunction with 'dieses Kinderhauses,' counteract the dominant connotations and imply female leadership. But as this shift in interpretation shows, the German term equally feeds off preconceptions, i.e. male-as-norm and female-as-specific, and is therefore unable to function neutrally in the readers' sociocultural context.

Another example is Luciente's use of 'healer' (1976, p. 159). While the term again appears neutral at surface level, defined as '[a] person who claims to be able to cure a disease or injury using special powers' (OD, 2016, n. pag.), it seems to imply 'female' rather than 'male'. In contrast to a medical doctor, a 'healer' merely 'claims to cure disease or injury'. As Connie's identification highlights, '[w]hat does she do in the hospital?' (1976, p. 159), the healer is indeed a 'woman'. Equally, the German translation's 'Heilperson' (2012, p. 192) seems to evoke 'Frau' first and foremost, arguably more so due to the term's female grammatical gender. Connie's equation with the role as 'Hexendoktor' briefly disrupts this assocation; however, the context of 'Handauflegen, Schmerzlindern, Knochenflicken' (2012, p. 192) seems to reassert a female-specific interpretation: 'Handauflegen' and 'Schmerzlindern' are arguably practices predominantly associated with women. A neutral understanding, despite the use of 'Person,' seems therefore hard to conceive. However, this far from reflects any inherent meaning but exposes Connie's, and the reader's, associations. In fact, any specific interpretation seems to be driven by the need to identify sex/gender by any means necessary. The nouns employed in *The Cook and the Carpenter* are a similar case in point. As terms, such as 'cook' and 'carpenter,' are predominantly employed as personal names, I evaluate them in relation to this additional layer of meaning. In the following I assess the

names and titles employed in each narrative in light of their support or disruption of linguistic neutrality.

Names and titles

Titles are only employed in the narration of the dominant context: 'Mr. Jack' (1973, p. 5) is used in reference to one of the potential aggressors in *The Cook and the Carpenter*, for example, and 'Miss Ferguson' (1976, p. 25) – the German version also employs 'Miss' rather than 'Fräulein' (2012, p. 26) – is mentioned by Connie in relation to her caseworker. In the carpenter's community and Luciente's society, on the other hand, titles have been omitted. Just as the lack of titles makes an important point about linguistic neutrality – sex/gender is irrelevant for both groups and so is status – names are equally significant. However, in line with their distinct narrative perspectives, Arnold and Piercy employ names differently. For example, while Arnold's narrative uses job titles, 'carpenter' and 'cook,' to refer to the novel's main characters, Piercy, on the other hand, employs recognisable first names instead, such as 'Connie' and 'Luciente'. To begin with Arnold's choices, 'cook' and 'carpenter' obscure sex/gender in line with the epicene pronoun; and at first sight, both job titles seem linguistically neutral. 'Carpenter,' defined as '[a] person who makes and repairs wooden objects and structures' (2016, n. pag.) by the *Oxford Dictionaries*' online platform, seems as open to interpretation as 'cook,' '[a] person who prepares and cooks food, especially as a job or in a specified way' (2016, n. pag.). However, both also have specific connotations in the reader's sociocultural context. 'Carpenter' is traditionally considered a 'male' occupation – Jesus was a 'carpenter,' not Mary – and 'cook,' although less weighted, seems possibly more 'female' as the male prestige term is generally 'chef'. In fact, these understandings appear to be supported by the narrative. For example, the carpenter is described as '[w]hat you say is important to people ... People have learned to value your mind because it is clearer than most of ours, and usually fair' (1973, p. 46). The cook, on the other hand, is perceived as follows: '[n]a is too sensitive; na has spent nan life feeling what other people – the other person – feel(s); it is the instinct of the short and the method of the timid. Na never creates a situation of nan own' (1973, p. 42). The carpenter's

'clear mind,' 'valued by others,' is opposed to the cook's 'feelings' and 'timidity'. As these character traits have been historically associated with one particular sex/gender, they sway interpretation. A German translation[5] might challenge the association of 'cook' in particular – 'der Koch' and 'der Tischler' are both grammatically and conceptually male. However, it would equally inhibit a neutral understanding. In fact, because of grammar, linguistic neutrality seems even more difficult to achieve in the German language. While an epicene pronoun potentially opens up the possiblity of a neutral understanding in English, a more profound revision of German would need to take place to evoke a neutral referent. 'Der Tischler, na', for example, remains more firmly linked to 'male' than its English equivalent – to convey that the term is neutral its grammatical structure would need to be adapted as well. Nevertheless, even if this was achievable, German, just like English, remains subject to sociocultural norms. And as long as a binary understanding of human beings shapes interpretation linguistic neutrality continues to be a challenge.

Arnold is aware of preconceptions evoked by language and the narrative consciously plays with interpretation, 'trusting the reader to know which is which'. The need to identify one particular sex/gender from any clues given is challenged once more at the end of the novel: while many English readers might have been reassured to learn that the cook was indeed 'female,' some might have been surprised at the carpenter's sex/gender. 'She was no longer the carpenter. Since jail, she had used the name her mother had given her at birth ... Henrietta' (1973, p. 159), the carpenter states. Like Connie's shifting response to Luciente, dominant practices require categorisation. It is the power of the status quo which eventually defeats the carpenter's attempts at neutrality: just as 'na' is replaced by 'she,' the 'carpenter' becomes 'Henrietta'. The name is poignant for the carpenter, 'the "hen" which had humiliated her childhood with its connotation of silly maternity, the "etta" which pursued her adolescence like a weak rime for "get her"' (1973, p. 159). In contrast to the chosen 'carpenter,' '[a] person who makes and repairs wooden objects and structures,' 'Henrietta' seems to epitomise 'female' in an androcentric culture. She is 'mother' and 'sexual object,' classified not according to her abilities but her sex/gender. The

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[5] A German version of *The Cook and the Carpenter* is yet to be published; any translations are my own.

carpenter challenges this categorisation first through renaming and then, re-association, 'Henrietta – sometimes shortened to Rietta – had taken on a new sound ... she was getting used to it like a face in a love affair' (1973, p. 159-60). While 'Henrietta' might not be able to self-identify completely in her sociocultural environment, she is able to redefine the name's connotations. And by reclaiming 'Henrietta,' the novel can be seen to imply, she is also able to redefine what it means to be 'woman' in an androcentric context.

While *The Cook and the Carpenter* portrays the significance of personal names in the carpenter's shift, *Woman on the Edge of Time* makes this case through the opposition of naming practices. First of all, the inhabitants of the egalitarian future only have a first name, while Connie has a family name, or rather several. Secondly, in Luciente's society people change names on the basis of experience and aspiration, whereas names in Connie's context are fixed. 'Luciente' and 'Connie' represent these essential differences. When introduced to Luciente, Connie reflects, 'luciente: shining, brilliant, full of light' (1976, p. 36), which stands in contrast to Connie, short for 'Consuelo'. Originating from Spanish, Consuelo means 'consoler' or 'comforter' (Shane, 2015, p. 105); in fact, 'Consuelo' has a particular place assigned to her. 'Consuelo's a Mexican woman,' Connie explains, 'a servant of servants, silent as clay. The woman who suffers. Who bears and endures' (1976, p. 122). But Connie refuses to be defined by her given name, '[t]hen I'm Connie, who managed to get two years of college,' she explains, 'till Consuelo got pregnant. Connie got decent jobs from time to time and fought welfare for a little extra money for Angie' (1976, p. 122). However, despite getting 'two years of college' and 'decent jobs from time to time,' Connie is never entirely free of 'Consuelo'. As 'until Consuelo got pregnant' implies, Connie is restricted by her sex/gender; and this restriction is not overcome by compliance. Connie might be able to go to college; however, this education is founded on an androcentric norm – when Consuelo 'gets pregnant,' Connie's time at college comes to an abrupt end. In short, in the androcentric context she can only ever be 'consoler,' 'mother,' 'woman'.

Connie's essential restriction is also implied by her family name(s): 'Ramos is my last name,' she says, '[w]hen I was born I was called Consuelo Camacho. Ramos is the name of my second husband: therefore I am Consuelo

Camacho Ramos' (1976, p. 76). Additionally, Connie is called 'Álvarez, the name of her first husband Martín' (1976, p. 76), and therefore fully referred to as 'Camacho Álvarez Ramos'. These three family names all indicate male ownership; 'Camacho' is her father's name, while 'Álvarez' and 'Ramos' are her husbands'. From birth she has been linguistically claimed and passed on through marriage, and Connie continues to be linguistically owned despite living independently. The inhabitants of Luciente's society, in contrast, 'have no equivalent' (1976, p. 77). In fact, their naming practices are founded on entirely different principles, as 'Jackrabbit' explains:

> When I was born, I was named Peony by my mothers ... When I came to naming, I took my own name. Never mind what that was. But when Luciente brought me down to earth after my highflying, I became Jackrabbit. You see. For my long legs and my big hunger and my big penis and my jumps through the grass of our common life. When Luciente and Bee have quite reformed me, I will change my name again, to Cat in the Sun. (1976, p. 77)

While Jackrabbit was named at birth as Connie was, he changed his name in light of key experiences. For example, meeting Luciente resulted in a shift from 'my own name' to 'Jackrabbit'; the next period in his life will be reflected by 'Cat in the Sun'. And this is by no means the last time Jackrabbit would be able to make an adjustment; Jackrabbit is free to choose as 'person' pleases. Connie, on the other hand, is only able to self-identify by shortening her first name; her full name, however, is permanent and binding.

As each narrative highlights, in environments based on division, names are necessarily interpreted as specific. Connie, for example, 'reads' Luciente as 'male' despite the name's linguistic neutrality –'Luciente' reminds of both female names such as 'Lucía' and male names such as 'Vicente'. Similarly, readers might understand 'carpenter,' essentially a neutral term in itself, as linked to one sex/gender in particular. In fact, clues will be found by any means possible. Returning to Wittgenstein's proposal that 'eine Sprache vorstellen heißt, sich eine Lebensform vorstellen,' I evaluate whether new terms are able to evoke a new 'Lebensform' next. With particular focus on pronouns, I assess the possibilities and limitations of linguistic neutrality from a wider philosophical

perspective to demonstrate the effectiveness of Arnold's and Piercy's literary problematisations.

New pronouns, new *Lebensform*?

The use of 'na' and 'person' is effectively tied to a new 'form of life' in Arnold's and Piercy's novels. The commune in *The Cook and the Carpenter* does not differentiate according to sex/gender, which is reflected in the epicene pronoun. Equally, the inhabitants of the future society in *Woman on the Edge of Time* replace 'she' and 'he' with 'person' as sex/gender are no longer considered relevant. Both communities live peacefully together in a non-binary collective; however they are under attack from outside forces. The carpenter's group faces male violence in response to their challenge to the status quo, while Luciente's community is at war to defend the gains of 'women's long revolution'. And while the outcome of Luciente's struggle is left open, the carpenter's neutral language and 'Lebensform' are defeated: the group reverts back to specific pronouns at the end of the narrative. Each community imagines a new language and therefore a new 'form of life'; however, both are clearly contested. The consequences of this contest are twofold: in the future society it leads to loss of life and in the carpenter's case to the de-establishment of the epicene.

The struggle portrayed in *The Cook and the Carpenter* and *Woman on the Edge of Time* highlights a central caveat of Wittgenstein's proposal – the imagination of a 'language' and a 'Lebensform' does not take place in isolation. As Lynne Rudder Baker explains in 'III. On the Very Idea of a Form of Life,' 'forms of life are communal property; there is no private practice' (1984, p. 278). Furthermore, 'they are in a certain sense conventional ... [and] rest on *agreement*' (1984, p. 278, emphasis in original). Baker elaborates that 'all human practices depend upon agreement in the sense that anyone claiming to participate in a practice can be checked by others in the community' (1984, p. 279). In short, language is communal property. The understanding of human beings as sexed/gendered is a key principle of the status quo, as represented by Connie's and the wider Texan community. As such, the neutral 'practices' of the carpenter's group and the inhabitants of Luciente's society are at odds with the dominant 'menschlichen Gepflogenheiten und Institutionen' (1953, p. 108),

as Wittgenstein terms it. This practice is 'checked by others,' which takes the form of threat, attack, and ultimately, defeat. Steven Shaviro reflects in 'From Language to "Forms of Life": Theory and Practice in Wittgenstein' why 'na,' in particular, was bound to fail. He states that 'a rule that forms part of a given social institution or practice can no more be altered by individual fiat than it can be followed privately' (1986, p. 225). The 'social practice' of deeming sex/gender a central marker needs to be reconsidered more widely before epicenes can succeed. It follows that, as long as pronouns are proposed in isolation, 'na' and 'person' essentially remain ineffective.

This shift is not impossible, however, Shaviro believes: '[s]ocial practice consists in a multiplicity of possible contexts and types of relations' (1986, p. 224); therefore, neutrality, as one 'type of relation,' is certainly imaginable. Joyce Davidson and Mick Smith agree in 'Wittgenstein and Irigaray: Gender and Philosophy in a Language (Game) of Difference,' that 'social relations are not fixed or predetermined, ... the world contains many possible kinds of social practices and therefore many possible forms of life' (1999, p. 93). 'Lebensformen' evolve in tandem with new understandings, as 'our human form of life is fundamentally cultural' (2013, p. 55), McGinn confirms. Equally, languages adapt, Brose explains. 'Wenn die Regel ... schlecht [funktioniert],' he states, 'so stört sie das Sprachspiel und andere und genauere Regeln müssen an ihre Stelle treten' (1985, p. 49). For example, if linguistic classification of sex/gender is no longer considered relevant, the pronouns 'she' and 'he' will eventually be replaced by epicenes. Davidson and Smith concur that 'languages evolve constantly, and different language-games can and do develop in conjunction with different forms of life' (1999, p. 88). In fact, 'eine Sprache vorstellen heißt, sich eine Lebensform vorstellen' is not a one-way interaction. To Davidson and Smith, 'the relationship between a form of life and a language-game is co-constitutive' (1999, p. 93), that is, they jointly shape social practices and understanding.

The central role of language is not to be underestimated, however, as Wittgenstein points out. In fact, he considers language a key tool to influence others and their perceptions. '[D]as Lernen der ... Sprache betrachte ich nun als ein Einstellen des Mechanismus auf eine gewisse Art der Beeinflussung' (1953, p. 138). In particular: 'Begriffe leiten uns zu Untersuchungen. Sind der Ausdruck

unseres Interesses, und lenken unser Interesse' (1953, p. 151). As specific pronouns lead speakers to consider 'sex/gender' a key marker, epicenes, such as 'na' and 'person,' present an alternative understanding – the linguistic expression of each understanding leads 'unser Interesse' in distinct ways. These two different conceptions of human beings are represented in Arnold's and Piercy's narratives: Connie's need to sex/gender the inhabitants of the future society stands in stark contrast to Luciente's use of 'person'; equally readers of the carpenter's narrative might feel coerced to identify 'na' as either 'male' or 'female'. Confronted with the opposition between the two 'languages,' readers might reflect on the related 'Lebensformen,' i.e. why sex/gender might, or might not, be considered relevant. And this reflection reveals the binaries inherent in the linguistic and social norms as well as illustrates potential alternatives. In short, as Wittgenstein argues, it is language which allows speakers to reflect on a 'form of life,' whether already in existence or imaginary.

However, could epicene pronouns transition from an imagined 'language' into general usage? And are neutral terms as egalitarian as they appear to be? In the following I evaluate the history and etymology of existing neutral terms to gauge their viability as replacements for the linguistic status quo. This provides an etymological perspective to Arnold's and Piercy's literary problematisations.

The history and etymology of neutral terms

Beyond Arnold's and Piercy's fictional narratives, the invention of neutral pronouns has a long history in the English language. According to Dennis Baron's 'The Words That Failed: A Chronology of Early Nonbinary Pronouns,' suggestions for an alternative to generic 'he' have been made as early as 1850 – the same year the UK Act of Parliament declared the male pronoun inclusive. As *The Cook and the Carpenter* and *Woman on the Edge of Time* highlight, epicenes have continued to occupy speakers ever since, and in fact, they continue to do so to this day. To give a few examples, the 1850 'ne,' with the possessives 'nis' and 'nim' (cited in Baron, n.d., n. pag.) is one proposal and seems neutral at first instance. However, neutrality is not easy to achieve as a closer look reveals – 'ne/nis/nim' are just one letter removed from 'he/his/him'. Equally, 'hiser' (cited in Baron, n.d., n. pag.), suggested around the same time,

indicates a connection to male terms of reference – in fact, its components 'his-her' continue to 'set the man before the woman' (Bodine, 1975, p. 134) in line with dominant norms and understanding. However, not all epicene pronouns are tied to male-as-norm. Charles Crozat Converse, for example, recommends 'thon' in 1884, and Emma Carleton proposes 'ip' the same year (cited in Baron, n.d., n. pag.); both of which seem entirely unrelated to 'he' and remind of Arnold's epicene. Other recommendations take their cue from neutral nouns in existence, like Piercy's 'person' and Dorothy Bryant's 1969 'kin' (cited in Baron, n.d., n. pag.). Others still use the female pronoun as a blueprint; Gregory Hynes, for example, recommends 'se, sim, sis' in 1938 which reverses the logic of 'hiser' and 'sets woman before man,' while Dana Densmore proposes generic 'she' in 1970 (cited in Baron, n.d., n. pag.). In fact, the sheer range of proposals is overwhelming: throughout the 1970s alone, Baron records over forty different suggestions. However, as all of these have yet to be accepted into everyday usage, Baron seems right to refer to these neologisms as 'the word that failed'.

On the other hand, some speakers also recommend existing epicenes. 'It,' for example, is mentioned as one alternative to generic 'he,' as are 'one' and 'they'. In his essay 'The Epicene Pronoun: The Word That Failed,' Baron provides some further insight into the debates on using these alternatives. According to Lindley Murray, for example, 'it' is suitable 'when we speak of an infant or child' (cited in Baron, 1981, p. 84); however, '[w]e hardly consider little children as persons' (cited in Baron, 1981, p. 83). This restriction seems to limit the anaphor's potential to function as a neutral pronoun in the wider sense. 'One' is equally contested. While Wolstan Dixey, for example, suggests 'the expansion of the already existing *one*,' G. L. Trager condemns the pronoun as 'pedantic' (cited in Baron, 1981, p. 85-6, emphasis in original). And finally, while 'they' might be considered 'expressive' by William D. Armes, he also deems its usage 'incorrect' (cited in Baron, 1981, p. 85). This grammatical understanding of 'they' is often given as a core reason for employing 'he' generically, as Ann Bodine illustrates in 'Androcentrism in Prescriptive Grammar: Singular "They", Sex-Indefinite "He", and "He or She"'. Prescriptive grammarians felt that '"they" fails to agree with a singular, sex-indefinite antecedent by one feature – that of number' (1975, p. 133). Consequently, 'he' was established as epicene. Nevertheless, 'they' continues to be employed by English speakers to this day;

but is it really a suitable pronoun to express neutrality? A brief etymological study of the anaphor provides some answers as to whether 'they' is able to represent both women and men equally.

First of all, Nathan Bailey's 1721 *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary* lists 'they' as of Saxon and Latin origin, 'pɪ' and 'Hi' respectively; he defines the pronoun as referring to 'thoſe Perſons' (1721, n. pag.). Samuel Johnson agrees in his 1755 *A Dictionary of the English Language* and adds the definition 'the plural of *he* or *ſhe*'; '[t]he men; the women; the perſons' (1755, n. pag., emphasis in original). Furthermore, Johnson states that the pronoun is 'uſed indefinitely; as the French *on dit*' (1755, n. pag., emphasis in original) – in effect, 'they' represents 'persons' in the plural and functions also as a singular generic term akin to the French 'on'. The *Oxford Dictionaries'* online platform confirms this understanding: '**they** ... as a singular pronoun to refer to a person of unspecified sex has been used since at least the 16th century' (2016, n. pag., emphasis in original), with Shakespeare an often-cited proponent for singular 'they'. In Hamlet, for example, he states, 'Tis meete that some more audience than *a mother*, [s]ince nature makes *them* partiall' (1603, p. 64, emphasis added). In etymology and usage at least, the pronoun certainly seems neutral. However, let me dig a little deeper still: each of the definitions quoted above links 'they' to 'person'; 'thoſe Perſons,' Bailey states; 'the perſons,' Johnson says. But what about the term's etymology, and furthermore, that of Piercy's pronominal alternative? Of Latin origin, 'person' is defined by Bailey as 'individually applied to every Man or Woman' as well as 'the outward Form and Shape of the Body' (1721, n. pag.), to which Johnson adds, '[i]ndividual or particular man or woman'; '[a] general looſe term for a human being; one; a man' and '[e]xteriour appearance' (1755, n. pag.). These descriptions certainly appear neutral at first instance; however, the use of 'outward Form and Shape of the Body' and '[e]xteriour appearance' seem problematic, especially in light of Johnson's definition of 'person' as linked to 'human being; one; a man'. In a sociocultural context informed by the classification of sex/gender, the 'body' is considered to be either 'male' or 'female'. Judging from the etymological link between 'human being' and 'man,' as explored in the previous chapter, is this particular 'body' then not essentially exclusive of 'woman'?

The final description provided by *Oxford Dictionaries* confirms this to be the case. While 'person' is today understood as 'human being regarded as an individual,' the term was previously '([e]specially in legal contexts) used euphemistically to refer to a man's genitals' (2016, n. pag.). 'Person' therefore clearly implied a particular 'body' and seems compromised in terms of neutrality. However, the very plurality of 'they' seems to defy the link to one sex/gender only – and thereby also the singularity of 'person'. While 'person' might be lacking, 'they' seems to be able to encompass the whole of humanity. However, is this the case also for its German equivalent, plural 'sie'? While the examples discussed in this chapter focus on the English context, the German language equally struggles with neutral terms of reference. In fact, it has the dual burden of grammar and culture to contend with. For example, terms such as 'der Tischler' and 'der Koch' carry not only social connotations but are grammatically weighted – with 'er' the default pronoun, the dominant association seems to be 'male'. Could 'der Tischler, sie' potentially avert a specific interpretation, such as 'the carpenter, they' might achieve?

This seems a tricky solution. First of all, plural 'sie' is, besides representing 'in M[ehrheit] ... alle drei Geschlechter,' also 'das perſönliche F[ürwort] der dritten weiblichen Perſon in der E[inheit]' (1871, p. 229), as Wilhelm Hoffmann states in his 1871 *Vollständiges Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*. And in fact, this latter understanding seems predominant, as Rothermund's study confirms. Rothermund found that 'für die im Plural dargebotenen GM-Phrasen [generisch maskulin] fand sich ein Überhang weiblicher Assoziationen' (1998, p. 194). As participants predominantly associate 'female' when reading 'sie,' the German plural pronouns seem decidedly less effective at conveying neutrality. Other alternatives have been proposed akin to English epicenes. And while neutral pronouns might be much better documented for the English language, they equally occupy German speakers. In 'Die SYLVAIN-Konventionen – Versuch einer "geschlechtergerechten" Grammatik-Transformation der deutschen Sprache,' for example, Cabala de Sylvain and Carsten Balzer suggest 'nin' as a neutral alternative to 'er' and 'sie'. The authors state that the epicene aims to create a linguistic space for 'alle geschlechtlich unbestimmten, uneindeutigen, zwei- oder mehrdeutigen und anderen Formen geschlechtlicher Liminalität'; however, it can also be used 'wenn das Geschlecht einer Person

oder Personengruppe nicht bekannt oder eindeutig bestimmbar ist' (2008, p. 42). As such 'nin' functions like Arnold's 'na' and Piercy's 'person'. However, as grammatical gender is a key feature of the German language, an adjustment of pronouns alone is not sufficient to communicate neutrality. Sylvain and Balzer recommend that definite articles incorporate 'din' in addition to 'der,' 'die' and 'das,' and indefinite 'einin'. But similarly to English language proposals, usage is yet to be widely accepted and, in the current context, bound to 'fail'.

Suggestions closer to current linguistic practices are Luise Pusch's proposal to neutralise grammar altogether. Pusch recommends '[*d*]*as Professor*,' for example, 'wo Präjudizierung eines der beiden Geschlechter diskriminierend wäre' (Pusch, 1980, p. 71, emphasis in original). Another suggestion is to use the article 'de,' which, as Anatol Stefanowitsch points out, is employed in Low German to refer to both sexes/genders (Oltermann, 2014, n.pag). However, either is yet to be embraced by the wider German-speaking community. Furthermore, neither suggestion addresses pronouns, which are an integral part of the sex/gender and language debate. In light of grammatical structure and epicene availability, the English language therefore seems more open to adaptation at this stage. Not only is 'they' compatible as a neutral pronoun, it has a long history of usage. However, what about its understanding today? Is 'they' still part of everyday written and spoken language after almost two-hundred years of prescriptive prohibition? In the following I take a brief detour to see how the plural pronoun is employed by English speakers today. The aim is to gauge the future of epicene 'they' and illustrate its potential for the establishment of a new language/new 'Lebensform'.

Detour: Current use of 'they'

Despite the prescription of generic 'he' as inclusive in the nineteenth century, 'they' continued to be used for singular referents. In fact, it is used as a neutral pronoun to this day. Studies have been conducted to assess the popularity of 'they' in written and spoken language, such as Michael Newman's 1992 'Pronominal Disagreements: The Stubborn Problem of Singular Epicene Antecedents'. Newman evaluated 'spontaneous speech on nine interview televised programs' (1992, p. 455), and his results affirm that 'singular *they* is

probably the most common epicene pronominal in English' (1992, p. 460, emphasis in original). Miriam Watkins Meyers's 1990 study 'Current Generic Pronoun Usage: An Empirical Study' is another example. Meyers put the focus on written language by asking '392 adult college juniors and seniors' to reflect on the question 'What is an educated person?'. She found that 'singular *they* [32%] and *he* [34%] are about equally chosen' (1990, p. 230, p. 232, emphasis in original). While this might not assert a clear dominance of the pronoun, it nevertheless shows that 'singular *they* is well established in the public writing of adult Americans' (1990, p. 234, emphasis in original). Maciej Baranowski's 2002 'Current Usage of the Epicene Pronoun in Written English' built on these results and 'stud[ied] the occurrence of epicene pronouns in the language of the press' (2002, p. 384). Baranowski evaluated issues of *The Independent* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* and found usage wide-spread. However, key differences emerged between the British and American English-language context; in the British newspaper '[t]he vast majority [of epicene pronouns] were singular *they*s (68%),' while in the *Chronicle* 'the rate of *they* is ... also higher than that of *he*'; in effect, 'singular *they* is used three times as often in the British corpus as in the American one' (2002, pp. 385, 391, emphasis in original). Nevertheless, Baranowski concludes, 'singular *they* is now the predominant form' (2002, p. 395, emphasis in original), despite cultural differences.

As these studies indicate, 'they' is accepted as a neutral pronoun in speech and writing. However, this is not to say that usage is not contested. First of all, as Julie Foertsch and Morton Ann Gernsbacher observed in their 1997 study 'In Search of Gender Neutrality: Is Singular "They"' a Cognitively Efficient Substitute for Generic "He"?,' '*they* is less acceptable with referential antecedents, for which there should be no ambiguity about gender' (1997, p. 110, emphasis in original). In effect, when the sex/gender of the referent is known 'they' is not chosen. Mark Balhorn confirms these results and notes in his 2009 study 'The Epicene Pronoun in Contemporary Newspaper Prose' that 'writers prefer the sex-appropriate singular pronoun *he* or *she* roughly 80% of the time' (2009, p. 402, emphasis in original). Sally McConnell-Ginet explains in 'Prototypes, Pronouns and Persons' why this might be the case. She argues, 'human beings are generally perceived as women or as men' (1979, p. 77), that is, they are categorised according to sex/gender. And as sex/gender plays a

key role in the sociocultural context, 'they,' if used, remains restricted to instances when 'male' or 'female' are not classifiable. A second hurdle for the wider implementation of the neutral pronoun is its grammatical function. As Donald G. MacKay argues in 'On the Goals, Principles, and Procedures for Prescriptive Grammar: Singular They,' the anaphor is problematic on several grounds. MacKay states: 'referential ambiguities ... make it difficult to determine the intended antecedent'; additionally '[b]ecause of its frequent association with nonhuman antecedents, *they* seems to impart dehumanizing and distancing connotations' (1980, pp. 356-7, emphasis in original). Overall, the author feels, '[p]lurals are less precise than singulars' (1980, p. 358), as they blur the boundary between group and individual.

However, as Wittgenstein argues, '[i]st das unscharfe nicht oft gerade das, was wir brauchen?' (1953, p. 34), meaning, is ambiguity always necessarily a detriment to communication? '[W]hen the referent is plural,' Alleen Pace Nilsen explains in 'Why Keep Searching When It's Already "Their"? Reconsidering "Everybody's" Pronoun Problem,' 'it is likely that both males and females are being referred to' (2001, p. 69). In fact, it is the very plurality of 'they' which allows speakers to imagine women and men simultaneously. While this points to the possibility of linguistic neutrality, the use of epicene terms such as 'they' is not necessarily an advantage in all circumstances. Male violence, and specifically male violence against women, is widespread and could be obscured by neutral language. According to statistics provided by *We Will Speak Out*, '2 women a week are killed by a male partner or former partner' and of '500,000 victims of sexual assault each year, 85%-90% ... are women' (2013, n. pag.). This violence is certainly specific, and as Annabelle Mooney argues in 'When a Woman Needs To Be Seen, Heard and Written as a Woman: Rape, Law, and an Argument against Gender Neutral Language,' 'gender neutrality ... would further obscure the gender issues and imbalance already present in the law, institutions and society. To represent rape as gender neutral would, quite simply, be disingenuous' (2006, p. 62). A neutral pronoun might hide the specificity of perpetrator and victim. While an epicene pronoun allows for the imagination of a new 'Lebensform,' in the current sociocultural context, it also obscures inequalities to potentially damaging effect. It therefore needs to be treated with caution in order not to contribute to the negation of disparity. In

extension, Arnold's and Piercy's literary proposals need to be considered in light of opportunities and limitations. While 'na' and 'person' help to evoke a potentially neutral being they might also mask inequality rather than address it.

Conclusions

In proposing linguistic neutrality, *The Cook and the Carpenter* and *Woman on the Edge of Time* enable a different representation and thereby understanding of human beings. Rather than being classified according to sex/gender, as women and men continue to be according to the linguistic status quo, the epicenes 'na' and 'person' suggest people could be referred to in terms of their shared humanity. This egalitarian language use clashes fundamentally with dominant norms – and as Arnold and Piercy explore in their novels, this clash has violent consequences. Both the inhabitants of the future society and the carpenter's group are under attack. And this struggle results in an uncertain future for Luciente's community and the abandonment of the neutral pronoun at the end of the carpenter's narrative. But while the use of 'na' and 'person' is presented as fraught with tension, it also illuminates the status quo's limitations. Connie's need to identify sex/gender, for example, seems crude in contrast to Luciente's neutral understanding. Equally, the threat of 'male' violence in response to the carpenter's peaceful use of 'na' highlights who feels threatened by neutrality.

As Wittgenstein argues, language and social practices are interlinked, and the 'Lebensform' imagined by Arnold and Piercy is essentially at odds with the dominant context. Before both language and 'form of life' are able to transition into the mainstream, however, they need to first become accepted by the wider community. Still, as Wittgenstein states, '[w]ir benennen die Dinge und können nun über sie reden: Uns in der Rede auf sie beziehen' (1953, p. 13), that is, by giving a 'name' to a neutral understanding, speakers have the means to talk about it. In effect, by being able to speak about neutrality, language-users are able to contemplate its possibility. Wittgenstein elaborates, 'das Hören des Namens [ruft] uns das Bild des Benannten vor die Seele' (1953, p. 18), that is, language helps speakers to imagine a referent, whether new or familiar. Nevertheless, this imagination takes place in the context of 'menschliche

Gepflogenheiten und Institutionen,' as Wittgenstein terms it. And if these 'Gepflogenheiten' are essentially opposed to neutrality, any alternate vision is necessarily limited. Furthermore, if one sex/gender is privileged over the other, neutrality remains a double-edged sword: it can have both positive and negative consequences.

'[L]anguage is vitally connected to our value system and social and cultural background' (1987, p. 419), Laura E. Tanner states in 'Self-Conscious Representation in the Slave Narrative,' and as such it reflects how speakers understand themselves and their reality. However, this understanding shifts and evolves with new insights and perspectives – as illustrated in Arnold's and Piercy's narratives. While neutral pronouns are yet to be commonly accepted, they certainly illustrate the status quo's constraints. Another useful means to highlight the underlying premise of the prevailing 'value system' is linguistic reversal. As Gerd Brantenberg's *Egalias døtre*, and its translations in particular, show, male-as-norm is never more poignant than when confronted with the opposite ideology. In the next chapter I assess the English and German versions of Brantenberg's novel with particular focus on the author's use of language. As my discussion shows, what seems peculiar in reversal can hold up a compelling mirror to what is deemed ordinary. I evaluate the translators' problematisations from a linguistic and philosophical perspective, and assess the effectiveness of both versions in relation to the other texts. This concludes the literary frame of my thesis.

Chapter 4: Reversing the linguistic status quo

Gerd Brantenberg's *Egalias døtre*

As well as problematising the linguistic status quo and proposing linguistic neutrality, literary writers have employed the technique of reversal to highlight the issues inherent in the dominant representation of women and men in language. Gerd Brantenberg's 1977 *Egalias døtre* is a key example of this approach. In the following I evaluate the text's translations to explore the effectiveness of Brantenberg's approach in relation to English and German. I analyse Louis Mackay's version *The Daughters of Egalia*, and Elke Radicke and Wilfried Sczepan's translation *Die Töchter Egalias* in relation to the use of nouns and pronouns, names and titles. I focus on the English and German translations as they provide a fruitful insight into the impact of linguistic reversal, and in extension, the linguistic status quo in each language. My discussion is framed by Sigmund Freud's concept of laughter as both liberating and challenging. This proves relevant as the English and German reversals of male generic terms often have a humorous effect. I assess the novel's wider impact by transferring Freud's notion, i.e. I explore whether the use of wordplay, in particular, can lead readers to both question and reconsider dominant linguistic practices. In conjunction, I present the etymological origins of female terms to propose an alternative view to male-as-norm. This concludes my literary explorations and provides the final part of the groundwork for the qualitative part of my study.

Freud's liberating laughter

Sigmund Freud is probably best known for his work on psychoanalysis and the interpretation of dreams, rather than humour. As Kai Rugenstein confirms in *Humor: Die Verflüssigung des Subjekts bei Hippokrates, Jean Paul, Kierkegaard und Freud*, 'das Thema [Humor nimmt] in der Interpretation seines Werks ... traditionell eine eher marginale Position ein' (2014, p. 241). However, Susanne Riester believes that Freud's thought is 'ungerechterweise vernachlässigt' (2006, p. 90). She argues in '"Der Witz und seine Beziehung

zum Unbewussten" von Sigmund Freud' that jokes '[lieferten] interessantes und wichtiges Material für sein theoretisches Gebäude der Psychoanalyse' (2006, p. 90). In fact, Freud considered 'Humor "eine der höchsten psychischen Leistungen" des Menschen' (2014, p. 241), according to Rugenstein. So instead of being marginal to Freud's understanding of the human psyche, humour plays a central role. Published in 1940, *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten* explores the individual and social impact of humour; the notion of its liberating potential is of particular interest to this thesis.

'Der Witz wird uns gestatten, Lächerliches am Feind zu verwerten, das wir entgegenstehender Hindernisse wegen nicht laut oder nicht bewußt vorbringen durften' (1940, p. 113), Freud states. A 'Feind' might be a figure of authority, for example, whom speakers are prevented from openly challenging due to social norms. Such 'Hindernisse' might be caused by 'innerliche Hemmungen oder äußerliche Umstände' (1940, p. 115), as Freud elaborates, and thereby maintain the dominant order. Humour, however, and the joke in particular, allow a release from this hierarchy. As Freud explains, '[d]er Witz stellt dann eine Auflehnung gegen solche Autorität [dar],' and thereby enables 'eine Befreiung von dem Drucke derselben' (1940, p. 115). This 'Befreiung' stems from the subversion of the usual power-positions which is both funny and pleasurable. '[Die] Beseitigung von Hemmungen, [erlaubt es] Lust frei zumachen' (1940, p. 151), Freud states. As compliance with social norms requires 'psychische[n] Aufwand' (1940, p. 133), the elimination of these norms also reduces the psychological effort. Consequently, humour has desirable side-effects.

This pleasure is particularly linked to 'Quellen des Spielens mit Worten' (1940, p. 151), as Freud terms it. '[T]echniques such as displacement, condensation with or without substitutive formation, modification, formation of mixed words, ambiguity, representation through the opposite, double meaning,' Mary Eloise Ragland elaborates in 'The Language of Laughter,' 'deflect word and thought expectations' (1976, p. 94). By playing with the norms of association and expression, language becomes the site of 'Lust'. Puns are an effective tool to subvert linguistic constraints. As Walter Redfern argues in *Puns*, wordplay is 'an agent of disorder ... [as it] breaks the conventions of orthodox speech or writing' (1984, p. 14). In doing so, 'as well as pointing outwards,' he adds, 'wordplay always points inwards and refers to the duplicity

of language' (1984, p. 10). By turning language in on itself, puns essentially reveal its normative function. Alan Partington agrees in *The Linguistics of Laughter: A Corpus-Assisted Study of Laughter-Talk.* '[Puns] can be a highly effective rhetorical weapon,' he states, 'the disruptive nature of wordplay is explained by its abruptly switching attention away from the subject matter in hand ... to language' (2006, p. 113, p. 118). Through wordplay then, language can be revealed for what it is: a key tool to both communicate and uphold 'normality'.

The response to such humour is what Zvi Lothane terms the 'laughter of recognition' (2008, p. 233). He argues in 'The Uses of Humor in Life, Neurosis and in Psychotherapy: Part 2' that this type of laughter occurs 'when something not consciously thought, something previously repressed, rises to consciousness' (2008, p. 233). So when made aware of 'the duplicity of language,' as Redfern calls it, speakers experience pleasure. And this pleasure stems from recognising the normative role of language as well as its liberating potential. The generic use of 'he' and 'man' is one example of 'repressed' or 'unconscious' usage – one means to highlight the underlying premise is through reversal. As Gerd Brantenberg, and her translators, show in *Egalias døtre*, employing female generic terms has humorous potential precisely because speakers recognise the familiar male-as-norm. Before I assess the impact of Brantenberg's approach in relation to Freud's conception of laughter as 'liberation,' I present how *Egalias døtre*, and specifically its English and German translations, turn dominant linguistic practices upside down. I thereby evaluate the effectiveness of Brantenberg's reversal as well as situate it in relation to the previously presented approaches.

Egalias døtre in translation

Published in 1977, Gerd Brantenberg's *Egalias døtre* was a key text of the Norwegian second wave feminist movement. Brantenberg took a unique approach to illustrating the disparity between the sexes/genders which in turn contributed to the success of her novel: in Egalia women, not men, are considered the norm. The reversal of the familiar worldview is presented through the experiences of the text's central character. Petronius, a male in a

female-centric context, encounters sexism in every environment, be it at home, school or in wider society. Following him through his teenage years to young adulthood, the narrative explores the restrictions imposed on Petronius. And these restrictions are also communicated in language: generic terms are female and positive connotations associated with women only. By reversing the premise male-as-norm, *Egalias døtre* effectively highlights the androcentricity of the Norwegian language. For example, by rendering the third person pronoun 'man' as 'dam' (1977, p. 11) Brantenberg illustrates the extent and impact of linguistic bias. This technique was appreciated by local readers as well as foreign publishing houses. Translations into several languages, including English and German, quickly followed, with Louis Mackay's 1985 English version *The Daughters of Egalia*, and Elke Radicke and Wilfried Sczepan's 1987 German translation *Die Töchter Egalias* at the centre of my discussion. Both versions provide a valuable insight into the workings of each language; like Brantenberg's original they effectively highlight the extent and impact of an androcentric status quo.

However, as English and German differ in structure, so do the translations of *Egalias døtre*. While sex/gender is predominantly assigned according to social expectations in English, German additionally has grammatical gender to contend with. Furthermore, key terms have distinct etymologies in each language which consequently lead to different interpretations. The examples below from the opening sections of each text illustrate the distinct approaches:

'But I want to be a seawom! I'll just take the baby with me,' said Petronius ingeniously. ... His sister laughed derisively. She was a year and a half younger and she teased him constantly. 'Ha, ha! And a manwom can't be a seawom either, a mafele seawom! Ho ho! Or perhaps you're going to be a cabin *boy* or a sea*manwom*, or a helms*manwom*? I'll die laughing, I will. ...' (Mackay, 1985, p. 9-10, emphasis in original)

'Aber ich will Seefrau werden! Ich nehme die Kinder einfach mit', sagte Petronius erfinderisch. ... Seine Schwester lachte gemein. Sie war anderthalb Jahre jünger als er und ärgerte ihn immer. 'Haha! Ein Mann soll Seefrau werden? Denkste!' Neunmalklug fügte sie noch hinzu, daß der Widersinn doch schon in den Wörtern liege. 'Eine männliche Seefrau! Der blödeste Ausdruck seit Wibschengedenken. Ho, ho! Vielleicht solltest du Schiffs*junge* werden? Oder Zimmer*mann*? oder Steuer*mann*?! Ich lach' mich tot. ... ' (Radicke and Sczepan, 1987, p. 7-8, emphasis in original)

Petronius' exclamation in either language, 'I want to be a seawom!' and 'ich will Seefrau werden!,' respectively highlights a key difference. Mackay creates a neologism to express Petronius' career aspirations, 'seawom,' whereas the German translation reverses existing terminology, 'Seefrau'. 'Seawom' is striking on two levels: first of all, it is based on 'seaman,' which is less familiar than the more commonly used 'sailor'. And secondly, in reversing 'man,' 'woman' is condensed to 'wom'. Opting for the reversal of 'seaman,' rather than 'sailor,' makes sense on two accounts. On the one hand, 'seawom(an)' is a direct translation of the Norwegian 'sjøkvinne' (Brantenberg, 1977, p. 11); on the other, it preserves the visible bias of the noun. While 'sailor' and 'seaman' have similar definitions, '[a] person whose job it is to work as a member of the crew of a commercial or naval ship' and '[a] person who works as a sailor' (OD, 2016, n. pag.) respectively, 'sea-man' additionally highlights the terms' specificity. 'Sailor,' like 'seaman,' was an occupation reserved for men; in turn, 'seawom' conveys female-as-norm. Additionally, 'sailor,' while more familiar to most readers, would have been more challenging to reverse. The suffix 'a,' commonly employed in female names, might have been one potential option; however, 'saila,' for example, is potentially too obscure for readers to understand. Furthermore, the term 'wom' plays a central role in the reversal and introducing it at this stage alerts readers as well as prepares them for the Egalian norm.

The use of 'wom,' rather than 'woman,' highlights a female-centric understanding. In contrast to 'woman,' which contains 'man' and thereby implies that 'woman' is a type of 'man,' 'wom,' and its derivative 'manwom,' convey that the female half of 'huwomity' (1985, p. 137) is the norm. The link between terms and associations is brought to the fore: a 'manwom' is considered a lesser kind of 'wom' and therefore perceived unable to perform any of the roles associated with female Egalians. Consequently, for Petronius, a 'manwom,' to take on a profession such as 'seawom,' requires a linguistic and conceptual shift which seems unsurmountable. In fact, as his sister's response shows, the extension of the female term to include the male seems laughable. '[A] mafele seawom' and 'sea*manwom*' imply an essential deviation from a female-centric point of view, with the use of 'mafele' underscoring the specificity of the female terms. Based on 'fele,' 'mafele,' like 'manwom,' is linked to the notion that 'wom' is the

linguistic and conceptual norm. Its English equivalents 'male' and 'female' are considered etymologically unrelated, since 'female' originates from Latin '*femella*'. Nonetheless, the *Oxford Dictionaries*' online platform confirms that '[t]he change in the ending was due to association with male' (2016, n. pag., emphasis in original). Consequently, 'fele,' assuming the role of blueprint, relegates 'mafele' to the secondary sex/gender once more. The need for double specification of 'mafele' as a type of 'fele,' and 'manwom' as a type of 'wom,' aptly underscore the ridiculousness of Petronius' proposal in the sociocultural context of Egalia.

As the German version explains, 'der Widersinn [liegt] doch schon in den Wörtern,' i.e. it is nonsensical for Petronius to desire what he is linguistically and therefore conceptually excluded from. A 'mafele seawom' is literally 'unheard of' and consequently inconceivable – a point which is also made in the German translation. While 'Seefrau' is a more direct reversal of the familiar 'Seemann' – 'Frau' and 'Mann' are etymologically unrelated – it equally highlights the term's specificity. Consequently, '[e]in Mann soll Seefrau werden' and '[e]ine männliche Seefrau' are, according to Petronius' sister, as ludicrous as their English equivalents. In fact, she believes that Petronius' ambition is '[d]er blödeste Ausdruck seit Wibschengedenken'. While Radicke and Sczepan might not have chosen a neologism to communicate female-as-norm in the reversal of 'Seemann', the use of 'Wibsche' shows that invented terms are not restricted to the English translation. 'Mensch' is etymologically linked to 'Mann,' as explored in Chapter 2; consequently, the term 'Menschengedenken' results in the implication that male thought is the norm. To reverse the noun according to Egalian ideology, it needs to be associated with 'woman': 'Wibsche,' based on 'Weib,' allows for the conception of 'Frau' as the default 'hu-wom'. With the help of terms such as 'Wibschengedenken' the artificiality of the premise male-as-norm is underlined. Consequently, 'this is how it has always been' seems no longer an adequate explanation for the binary division of human beings. It was 'Menschengedenken,' the implication seems to be, which resulted in linguistic and conceptual othering, and it is human thought also which can alter the hierarchy of the sexes/genders.

Androcentric bias is deeply engrained in the English and German language as the following examples illustrate: 'cabin *boy*,' 'Schiffs*junge*' and

'Steuer*mann*' exist also in the reader's context and are therefore distinctly recognisable. And while the italicisation of 'boy,' 'Junge' and 'Mann' implies that their Egalian usage is a novelty, the very familiarity of the terms seems to override the translators' intention. 'Cabin boys' and 'Steuermänner' might not be everyday terms; however, their specificity is. As a result, the associated Egalian nouns 'cabin girls' and 'Steuerfrauen' might be lost as the male terms are essentially unexceptional to readers. On the other hand, the recognisability of 'cabin boy' and 'Steuermann' can also be argued to direct the reader's attention. Rather than being dismissed as a fictional world with no impact on the readers' context, the use of familiar terms in conjunction with neologisms accentuates the linguistic status quo. The specificity of 'cabin boy' and 'Steuermann' might usually remain unnoticed; however, in juxtaposition with the female terms, their linguistic and conceptual limitation is illuminated. Consequently, the translations create a dialogue with their respective languages, playfully revealing bias where it might not usually be perceived.

And this bias filters down as far as grammar, as the heading of the first chapter already indicates. 'Bram, the director, and her family,' and 'Direktorin Bram und ihre Familie: Kristoffer, Petronius und Ba' underscore the extent to which each language functions on the premise male-as-norm. The use of 'director' in conjunction with the male pronoun, as in 'Bram, the director, and his family,' would be as unremarkable as 'Direktor' and 'seine Familie'. The reversed version, however, was, and still is, decidedly less familiar. This is visible in the default grammatical gender of the German term: the suffix '-in' implies a deviation. Additionally, 'director' and 'Direktor' are biased conceptually. As men continue to dominate positions of power, English and German speakers are more likely to associate the terms with 'man' and 'Mann' rather than 'woman' and 'Frau'. This link is reflected pronominally, 'director, he' and 'Direktor, er'. Turning this norm upside down has a poignant effect: 'director, she' and 'Direktorin, sie' seem linguistic and conceptual oddities. Naming practices further enshrine the social standing of the sexes/genders; while 'Direktorin Bram' is referred to by her last name, her husband is listed as part of the family group and addressed by his first name, 'Kristoffer,' only. Consequently, Bram is presented as a public person commanding respect

whereas Kristoffer is restricted to the private sphere of domesticity and familiarity.

Critics have commented on the poignancy of Brantenberg's text, and its translations, and especially their use of subversion to uncover the dominant norms. Denise Kulp, for example, understands the narrative as 'a satire, and one with a bite' (1986, p. 19), in her review of the English version, 'Egalia's Daughters'. Luise F. Pusch agrees in '"Eine männliche Seefrau! Der blödeste Ausdruck seit Wibschengedenken": Über Gerd Brantenbergs *Die Töchter Egalias*'. She deems the German translation of the novel 'witzig,' 'bissig,' and 'scharfsinnig' (Pusch, 1984, p. 69); its engagement with language is considered particularly effective. '[D]ie Regeln der Männersprache,' she explains, 'werden listig und sinnig auf den Kopf gestellt, uns spiegelverkehrt vorgeführt, mit dem einzigen Ziel, die Sprache des Patriarchats ... als solche erkennbar zu machen' (1984, p. 70). Karin Richter-Schröder concurs in *Frauenliteratur und weibliche Identität: Theoretische Ansätze zu einer weiblichen Ästhetik und zur Entwicklung der neuen deutschen Frauenliteratur*. The linguistic reversal is 'provokant,' according to Richter-Schröder, as the text shows that 'weder die Strukturen unserer Sprache noch unser Sprachgebrauch als geschlechtsneutral aufgefaßt werden können' (1986, p. 38). The German translation clearly illustrates the issues inherent in the linguistic status quo. Through reversal, 'die Sprache des Patriarchats' is revealed as anything but 'geschlechtsneutral' – by showing the status quo in a new light, Brantenberg's text, and its translations, enable readers to question its androcentric rules and conventions.

Not all reviews were as favourable, however, as this reference to the Swedish reception highlights. As Verne Moberg illustrates in 'A Norwegian Women's Fantasy: Gerd Brantenberg's "Egalias Døtre" as "Kvinneskelig Utopia",' some consider the text lacking. Lars Olof Franzén and Bernt Eklundh, for example, 'found the novel worthwhile and entertaining *up to a point*,' but overall they deem the narrative to be 'tiresome,' 'dragged out' and 'mechanical' (cited in Moberg, 1985, p. 329, emphasis in original). Another unnamed (male) reviewer takes this judgement one step further, describing the translation as 'vulgar,' 'superficial,' 'sterile' and 'sadistic' (cited in Moberg, 1985, p. 329). While these responses could be dismissed as simply antagonistic, they also point to certain concerns readers may have. Jan Relf's argument in 'Women in Retreat:

The Politics of Separatism in Women's Literary Utopias' illustrates why this might be the case. Brantenberg's text might not be a 'separatist utopia' per se; however, it shares similarities to some degree. For one, by turning the dominant norms on their head rather than altering their core premise, *Egalias døtre* could be perceived as separatist. As such, the novel, to follow Relf, might cause 'inverted sexism and a perpetuation of the unproductive binary opposition game' (1991, p. 141). As one sex/gender is presented as superior, the other is perceived as lacking. At the same time, however, the reversal of the hierarchy can also be seen to uncover that such a classification exists. Many readers might not be aware of the extent and impact of the status quo. As it is effectively integrated into everyday language, the generic use of male nouns and pronouns might often remain unnoticed. Through reversal this suddenly becomes obvious. Considered from this angle, Brantenberg's novel, and its translations, then do not perpetuate 'the binary opposition game' but expose its very mechanisms. And by exposing these, it enables speakers to challenge and disrupt the underlying premise male-as-norm.

'Der von *Brantenberg* angestrebte und erzielte Lerneffekt,' Pusch confirms, 'ist der, daß uns **unsere** Bedingungen, die des Frauseins im Patriarchat, allmählich oder auch schlagartig genauso fremd, absurd, unerhört und ungeheuerlich vorkommen' (1984, p. 72, emphasis in original). In effect, by holding up a mirror to the dominant norms, the translations of *Egalias døtre* help to illuminate them. But how does this 'spiegelverkehrte' illumination take place? And how does it differ in English and German? In the following I assess Mackay's and Radicke/Sczepan's versions with particular focus on nouns and pronouns, names and titles. The aim is to evaluate the breadth of Brantenberg's translators' linguistic revision and explore its consequences. This ties in with my previous evaluations and will illustrate the effectiveness of this particular literary approach.

Nouns and pronouns

As shown above, both versions work with neologisms and direct reversals to communicate the premise female-as-norm. And the choice for either tactic seems to depend on a term's connotation and/or etymology. Examples of word

creations are 'manwom,' which plays on the link between the nouns 'woman' and 'man,' while 'Wibsche' comments on the etymological connection between 'Mensch' and 'Mann'. Where no such link is perceived male terms are reversed, that is, replaced by their female counterparts, such as 'Frau' being used instead of 'Mann'. However, all terms certainly remain recognisable. The neologisms 'manwom' and 'Wibsche' are visibly tied to existing English and German nouns, 'woman' and 'Weib' respectively. This ensures intelligibility as well as the ability to reflect on the status quo of each language. The German third person pronoun is here a good example. 'Es ist viel grauer und trister, nicht werden zu dürfen, was dam will' (1987, p. 7), Petronius responds when told that his ambition to become a 'Seefrau' was ludicrous. Instead of the familiar 'man' the reader encounters 'dam,' and while this term is new to German speakers, it is nevertheless recognisable. First of all, only one letter differentiates 'dam' from 'man,' and secondly, the neologism contains a visible link to the German noun 'Dame'. This link, in particular, aims to prompt readers to question the generic use of 'man'. As 'dam' is revealed as related to 'Dame,' the connection between 'man' and 'Mann' is highlighted in turn. Consequently, through reversal, the German third person pronoun is exposed as far from generic.

However, 'dam' is also a puzzling choice. First of all, its root 'Dame' is a rather formal term. Secondly, in contrast to 'Mann'/'man,' the noun is not part of everyday language. And thirdly, the pronoun 'frau,' which has been in existence since the late 1970s, seems a more direct equivalent. The translators' preference can nevertheless be justified: on the one hand, it is a replication of the Norwegian original, 'dam' (Brantenberg, 1977, p. 11), and on the other, it performs a similar function to 'man'. Like 'man,' 'dam' could potentially pass unnoticed and thereby veils its wider implications. As the third person pronoun is used frequently, and without much consideration or comment in the German language, the more subtle 'dam' mirrors its linguistic form and function. And while 'dam' is of course more noticeable than 'man,' it equally requires closer investigation. Additionally, unlike 'man' and 'dam,' 'frau' is openly specific and could therefore be more easily dismissed as an inadequate comment on the German language. This issue is easily circumvented in the English translation. The existing pronoun 'one' (1985, p. 9) is able to represent 'man'/'dam' without obvious connotations. Nevertheless, in a sociocultural setting founded on the

division of the sexes/genders, what does 'one' stand for? The subsequent use of '[n]owom' (1985, p. 15) and 'anywom' (1985, p. 44), instead of 'no one' and 'anyone,' proposes that even 'one' might not be as neutral as it initially seems. In effect, as the later adaptations show, the English third person pronoun is considered similarly problematic. As 'one' shifts to 'wom,' male-as-norm is once more subtly revealed in reversal.

However, not all instances of linguistic usage are conscious problematisations. Occasionally, both translations simply slip in consistency – however, these slippages often provide a poignant commentary in themselves. The German version struggles with female-centric terms, in particular. For example, Petronius' sister's justification, '[e]s gibt ja gar keine Taucheranzüge für Männer' (1987, p. 8), is contradictory. First of all, 'Taucher' is a male generic term, with 'Taucherin' its appropriate reversal. Secondly, as the noun is 'male' by default the explanation, 'für Männer,' is unnecessary. For the translation to reflect the Egalian context, either 'Taucher' would have to be italicised akin to 'Schiffs*junge*' and 'Steuer*mann*,' or it should read 'Taucherinnenanzüge für Männer' to indicate the deviation from female-as-norm. The English version's 'frogwom suits for menwim' (1985, p. 10) is a good example of the second tactic; it replaces 'man' with 'wom' while highlighting the incompatibility of the female term and 'menwim' through specification. As such it is more successful than its German equivalent in conveying the Egalian status quo. Another slippage of the German translation is the use of 'Vaterschaftspatronat' (1987, p. 9) to indicate the legal arrangement between 'wim' and 'menwim' in relation to children. Again, 'Patronat' is a male term, stemming from 'Patron,' 'lateinisch patronus, zu: pater = Vater' (Duden, 2016, n. pag.). Consequently, 'Vaterschaftsmatronat' would have been a more suitable term to express 'female patronage'. As it stands, the implication is confusing. The English version is again more successful by circumventing the issue altogether: it employs the more neutral 'fatherhood protection' (1985, p. 11) to convey that it is menwim who are in a legally precarious position. A third example of a difference in effectiveness between the German and English versions is the expression 'hysterische Mannspersonen' (1987, p. 65) in contrast to 'testerical menwim' (1985, p. 70). While the English translation reverses the underlying premise of 'hysterical,' 'from *hustera* "womb" (hysteria being thought to be

specific to women and associated with the womb)' (OD, 2016, n. pag., emphasis in original), and associates the condition with testes, the German reproduces its inherent prejudice. According to the Egalian norm, the womb has distinctly positive connotations; therefore 'hysterical' is inconceivable to begin with. 'Testerical,' on the other hand, underscores female-as-norm and male-as-deviation.

Not all instances of slippage into the linguistic status quo are as obvious, however. Male-as-norm sometimes creeps into the German translation even less noticeably, which aptly comments on the extent and opaqueness of male generic terms. For example, the male term 'Schüler' (1987, p. 14) is used in at least six instances and 'Arbeiter' (1987, p. 42) in at least two across the novel. Additionally, the translation refers to 'Vertreter' (1987, p. 40) and 'Egaliataner' (1987, p. 27). These examples highlight how challenging it is to maintain consistency in reversing the status quo. As the translators' context and language are shaped by one worldview, communicating the opposite is tricky. Furthermore, the default grammatical gender of the German language, in particular, is challenging to reverse at all times. On the other hand, when translated consistently, the German version is more effective in conveying female-centricity. As the following examples show, grammar can be a distinct advantage when communicating the Egalian worldview:

> The Narcisseum Club for Gentlewim was situated halfway up the Moonhill ... In principle, anywom who wanted to could become a member; in practice, the club's membership consisted almost exclusively of company directors, senior civil servants, chief divers, school principals, members of Parliament and scientists. (1985, p. 44)

> Der Frauenklub 'Freiheit' lag auf halber Höhe des Plattenbergs ... Im Prinzip konnte jede Mitglied werden. Praktisch jedoch waren die Mitglieder vor allem die Direktorinnen und Unterdirektorinnen der staatlichen Kooperative, Cheftaucherinnen, Taucherinnen, Rektorinnen, Volksvertreterinnen, Forscherinnen, Künstlerinnen und die Leiterinnen der Handelsorganisationen. (1987, p. 39)

Both translations state that the club is reserved for women; the English version uses 'Club for Gentlewim' and the German 'Frauenklub' to highlight its specificity. Additionally, the quantifiers 'anywom' and 'jede' underscore female-

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centricity. Linguistically and conceptually, women are the norm. However, the subsequent listing of club members in the English version seems to contradict a female-specific interpretation. '[C]ompany directors, senior civil servants, chief divers, school principals, members of Parliament and scientists' all carry particular connotations in the reader's sociocultural context. Despite appearing neutral at surface level, similarly to Genly's description in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, the terms predominantly imply male-as-norm.

To give one example, a 'Member of Parliament,' defined as '[a] person formally elected to the UK national legislative body' (OD, 2016 n.pag), seems neutral to begin with. A 'person,' '[a] human being regarded as an individual' (OD, 2016, n. pag.) according to its definition, could be a 'man' or a 'woman,' after all. However, historically the role of MP was reserved for men – as women were not allowed to vote until 1918[6], the first female MP was not elected until that year. While the noun has opened up conceptually over the past 100 years, in 2015 only 29% of 650 seats were taken up by women despite almost a century of access to the UK Parliament. And as less than a third of MPs are female, the noun continues to connote 'male' first and foremost to this day. The German 'Volksvertreterinnen,' on the other hand, clearly communicates 'female'. By employing the suffix 'in' it overrides the dominant associations present also in the German-speaking context. In 2015, only 227 of 630 'Volksvertreter' in the Bundestag were female, resulting in a conceptual preconception akin to the English version. 'Volksvertreterinnen,' on the other hand, implies female-as-norm; the term is consequently much more effective in conveying the Egalian understanding. This effectiveness is underscored by the long list of female-specific nouns, 'Direktorinnen und Unterdirektorinnen der staatliche Kooperative, die Cheftaucherinnen, Taucherinnen, Rektorinnen, Volksvertreterinnen, Forscherinnen, Künstlerinnen und die Leiterinnen der Handelsorganisationen'. In contrast to 'company directors' and 'scientists,' the German version specifies 'Direktorinnen' and 'Forscherinnen' – terms which are linguistically and conceptually associated with 'female'. As a result, the German translation prompts readers to imagine a female-centric environment, one which is not compromised by male-as-norm.

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[6] The 1918 'Representation of the People Act' granted suffrage to women over the age of 30 who met certain criteria. It took another ten years until all women over 21 years of age were able to vote.

Despite occasional differences in effectiveness, both versions poignantly comment on the linguistic status quo of each language. The German reversal of male-as-norm highlights that generic terms associated with one sex/gender are not inclusive of the other – just as 'Volksvertreterinnen' does not imply 'male,' the male generic 'Volksvertreter' struggles to evoke female. In a similar vein, the English translation shows that terms which might be linguistically neutral do not necessarily represent women and men equally. In line with dominant associations, terms such as 'members of Parliament' are interpreted as one particular sex/gender if they are linked to this sex/gender in reality or public imagination. In fact, the noun 'member' is telling in itself; while the term is mainly defined as '[a] person, animal, or plant belonging to a particular group,' it has previously been '[u]sed euphemistically to refer to the penis' (OD, 2016 n. pag.). The German term 'Mitglied,' while linguistically neutral as highlighted by the pronoun 'es,' carries similar connotations – 'Mit-glied,' 'with-member' in translation, is equally biased. 'Glied,' a term also for 'äußeres männliches Geschlechtsorgan; Penis,' shares the same Latin origin as the specific understanding of 'member': 'membrum (verile)' (Duden, 2016, n. pag.). Consequently, even seemingly inclusive terms can at times be shown to contain an etymological link to sex/gender. As these connotations lie beneath the surface level, reversing them is challenging. However, as 'testerical' and 'dam' show, closer inspection and wordplay can provide surprising insights.

Names and titles are another central tool to communicate linguistic and sociocultural norms; surnames, for example, also often imply a male norm. In the following I assess Mackay's and Radicke/Sczepan's approaches to naming practices to explore how they support Brantenberg's approach in presenting a female-centric worldview.

Names and titles

As in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, *Häutungen*, *Woman on the Edge of Time* and *The Cook and the Carpenter*, names and titles also play an important role in the English and German translations of *Egalias døtre*. The reversal of naming practices provides an additional perspective on the linguistic status quo, and furthermore, illustrates the differences between English and German. Mackay

and Radicke/Sczepan employ distinct techniques to highlight the issues inherent in each language. The following translation is here a good example: the English form of address 'ladies and gentlemen' is reversed to 'lordies and gentlewim' (1985, p. 11), while the familiar German 'Damen und Herren' is rendered as 'Herren und Damen' (1987, p. 9). Both approaches put the spotlight on dominant linguistic practices; however, their tactics clearly differ – a difference which is informed by the language's grammar and etymology. 'Gentlewim,' for example, subverts the linguistic dependency of 'wo-man' on the male term, and 'lordies' is a humorous play on 'ladies'. The phonetic and structural similarity in each case ensures that the nouns remain recognisable to readers whilst providing a poignant commentary. 'Herren und Damen,' on the other hand, remain the same; their shift in meaning is indicated only through a change in position. Whilst less complex, the switching of terms equally ensures that readers are made aware of the difference in worldview. In the Egalian context, the social hierarchy is clearly turned upside down.

'Herr' is also the male title in German and its altered understanding is consistently stressed throughout the narrative. In Egalia it is men, not women, who are categorised according to their marital status; the use of 'Herrlein' (1987, p. 13) and 'Herr Cheftaucherin Ödeschär' (1987, p. 33) signify the complete reversal of norms. 'Herrlein' mirrors the role of 'Fräulein,' '(veraltet) kinderlose, ledige [junge] Frau' (Duden, 2016, n. pag.). Similarly, 'Herr' indicates a shift from 'unmarried' to 'married man'. And while 'Fräulein' might no longer be in everyday usage, the concept of marriage as a key event for women remains. This is confirmed by the definition of 'Frau' as 'Ehefrau' (Duden, 2016, n. pag.), whereas the title 'Herr' holds no such equivalent meaning. 'Frau' of course functions both as title and noun, which 'Herr' does not; however, this dual role highlights an engrained link between 'female' and 'married'. This connection is further supported by the superseding of her family name by his, aptly illustrated in reversal. The form of address 'Herr Cheftaucherin Ödeschär' implies that while the identity of 'Cheftaucherin Ödeschär' remains unchanged on marriage, her husband becomes an appendage to his wife. He loses his 'damename' (1985, p. 56), as the English version terms it, and acquires a new title, 'Herr'. Consequently, 'Herrlein' is linguistically passed from mother to wife, just like Connie is passed from father to husband in *Woman on the Edge of Time*.

Petronius explores this linguistic dependency in a reversal of the reversal. Writing a satire akin to Brantenberg's he invents the title 'Frau Direktor Berg' (1987, p. 227). And while this usage might seem ludicrous to Egalians, to German readers, it did, and still does, appear fairly commonplace. This dual illustration highlights the extent of women's secondary standing in language.

The English version problematises titles in a similar vein; moreover, it emphasises the social undesirability of 'mafele' singledom. As the use of '[s]pinnerman' (1985, p. 15) shows, unmarried 'menwim' are subject to judgment. Modelled on 'spinster,' which 'used to mean simply "unmarried woman"; it is now always a derogatory term, referring or alluding to a stereotype of an older woman who is unmarried, childless, prissy, and repressed' (OD, 2016, n. pag.). 'Spinnerman' has equivalent connotations: a single 'manwom' is considered an aberration in the Egalian context. In contrast, the title 'Msass' implies a male's rightful place. Functioning as 'Mr' and 'Mrs' respectively, the titles 'Ms and Msass Bram' (1985, p. 41) represent the norm. 'Ms,' akin to its English equivalent, is 'used before the surname or full name of any woman regardless of her marital status' (OD, 2016, n. pag.), while 'Msass' signifies 'husband,' or 'housebound' (1985, p. 17) as the English version terms it, of 'Ms Bram'. A 'Msass' is the approved position for 'menwim,' and the title 'Msass' an interesting choice, albeit a problematic one. First of all, it is phonetically similar to 'Mrs,' ensuring recognisability. Secondly, its components 'Ms' and 'ass' indicate linguistic and conceptual dependency. Additionally, the use of 'ass' is humorous – 'Msass' is 'made an ass of' by becoming the housebound of 'Ms'. And while this is a telling comment on the subjugation of 'Mrs,' it misrepresents the relationship between the English titles at least linguistically. 'Mrs,' an 'abbreviation of mistress' (OD, 2016, n. pag.), is not as dependent a term as it might initially seem. In fact, 'Mr,' according to Walter W. Skeat's *A Concise Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*, is '[a] corruption of *master*, due to the influence of *mistress*' (1882, p. 330, emphasis in original). Being 'an older word than *mister*' (1882, p. 330, emphasis in original), as Skeat states, 'Mrs' was far from always secondary. Nevertheless 'Mrs' is not understood as it once was; 'Msass' consequently underlines that 'Mrs' is no longer her 'own mistress'.

Titles are just one tool to reveal bias; first names and family names equally communicate the positions assigned to the sexes/genders. This becomes particularly visible in the following: while male characters carry names such as 'Lillerio Moondaughter' (1985, p. 22) and 'Baldrian Bareskerry' (1985, p. 22), their female counterparts are called 'Vita Strong' (1985, p. 22) and 'Gro Maydaughter' (1985, p. 29). These are prominent examples and more moderate versions certainly exist; however, they provide a useful perspective on the social status of 'wim' and 'menwim'. To evaluate two names in more depth, 'Vita,' from 'Latin, literally "life"' (OD, 2016, n. pag.), especially in combination with the family name 'Strong,' seems to represent one end of the social hierarchy, while 'Lillerio Moondaughter' seems positioned at the other. In name she is 'solid,' 'robust,' the giver of 'life' and in effect 'life' itself, while he seems 'frilly,' without substance. Furthermore, his last name underlines this effaced role: 'Moondaughter' leaves no linguistic or conceptual room for a 'son'. Akin to androcentric names, such as 'Jefferson' and 'Zimmermann,' 'Moondaughter' is modelled on the premise female-as-norm. Consequently, 'Lillerio Moondaughter' seems to exist only in dependency, and moreover, enshrine the Egalian notion that 'their [menwim's] only purpose is decorative and ornamental' (1985, p. 97). Brantenberg employs names consciously to communicate this division, as Moberg confirms. 'Petronius,' in particular, Moberg argues, highlights a deeper commentary. 'The Petronius in *Egalias døtre*,' she states, 'had a fitting namesake in Caius Petronius ... considered to be the author of a fragment of a preserved humorous adventure novel, *Satirae*' (1985, p. 331, emphasis in original). The use of 'Petronius' then is not only decorative but also implies the ability to subvert. And in his satirical reversal of the Egalian norms, he certainly puts the spotlight on the extent and implications of the linguistic status quo.

But what is the impact of this reversal? Does the use of humour, in particular, have any wider significance? I now return to Freud's notion of laughter as liberation to evaluate whether Brantenberg's, and her translators', use of satire could have any impact beyond the page. I thereby assess the text's effectiveness from a philosophical perspective.

Can laughter be liberating?

When reading Petronius' satirical reversal of the Egalian status quo, his father, Christopher, seems to experience what Lothane terms 'laughter of recognition'. In contrast to his mother's 'bad-tempered' response, 'Christopher went on laughing until he fell over' (1985, p. 267). In fact, '[h]e felt invigorated' by Petronius' writing; so much so that he demanded to be taken seriously and 'slammed his fist on the table' (1985, p. 267). The 'mafele Egalian reader,' it seems, is liberated by the humorous text. However, is Brantenberg's text likely to have a similar impact on the female English and German reader? In '"Laughing in a Liberating Defiance": *Egalia's Daughters* and Feminist Tendentious Humor' Marleen S. Barr takes the position that laughter can indeed be liberating. She states, 'laughing at patriarchy breaks the rules,' and by breaking the rules it is 'a feminist achievement' (1989, pp. 90-1). Like Christopher and Petronius, women are meant to comply with the dominant social order, one which considers them secondary on the basis of their sex/gender. By provoking a gleeful reaction to the reversal of norms, the novel, according to Barr, acts as 'a social corrective – a weapon' (1989, p. 93). Barr considers humour a powerful social tool; Freud agrees, '[der Witz] schafft dem Feind ein Heer von Gegnern, wo erst nur ein einziger war' (1940, p. 149). By uniting people, humour seems to have liberating potential.

However, the longevity of this liberation is contested. Ragland, for example, believes that shared laughter at an opponent is simply 'a safety valve' (1976, p. 93). And like a safety valve it 'rebels against norms, aiming not to destroy, but to restore harmony and freedom through fusion, through momentary wholeness' (1976, p. 102); that is, it only provides momentary release. This view seems to negate Barr's notion of Brantenberg's text as 'a social corrective'. As any response is temporary, the novel can be argued to be without long-term consequence. Michael Billig supports this position; in *Laughter and Ridicule: Towards a Social Critique of Humour*, he argues that while '[a]uthority is challenged and the guardians of rules are mocked ... [by] rebellious humour,' the impact is little more than 'momentary freedom' and 'a brief escape' (2005, p. 208). Moreover, Billig believes that humour can consolidate prevalent norms. 'The more we laugh and the more we imagine

ourselves to be daringly free in the moments of our laughter,' he explains, 'the more we are complying with the demands of the so-called free market' (2005, p. 212). In effect, precisely because it allows the imagination of freedom without demanding a struggle for it, humour essentially keeps everyone in their place.

Lisa Merrill disagrees with Ragland and Billig. In 'Feminist Humor: Rebellious and Self-Affirming' she states that 'humor empowers women to examine how we have been objectified and fetishized' (1988, p. 279). According to the author, feminist humour, in particular, provides women with an understanding of their position within the social hierarchy and thereby the tools to dismantle it. Helga Kotthoff seconds this. 'By violating norms and creating unconventional perspectives, humor certainly influences norms' (2006, p. 5), she argues in 'Gender and Humor: The State of the Art'. In fact, '[humour]... communicates sovereignty, creative power, and the freedom to intervene in the world' (2006, p. 5), according to the author. Consequently, the 'unconventional perspectives' provided in Brantenberg's novel have the potential to act as 'a weapon,' as Barr believes. In 'Between Women: A Cross-Class Analysis of Status and Anarchic Humor,' Regenia Gagnier argues that this potential can be explained by sex/gender. In her evaluation of 'working women's autobiographies' (1988, p. 140), Gagnier found that 'women's humor tends toward anarchy rather than the status quo, to prolonged disruption rather than, in Freudian theory, momentary release' (1988, p. 145). It is women's marginal position which results in accessing laughter's liberating potential. As Barr believes, Brantenberg's novel, in particular, 'acts as a catalyst to encourage the untapped and unpredictable power of women's shared laughter' (1989, p. 97).

While the long-term impact of humour remains contested, Freud nevertheless affirms its revelatory potential. The tactic of 'Entlarvung,' of which *Egalias døtre*, and its translations, can be seen as a prime example, especially reveals that '[d]ieser und jener gleich einem Halbgott Bewunderte ist doch auch nur ein Mensch wie ich und du' (1940, p. 231). Through the humorous reversal of the status quo, readers are able to perceive its artificiality. And this new understanding, facilitated by 'Entlarvung,' allows them to challenge the privileges and limitations assigned on the basis of sex/gender. These norms, as the English and German translations of Brantenberg's novel show, are engrained in language. Employing female-centric terms effectively highlights the

androcentric bias, and responses shift between amusement and recognition. This dual-response might not automatically be liberating, but it certainly prompts reflection and thereby the potential of action at least. Creating awareness by sensitising readers, as Koeser et al. found in relation to inclusive language, is often a first step to facilitating change.

Providing the history and etymology of female nouns and pronouns can contribute to sensitising speakers. Female terms might today be considered a mere addition to the male norm; however, as I show in the following, previous usage tells another story. By building on the 'entlarvende' function of the English and German translations of *Egalias døtre* I highlight that linguistic and social status are tied to worldview. And this worldview is never fixed but always subject to change. This provides an etymological perspective on the effectiveness of the reversal.

The history and etymology of female terms

A conversation between two of the novel's characters, Fandango and Baldrian, highlights the central concern around key terms in the English and German language. As Fandango argues in English, 'take the word "manwom"... it suggests that manwom is just a certain sort of wom, though a wom isn't any sort of manwom. Why don't they just say "man"?' (1985, p. 145). And in German he states, '[d]as Wort "Wibsche" hört sich an, als ob alle Wibschen Weiber sind. Warum könnte es nicht genausogut "Mannschen" heißen? Oder "Menschen"?,' equally 'das Wort "dam" ... Warum könnte es nicht genausogut "herr" heißen? Oder "mann"?' (1987, p. 129). Egalian nouns and pronouns are founded on the premise female-as-norm; so are their English and German counterparts linked to the opposite worldview. 'Man,' 'human' and 'Mensch' are far from neutral terms, as explored in Chapter 2. However, to reverse Fandango's argument, is 'woman' really 'just a certain sort of man'? And why does 'Weib' generally hold negative connotations?

To begin with 'woman,' Nathan Bailey's 1721 *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary* and Samuel Johnson's 1755 *A Dictionary of the English Language* both define the term as 'the Female of the Human Race,' linking it to the Saxon 'Wiman' (1721, n. pag.) and 'pimman' (1755, n. pag.) respectively.

Bailey elaborates the origin of the noun as follows, 'Dr *Th. H.* derives it of Wip, *Sax.* Wife and Man, but others of Wumb, *Sax.* and Man, *Sax.*' (1721, n. pag., emphasis in original) which introduces two notions akin to Fandango's above problematisation. First of all, 'woman' seems indeed a 'sort of man,' and secondly, the term seems associated with 'womb' – the reproductive organ signifying the essential difference between women and men. Walter W. Skeat's 1882 *A Concise Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* confirms a link to 'man'; as he explains, 'woman' is '[a] phonetic alteration of A.S. *wīfman*, lit. wife-man' (1882, p. 614, emphasis in original). But as Skeat adds, 'the word *man* ... [was] formerly applied to both sexes' (1882, p. 614, emphasis in original), and thereby complicates the notion that 'woman' is 'just a certain sort of man'. While 'man' is now predominantly used in the specific sense, it was certainly once a generic term. At some point, however, as illustrated previously, its meaning shifted and 'wo-man' became considered the specific counterpart to the generic/specific 'man'. But where does the prefix 'wo' originate from? Skeat relates it to 'wife' which comes from 'A.S. *wīf*, a woman'; however, he believes its '[r]oot [is] obscure; certainly not allied to *weave* (A.S. *wefan*) as the fable runs' (1882, p. 610, emphasis in original). Bailey is also unsure as to its origin and links it to 'Wip, *Sax.* Wife' as well as 'Wumb'. This uncertainty carries over into T.F. Hoad's 1986 *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, which deems 'woman,' 'a formation peculiar to Eng.,' and '*wīf*,' 'of unkn[own] orig[in]' (1986, p. 541, p. 544, emphasis in original).

Julia Penelope (Stanley) and Cynthia McGowan explore the origin of both terms in 'Woman and Wife: Social and Semantic Shifts in English'. 'The OE word <u>wīf</u>,' the authors explain, 'retained its original meaning, "female human being," well into the OE period' (1979, p. 499, emphasis in original). So the shift to 'wo-man' is a relatively new development. However, '[a]t the same time, the term was becoming narrower in its semantic range'; that is, 'wife' was increasingly understood as 'married to a man' (1979, p. 499). And '[p]erhaps as a consequence of the narrower semantic range,' Penelope (Stanley) and McGowan elaborate, 'the compound <u>wīfman</u> came to be used more and more frequently' (1979, p. 499, emphasis in original). The authors believe that this shift from 'wife' to 'woman' is due to 'increased patriarchal influence'; in line with the narrowing of 'the semantic range of <u>man</u> ... the range of reference of the

word w̄if' also narrowed (1979, pp. 499-500, emphasis in original). The merging of 'wife' and 'man' signified that 'a female person' was now understood as essentially linked to 'a male human'. However, this linguistic and social dependency is an invention of the Old English period; 'wife' once used to be her own 'woman'. But 'like other English words referring to women, [wif] might have undergone some degree of pejoration' (1986, p. 154), Dennis Baron argues in *Grammar and Gender*, which explains its demotion to prefix of 'man'. While this establishes the linguistic and conceptual standing of 'woman' since, could this past, and now obscure, understanding of 'wife' point to a different worldview of 'woman' as equal to 'man'?

Skeat and Hoad both list the German noun 'Weib' as a direct relation, which seems a good point to start to attempt to answer the above. According to the online *Duden*, the term has four distinct meanings: '(veraltend) Frau als Geschlechtswesen im Unterschied zum Mann'; '(umgangssprachlich) [junge] Frau als Gegenstand sexueller Begierde, als [potenzielle] Geschlechtspartnerin'; '(abwertend) unangenehme weibliche Person, Frau' and '(veraltet) Ehefrau' (2016, n. pag.). Like 'wife' then, 'Weib' means 'Frau' in general as well as 'Ehefrau'; however, in contrast to the English noun, both definitions are confined to history. What remains are the connotations of 'Frau als Gegenstand sexueller Begierde' and 'unangenehme weibliche Person'. 'Weib' seems to have undergone a semantic derogation akin to 'wife,' but in contrast to its English equivalent, the noun has been banished from everyday language. But when and how did it shift to 'sexuelle' and/or 'unangenehme' understandings? As Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm state in the 1878 *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 'Weib' is now understood as '*die niedrige*' and 'Frau' as '*die hochgestellte*' (1878, p. 353, emphasis in original). This change in meaning has a similar origin to the one proposed by Penelope (Stanley) and McGowan for 'wife'. '[A]*ls gefahr für den mann wird das* weib *schon vom mittelalter beredt nach allen seiten dargestellt*' (1878, p. 367, emphasis in original), the Brothers Grimm confirm. This particular conception of the sexes/genders potentially marks a change from a pre-middle-age understanding, and might have influenced the shift from 'wife' to 'wo-man'.

It is of course challenging if not impossible to locate evidence; just as the etymology of the term is opaque, so is its previous standing. While one could

speculate either way – an Egalian perspective would hold a decidedly different position to an androcentric one – '*sicherheit ist bisher nicht gewonnen*' (Grimm and Grimm, 1878, p. 329, emphasis in original). Consequently, 'Weib' remains 'etymologisch ganz unklar' (1883, p. 781), as Friedrich Kluge confirms in his 1883 *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, and continues to be so to this day: 'Herkunft ungeklärt' (2016, n. pag.), the online *Duden* asserts. The origin of its substitute 'Frau,' on the other hand, is well documented. According to the Brothers Grimm, 'Frau,' from '*goth.* fraujô ... *ist moviert aus* frauja' (1878, p. 71, emphasis in original). The authors elaborate its origin as follows: 'frauja [*war*] *der waltende herr und gebieter*, *die* frau *seine genoszin*' (1878, p. 73, emphasis in original). And while the Grimms portray 'Frau' as 'mitherrschend' (1878, p. 73), it is 'man' who is considered 'der waltende herr und gebieter'. 'Frau' is therefore deemed as dependent as 'wo-man'. Equally, the term has a long history, for '[s]chon im Beginn des 13. Jahrh. war der Gebrauch Frau für Weib gebräuchlich, um einen vornehmen Stand zu bezeichnen' (1871, p. 610), according to Wilhelm Hoffmann's 1871 *Vollständiges Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*. The linguistic and conceptual demotion of 'Weib'/'wife' therefore seems to symbolise the onset of a new androcentric norm: 'Frau' as Mann's '*genoszin*,' 'Weib' as 'gefährlich,' 'wife' as 'married to a man,' and 'wo-man' as 'womb-man'.

But what about 'she': is the female pronoun also tied to male-as-norm? According to Skeat, its Anglo-Saxon origin '*hēo*' is linked to '*hē*,' the root of the male pronoun, 'he' (1882, p. 235). And while the two are distinct they share a close relationship. In fact, this seems to have become problematic as 'hēo' 'caused confusion with the masc. *he*' (Skeat, 1882, p. 479, emphasis in original) – this confusion must have complicated male-as-norm and therefore inspired the later adaptation of the female pronoun 'hēo,' via '*sēo*' and '*scho*,' to 'she' (1882, p. 479, emphasis in original). The distinction between the two sexes/genders was clearly significant prior to the pronominal shift, as the difference between 'hēo' and 'hē' indicates. However, it seems to have become more important since. '[T]he English pronominal system underwent a veritable grammatical upheaval during the Middle English period' (1978, p. 71), Julia P. Stanley and Susan W. Robbins explain in 'Going through the Changes: The Pronoun She in Middle English'. Around the same time as 'wife' was

transformed into 'woman,' 'hēo' was adapted to 'she'. '[T]he apparently persistent need for a pronoun which uniquely specifies the female gender,' the authors argue, 'must spring from the same conception of the identities and roles assigned to females and males in a male-dominated culture' (1978, p. 81). To maintain the sociocultural boundaries between the sexes/genders, firm linguistic borders were needed. And as 'hēo' permeated these borders by 'causing confusion,' the pronoun 'she' came into being.

The German female pronoun, 'sie,' has a similar history to 'she' to a large extent. Like Skeat, the Brothers Grimm list its etymology under the male pronoun, again implying a close connection. Furthermore, it seems to have also undergone a shift, albeit a little earlier. The Gothic roots 'is' and 'si,' 'er' and 'sie' respectively, show a linguistic link; however, the Old High German 'ir, ër' and 'siu' (1878, p. 680) already begin to segregate into the distinct pronouns used today. Interestingly, it is the male pronoun which changed most profoundly. The reasons for this alteration are presumably similar to those provided by Stanley and Robbins – the need to distinguish clearly between the sexes/genders. However, where did the fear of 'pronoun confusion' originate? And why was 'Weib' considered a 'Gefahr,' as the Grimms state? In the following I take a brief detour to a different conception of women and men – one which, like the Egalian worldview, considers 'female' at the top of the sex/gender hierarchy. The aim is to explore how such a view might have inspired a profound linguistic and conceptual revision. I thereby assess the effectiveness of Brantenberg's, and her translators', literary problematisation from an ideological angle.

Detour: Female-as-norm

The premise English and German speakers are most familiar with is male-as-norm, as it plays a central role in the Western sociocultural context. Having been in circulation for at least two-thousand years, the notion has many well-known proponents. One of its key thinkers is Aristotle, who claimed in his 350 BC *Generation of Animals* that 'the female is ... a deformed male' and essentially a 'deviation' (1943, p. 175, p. 401). This proposal, Maryanne Cline Horowitz confirms in 'Aristotle and Woman,' brought forth 'many of the standard Western arguments for the inferiority of womankind' (1976, p. 183) and persists

to this day. However, why subjugate 'woman' as a deviation? And why conceive male-as-norm? As the Brothers Grimm highlight in relation to the term 'Weib,' there seems to have been a certain fear associated with women. And this fear seems based on the female body, in particular, as the derogation of 'Weib' to 'sexuelle' and/or 'unangenehme' connotations indicates. While Aristotle and the Grimms wrote during different epochs, the underlying reasoning seems related. 'Woman,' it seems, was at some point considered a cause for (male) anxiety.

Klaus E. Müller confirms that men might have felt threatened by women. As he explains in 'Die bessere und die schlechtere Hälfte: Zur Kausalität und Verhältnisstruktur menschlicher Zwiespältigkeit,' in hunter-gatherer societies women might have potentially been considered more successful at 'Nahrungsbeschaffung' and more significant in relation to 'biologische... Reproduktion' (1978, pp. 164-5). 'Eine derartige doppelte Abhängigkeit,' Müller explains, 'konnte von den Männern nur als Gefährdung ihrer eigenen Existenz, als Bedrohung ihrer Identität und ihres Geltungsanspruchs empfunden werden' (1978, p. 165). And as they felt threatened economically and biologically, men supposedly created a counter-narrative to combat female dominance at least on ideological grounds. Over time, through 'Ritualisierung' (1978, p. 174), as Müller argues, these myths eventually congealed into a different worldview – one which considers 'man' the norm and 'woman' the deviation. While this might seem far-fetched to some, William E. Abraham certainly agrees with myth's powerful potential. Created by 'a people in distress,' as Abraham terms it in 'The Origins of Myth and Philosophy,' '[t]he overriding purpose of the myth is to situate man safely in the world' (1978, pp. 165-6). Moreover, '[i]t reinforces and entrenches by repetition' (1978, p. 177), so that what might seem implausible at one point could eventually become normality through sheer reiteration.

The understanding of the female body as deficient is a particularly poignant example. Since Aristotle first introduced this viewpoint, not many scholars have attempted to challenge this premise – it was, and still often is, accepted as 'truth,' proving the effectiveness of myth. However, as a little research shows, male-as-norm is essentially an 'old housebound's tale,' as Egalians would term it. In fact, the 'human' body has a very different blueprint. As Ashley Montagu argues in *The Natural Superiority of Women*, 'an embryo ..., during the first few weeks of development, is sexually undifferentiated, though

oriented toward femaleness' (1968, p. 71). So rather than male-by-default, as Aristotle proposes, human beings are female-as-norm. This is confirmed by John Launer, who, in his article 'Why Do Men Have Nipples?,' states that 'embryos are always female in their early stages, and males only differentiate from the female prototype after a few weeks' (2011, p. 79). Further evidence is provided by Rainer Knußmann in *Der Mann: Ein Fehlgriff der Natur*: 'jedes menschliche Individuum [ist] primär weiblich' (1982, p. 17). In effect, as Knußmann elaborates, '[d]as weibliche Bild stellt vielmehr den unmittelbar im Erbgut festgelegten Bauplan des Menschen dar' (1982, p. 22). And as a result, '[n]icht die Frau ist ein verstümmelter Mann,' as Aristotle believes, 'sondern der Mann eine unterentwickelte Frau' (1982, p. 41). On the basis of biology at least, the Egalian terms 'huwom body' (1985, p. 45) and 'Wibschenkörper' (1987, p. 40) seem decidedly more accurate than their androcentric equivalents.

The prevailing worldview, however, is not female- but male-as-norm and this is reflected linguistically, as aptly illustrated in the English and German translations of Brantenberg's fictional reversal. To provide an instructive example, even when involved politically, Petronius is referred to as a 'spokeswom for menwim's liberation' (1985, p. 268) and a 'Rednerin für die Männerbefreiung' (1987, p. 233). Consequently, he is always already linguistically and conceptually measured against the default 'huwom' being. Whatever the context, 'wom'/'Frau' remains the norm and 'manwom'/'Mann' the deviation. And this logic remains, the novel ends, until language is revised in line with social changes. As a result, Brantenberg's text, and its translations, effectively prompt readers to both query the linguistic status quo and challenge its perpetuating function.

Conclusions

Like problematising the linguistic status quo and proposing linguistic neutrality, reversing the linguistic status quo is an effective tool to highlight the issues inherent in the representation of women and men. *Egalias døtre* and its English and German translations, in particular, aptly illustrate the extent and impact of male terms by reversing their underlying logic to female-as-norm. What is frequently perceived as insignificant is revealed to be a powerful reiteration of a

worldview which privileges one sex/gender over the other. As the generic use of 'wom' and 'Frau' highlights in each version, 'manwom'/'Mann' is both linguistically and conceptually absent; moreover, if visible, he is presented as a specific, and often specifically sexual, addition to the female norm. While she is able to inhabit a variety of social positions, such as 'seawom' and 'Direktorin,' he is defined only in relation to her, a 'spinnerman'/'Herrlein' or 'housebound'. The translators' inventiveness often has a humorous effect – 'Herrlein,' for example, seems a comical counterpart to the familiar 'Herr' – however, reversals go deeper than simply producing mirth. If 'Herrlein' seems ludicrous, readers are prompted to ask, then why would its equivalent 'Fräulein' be deemed acceptable? As a result, via the means of humour, the novel invites a contemplation of the linguistic status quo, and this contemplation intends to lead to questioning and eventual change.

Freud's notion of the liberating potential of laughter is relevant in this context. The long-term impact of humour might be contested – Ragland, for example, simply considers it a 'safety valve' whereas Barr deems it a 'social corrective'. The technique of 'Entlarvung,' however, which Brantenberg, and her translators, employ in *Egalias døtre*, certainly highlights that male-as-norm is a sociocultural product. That is, the norm 'man,' elevated to the top of the sex/gender hierarchy through myth and ideology, as Müller believes, is revealed to be as constructed as the deviation 'woman'. From a different perspective, as Brantenberg, and her translators, show, the linguistic and conceptual understanding of the sexes/genders could equally be reversed. Humour allows readers to both be entertained and unnerved by this discovery. And this humorous insight, Kotthoff argues, enables readers to realise that they are able to challenge and revise what is often presented as fixed and 'natural'. Moreover, it is through the means of entertainment that readers are able to take in this insight in the first place. As I proposed in the introduction to this thesis, literary texts allow the presentation of alternative viewpoints precisely because they are considered to be 'mere' entertainment. In the next chapter I return to this proposal and investigate the impact of the three literary approaches with the help of a qualitative study. The research questions guiding my study are: Can literary texts help to raise awareness of the importance of inclusive language? And can they encourage speakers to reconsider dominant linguistic practices?

I explore these questions from a reader response position via the data I collected in a focus group study. This provides a sociological angle to my literary assessment and feeds into my overall evaluation of the effectiveness of literary texts in highlighting the linguistic representation of women and men. Rather than relying on my own analysis only, the results of my focus groups provide a deeper insight into speakers' perspectives. In particular, they allow me to assess whether and how literary texts can progress debates on sex/gender and language beyond the pages of this thesis.

Chapter 5: 'It's good to make people realise … double standards'

Evaluating the effectiveness of English and German literary texts

So far I assessed English and German fiction in three clusters, namely 'Problematising the linguistic status quo,' 'Proposing linguistic neutrality' and 'Reversing the linguistic status quo'. I evaluated the texts' engagement with the issue of sex/gender and language from a literary, linguistic and wider philosophical perspective. To test how other readers perceive their effectiveness, I conducted a focus group study. In this study, I asked participants to assess an excerpt from Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*, June Arnold's *The Cook and the Carpenter* and Gerd Brantenberg's *Egalias døtre* in either English or German in relation to their engagement with the linguistic representation of women and men. In particular, I chose one text from each literary cluster to evaluate which approach is deemed most effective. The results of this study brought new and valuable insights: firstly, literary texts prompt readers to reflect on the linguistic status quo and secondly, they encourage readers to consider alternatives to dominant practices. This provides a sociological perspective to my argument.

Methodology

In this section I explain why I selected the focus group method for data collection and grounded theory for analysis. I also present my research design to justify the structure of my study.[7]

Focus groups as a dialogic tool

Data can be gathered in a variety of ways. For example, researchers employ questionnaires, individual interviews and focus groups to collect responses. To

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[7] My study has been approved by the UCL Research Ethics Committee; Project ID: 5889/001.

decide which method is most suitable for a study, several aspects need to be considered. Researchers need to ask, for example, is the required data qualitative or quantitative? And, does the research benefit from structured or explorative questions? My study asked how readers perceive literary texts thematising sex/gender and language; therefore a tool for gathering qualitative data seemed most appropriate. Furthermore, my study aimed to allow readers to express their opinions and ideas freely, which points toward an explorative setting. As Rosaline S. Barbour and Jenny Kitzinger argue in their introduction to *Developing Focus Group Research: Politics, Theory and Practice*, 'questionnaires are more appropriate for obtaining quantitative information,' and focus groups 'for exploring how points of view are constructed and expressed' (1999, p. 5). This speaks for focus groups in both instances. Additionally, language is at the heart of my study, and as language is a social tool it requires a communal setting. As Sue Wilkinson explains in 'Focus Groups – A Feminist Method,' '[f]ocus groups … draw on people's normal, everyday experiences of talking and arguing' and thereby '[tap into] this ordinary social process' (1999a, p. 225). And while the context remains created by the researcher, 'the interactions that take place within focus groups are closer to everyday social processes than those afforded by most other research methods' (Wilkinson, 1999a, p. 227). This social aspect rendered focus groups more suitable also than individual interviews.

But while focus groups seem ideal for gathering explorative responses in a social setting, their very communality can create complications. Martha Ann Carey, for example, warns in 'The Group Effect in Focus Groups: Planning, Implementing, and Interpreting Focus Group Research' that 'a person [might] elect… to tailor his or her contributions to be in line with perceptions of the group members' (1994, p. 236). Further, as Sue Wilkinson highlights in 'Focus Groups in Feminist Research: Power, Interaction, and the Co-construction of Meaning,' in addition to individuals silencing themselves, they might also be silenced by others. She argues that 'group participants can collaborate and collude effectively to intimidate and/or silence a particular member' (1998, p. 116). A third type of silencing, or censoring, can occur when group members 'create a silence around a particular topic or issue' (Wilkinson, 1998, p. 116); a fourth is conformity with the presumed views of the researcher. As Terrance L.

Albrecht, Gerianne M. Johnson and Joseph B. Walther confirm in 'Understanding Communication Processes in Focus Groups,' 'responses may reflect what it is they [participants] think the facilitator wants to hear' (1993, p. 55).

Two additional factors to consider are status and diversity. As Kitzinger and Barbour argue, 'hierarchies within groups and in broader society may inhibit the contributions of members' (1999, p. 9). And while Michael Bloor et al. reflect in *Focus Groups in Social Research* that '[t]here has to be sufficient diversity to encourage discussion,' if a group is too diverse 'conflict and the repression of views of certain individuals' (2001, p. 20) may arise and disrupt the research process. Participants' sex/gender can be a particularly salient factor for the development of 'conflict' and 'repression'. As Richard A. Krueger states in *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, '[a]t times, it is unwise to mix gender in focus groups, particularly if the topic of discussion is experienced differently by each sex' (1994, p. 78). The author elaborates: '[m]en may have a tendency to speak more frequently and with more authority when in groups with women – sometimes called the "peacock effect"' (1994, p. 78). This can silence female group members as well as be 'an irritant' to them (Krueger, 1994, p. 78). On the other hand, mixed groups 'better reflect the structure of the society and thus allow … the participants and researcher to learn about social differences and social relationships' (1996, p. 119), Jon D. Goss and Thomas R. Leinbach highlight in 'Focus Groups as Alternative Research Practice: Experience with Transmigrants in Indonesia'. Mixed groups in terms of sex/gender, in particular, Goss and Leinbach reflect, 'work… to reveal to participants the gender-differentiated nature of social knowledge and the distinctive experiences and perspectives of men and women' (1996, p. 119). That is, mixed groups can provide new insights to both sexes/genders.

Sex/gender comes into play not only between participants but also between the researcher and research subjects. As Karen Taylor comments in 'Keeping Mum: The Paradoxes of Gendered Power Relations in Interviewing,' women interviewing men can equally cause complications. 'As a dominant group the men resist traditional research power dynamics of the researcher/researched' (1996, p. 116), she states. Disruptions to the research process might, for example, consist of relatively 'harmless' non-compliance, but

might also include defiance and aggression. Additionally, the position of a female researcher will have an impact on the group dynamic. As Maria Mies reflects in 'Towards a Methodology for Feminist Research,' 'their own existence as *women* and *scholars* is a contradictory one. As women, they are affected by sexist oppression together with other women, and as scholars they share the privileges of the (male) academic elite' (1983, p. 120, emphasis in original). So while female facilitators and research subjects might be able to co-operate on the basis of gender, it does not negate misunderstanding. As Catherine Kohler Riessman found in 'When Gender is Not Enough: Women Interviewing Women, 'the lack of shared cultural and class assumptions' (1987, p. 190), can also impede the research process. Careful selection of participants and awareness on part of the researcher are therefore essential for creating an open environment.

A key benefit of focus groups is that they help to level the usual research hierarchy to a large degree. '[They] are a relatively *non-hierarchical* method,' Wilkinson explains in 'How Useful Are Focus Groups in Feminist Research?,' 'they shift the balance of power away from the researcher towards the research participants' (1999b, p. 64, emphasis in original). Esther Madriz agrees, and elaborates in 'Focus Groups in Feminist Research' that 'more weight [is given] to the participants' opinions, decreasing the influence the researcher has over the interview process' due to 'the interaction among group participants' (2000, pp. 836-7). Goss and Leinbach also propose that 'both the researcher *and* the research subjects may simultaneously obtain insights and understanding of a particular social situation *during* the process of research' (1996, pp. 116-7, emphasis in original), which allows both parties to benefit. Focus groups are '*dialogic*' (Goss and Leinbach, 1996, p. 118, emphasis in original), then, not just in terms of participants' interaction but also the facilitator's understanding. This dialogic aspect of focus groups can be enhanced further by encouraging participants to develop their own viewpoints as much as possible. One way to do so is by 'beginning [the focus group] with participants writing, rather than saying, their ideas' (1993, p. 57), Albrecht et al. suggest. This allows the researcher to access 'internalized opinions' (1993, p. 57), which limits conformity both with what the researcher 'wants to hear' and the opinions of other group members.

In effect, the introduction of reflective tasks can circumvent many of the concerns around focus groups from the beginning. I integrated such a task into my study to maximise its dialogic potential. I present my overall research design next to outline how the study enabled mutual exchange and understanding.

Research design

The design of my topic guide was heavily influenced by Richard A. Krueger's *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research* and Lia Litosseliti's *Using Focus Groups in Research*. Both authors give valuable advice on how to conduct focus groups, including how to make participants feel at ease, how to structure the discussion, and what type of questions to ask. After deciding whom to approach to take part[8], choosing the ideal group size is the next step in enabling a fruitful discussion. As Litosseliti states, '[f]ocus groups typically consist of between six and ten participants, but the size can range from as few as four ... to as many as twelve' (2007, p. 3). While '[l]arger groups are difficult to manage, moderate and analyse,' she explains, they 'can be useful for brainstorming' (2007, p. 3). 'Smaller groups,' on the other hand, 'are more appropriate if the aim is to explore complex, controversial, emotional topics, or to encourage detailed accounts' (2007, p. 3). According to Litosseliti, smaller groups 'offer more opportunity for people to talk and are more practical to set up and manage' (2007, p. 3). Krueger agrees: '[s]mall groups of 4 or 5 participants,' he adds, 'afford more opportunity to share ideas' (1994, p. 17). Such '*mini-focus groups*' (1994, p. 17, emphasis in original), as Krueger terms them, seemed most appropriate for the purposes of my study. As respondents were asked to share their opinions and ideas on three literary excerpts, I wanted to ensure there was sufficient opportunity for everyone to fully participate. Furthermore, the issue of sex/gender and language is potentially considered a sensitive or controversial topic, making smaller groups more suitable to discuss it. Once the size is decided, another factor to consider is the number of focus groups. As Litosseliti comments, '[i]t is too risky to build a research project around a single focus group' as this 'could hinder both comparative and in-depth exploration of the topic' (2007, p. 4). In order to

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[8] I discuss the selection process in each evaluation section.

access rich and comparable data, I followed Litosseliti's advice that '[a] typical number is between four and six groups' (2007, p. 4). I conducted a pilot focus group to test my guide and materials, as well as two native English- and two native German-speaking groups. In sum, I conducted five groups in total.

For each group to function successfully, a thought-out topic guide was key. Litosseliti advises that '[t]he guide should be clear, non-academic, and understandable to the participants' (2007, p. 56). I worked closely with Krueger's instructions in the design of my guide. He recommends to begin by welcoming the participants and giving an 'overview of the topic,' followed by setting out some 'ground rules' (1994, p. 113). Ground rules might be instructions such as '[t]here are no right or wrong answers' and '[p]lease share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said' (1994, p. 13). After this introduction, Krueger advises to employ questions that 'go from general to specific' (1994, p. 67). Initial questions should help the participants to get a general sense of the topic whilst those asked later on should be 'specific questions of critical interest' (1994, p. 67). These types of questions are referred to by Krueger as 'Introductory Questions,' 'Transition Questions,' 'Key Questions' and 'Ending Questions' (1994, pp. 54-5) and give a clear structure to the discussion. At the end, once all prompts have been explored, Krueger suggests providing a 'short oral summary ... of the key questions and big ideas that emerged from the discussion' (1994, p. 55). This allows the participants to reflect on what was said and make any final comments. Finally, participants should be thanked for their contributions and the discussion concluded.

Based on Krueger's recommendations I developed the following structure for my topic guide (see Appendix 1). This remained the same throughout my study, bar one or two adjustments after the pilot focus group meeting. As a preamble to the discussion, I welcomed the participants, stated why the focus group was taking place and clarified how the data would be used. I explained that all responses would be equally valid and that participants were not meant to reach a consensus. I then asked the respondents to introduce themselves and say briefly why they were interested in taking part. Following this introduction, I handed out reading packs which contained the first few introductory pages of three of the literary texts I evaluated throughout this thesis. Depending on the group, these were Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand*

of Darkness (1969a, pp. 1-4) or its German translation (1981, pp. 5-9), June Arnold's *The Cook and the Carpenter* (1973, pp. 3-6) or my translation, and the English (1985, pp. 9-12) or German translation (1987, pp. 7-10) of Gerd Brantenberg's *Egalias døtre*. I instructed participants to underline anything they noticed about the language employed in the excerpts and to write a few bullet points or sentences on their impressions on a separate piece of paper. I asked respondents to pay particular attention to the use of nouns, such as job titles like 'doctor,' and pronouns, such as 'she' or 'he'. Participants were given about 25 minutes to complete the task; I extended the reading and writing time in each group as and when required.

Respondents' perceptions of the three excerpts were elicited with the help of general explorative questions. Firstly, we discussed the excerpt from *The Left Hand of Darkness* by sharing what each participant noticed about the language used in the text. I wrote down key points and used these to prompt a more in-depth discussion. This remained the same throughout the study; however, the questions became more focused in the native English- and German-speaking groups. For example, I asked respondents to reflect on whom they imagined when reading the text and to elaborate on why this was the case. After all ideas had been exhausted, I moved the group on to the second excerpt, *The Cook and the Carpenter*, and asked participants to share what they noticed. I also instructed them to consider the similarities and differences between the two texts. In the German groups, I additionally referred to the outcomes of previous groups whenever useful to further probe certain comments. Finally, we explored respondents' opinions and ideas in relation to *The Daughters of Egalia*. I asked participants to put their bullet points on the text's language use onto a whiteboard and read what the others had written. We then reconvened to explore what respondents had noticed, and discussed how all three excerpts compared. I was particularly interested in what participants considered the goal of each excerpt and how effective the texts were in meeting it. I also asked which one(s) of the three excerpts participants found most effective in highlighting the issue of sex/gender and language.

The discussion was concluded by a brief summary during which I listed the key points of our exploration. I asked the participants if this was a fair reflection and provided space to make any other comments. I then formally

concluded by thanking them for their participation, reiterated how the data would be used and confirmed that their contributions were anonymous. I handed out an information sheet with my details and contacted them by email a few days later to offer another opportunity for comments and feedback. Following on, I transcribed the responses and analysed the data with the help of grounded theory. I present the central tenets of this methodology next and argue why it was most suitable for the evaluation of the data.

Grounded theory as reflective methodology

Developed by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss and first published in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, 'grounded theory is derived from data and then illustrated by characteristic examples of data' (1968, p. 5). Additionally, according to Glaser and Strauss, '[o]ur strategy of comparative analysis for generating theory puts a high emphasis on *theory as process*; that is, theory as an ever-developing entity, not as a perfected product' (1968, p. 32, emphasis in original). This means data is not only constantly compared but any theory emerging from this comparison is subject to alteration. This puts participants' responses at the heart of the analysis – what matters most to them, matters most also in the analytic process. Linking in with the dialogic potential of the focus group method, grounded theory seemed highly suited to assess the responses collected during my study.

While Glaser and Strauss developed the original methodology, I chose to work with Kathy Charmaz's *Constructing Grounded Theory*. Glaser and Strauss's thinking originated in the late sixties, a time perhaps when qualitative research was measured even more strongly against the standards of positivist science. In consequence, the authors did not reflect in-depth on the researcher as a central participant in the research process. By proposing a 'constructivist approach perspective' which 'shreds notions of a neutral observer and value-free expert' (2014, p. 13), Charmaz proposes the (re)integration of the researcher who 'must examine rather than erase how their privileges and preconceptions may shape the analysis' (2014, p. 13). This approach takes concerns around the status of the researcher into account, which is a central feature also of a considered focus group study. As a result, grounded theory,

and Charmaz's reflective approach in particular, complements the creation of a non-hierarchical research environment. As Charmaz elaborates in '"Discovering" Chronic Illness: Using Grounded Theory,' '[t]he "groundedness" of this approach fundamentally results from these researchers' commitment to analyze what they actually observe in the field or their data' instead of 'limit[ing] themselves to preconceived hypotheses ... [or] follow[ing] the prescribed canons of traditional random sampling' (1990, p. 1162). Analysts are guided by the data and the findings that emerge from it, which means that 'rather than focusing time and energy on investigating a preconceived, researcher-driven problem or process that is of little concern to the participants, this openness enables the researcher to be more responsive to the participants' problem' (2005, p. 423), John R. Cutcliffe adds in 'Adapt or Adopt: Developing and Transgressing the Methodological Boundaries of Grounded Theory'.

To get to the core of 'the participants' problem,' as Cutcliffe terms it, grounded theory employs a variety of methods. The first step of analysis is the coding of data, which has an 'initial' and a 'focused' stage, according to Charmaz. She explains that '[d]uring initial coding, the goal is to remain open to all possible theoretical directions' (2014, p. 114) while '[f]ocused codes advance the theoretical direction of your work' (2014, p. 138). In the beginning, then, researchers consider all possible interpretations. This openness allows them to listen to what participants are actually saying, which interlinks with the explorative aims of my focus group study. The subsequent move from initial codes to focused codes is supported by the 'constant comparison method,' and focused coding enables 'concentrating on what your initial codes say and the comparisons you make with and between them' (2014, p. 140). By comparing 'data and data, data and codes, codes and codes' and the emergent 'categories and categories' (2014, p. 171), researchers slowly arrive at the beginnings of a theory. This is tested against further data: 'theoretical sampling,' as this part of the process is called, 'means seeking and collecting pertinent data to elaborate and refine categories in your emerging theory' (2014, p. 192). It essentially allows the analyst to test categories and with them the theory. And rather than traditional demographic sampling, 'theoretical sampling pertains only to conceptual and theoretical development of your analysis; it is *not* about

representing a population' (2014, p. 198, emphasis in original). Its function is therefore to progress the emerging theory.

Coding and theoretical sampling are not the only core components of grounded theory. Memo-writing is arguably *the* practice which allows codes to evolve and a theory to emerge in the first place. As Charmaz explains, '[m]emos catch your thoughts, capture the comparisons and connections you make, and crystallize questions and directions for you to pursue' (2014, p. 162). In short, memo-writing 'provides a space to become actively engaged in your materials, to develop your ideas, to fine-tune your subsequent data-gathering, and to engage in critical reflexivity' (Charmaz, 2014, pp. 162-3). But in order to be effective, reflexivity must incorporate several components, as Virginia L. Olesen highlights in 'Feminist Qualitative Research and Grounded Theory: Complexities, Criticisms, and Opportunities'. These are: '(1) [f]ull explanation of how analytic and practical issues were handled; (2) [e]xamination of the researcher's own background and its influences on the research; and (3) [r]eflections on the researcher's own emotions, worries, feelings' (2010, p. 423)[9]. Some might argue that this level of personal involvement impedes the research process; however, working under the assumption, or even pretence, of objectivity seems much more damaging. One way of looking at the integration of reflexivity is as 'provid[ing] a way for readers to assess the researcher in action and accord trustworthiness and credibility' (Olesen, 2010, p. 428). In fact, reflexivity enables the reader to consider the researcher, along with the participants, as an agent in the research process. And this understanding encourages the levelling of any findings from 'the' truth to 'a' truth, which helps to deflate the hierarchy of researcher and researched also in the analytic process.

Grounded theory therefore goes hand in hand with the dialogic potential of the focus group method. Next I present how I applied grounded theory to evaluate the data of my focus group study.

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[9] As becomes visible throughout my analysis, integrating this level of reflexivity is challenging.

Focus group analysis

In this section I assess the data resulting from the focus group discussions. I explore how codes and categories emerged from participants' responses, and how grounded theory evolved in consequence.

Emerging codes and categories – Pilot

The aim of the pilot focus group was to test my topic guide and materials. I recruited participants by approaching other PhD students, and three respondents agreed to take part in this initial meeting. All participants, Claudia[10], Janine and Martina, were of white European ethnicity, female, on average 32 years old and non-native English speakers. Two participants I knew well and the third I had met several times before. The same two participants were also familiar with one another; the third was relatively new to the group. All, however, had previously encountered each other in a postgraduate conference setting. Motivations to take part therefore reflected this pre-existing connection. While one respondent commented that 'I am here because of my interest, I suppose, in language and gender,' the other two reflected, 'I'm here because you asked me to come' and 'I'm here because you need some help for your focus group'.

   After transcribing the pilot focus group, I evaluated the data by reading closely and coding line-by-line. I selected line-by-line coding as, according to Charmaz, '[it] encourages you to see otherwise undetected patterns' (2014, p. 125) and 'frees you from becoming so immersed in your research participants' world-views that you accept them without question' (2014, p. 127). As Charmaz advises, '[d]uring initial coding, the goal is to remain open to all theoretical directions' (2014, p. 114), I therefore chose 'in vivo codes' at this stage as they allow 'to preserve participants' meanings of their views and actions in the coding' (2014, p. 134). This ensured that I stayed close to what was said. Whilst coding, I also wrote memos to reflect on emerging patterns, and as the following example shows, these were mainly summaries to begin with. A line-by-line evaluation of the first comment on *The Left Hand of Darkness* looks as follows:

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[10] All names have been changed.

firstly, Janine began by saying that '[o]kay, so I don't know if it's what you wanted or not,' which I coded as 'unsure if "got" the task'. She then stated, 'so yeah, the narrator usually uses "I",' which was coded as 'focus on "I" in first comment'. Janine continued by explaining, 'so you don't, he or she doesn't really, like, specify if we're talking about a male or a female,' coded as '"I" female or male?' The final two lines, 'so I came to the conclusion that with the rest of the text because it's only talking about men and kings and everything' and 'that we're talking only about men here,' coded as 'only men referred to, so only men'. The corresponding memo states, 'the participant mentions the use of "I" by the narrator – but is unsure if that is what I was looking for; she at first can't tell whether the narrator is male or female. However, the respondent assumed that the narrator has to be male as the text only talks about men'. This reminds of my application of Leibniz's *salva veritate* principle: as 'man' is unable to represent 'a human being of either sex', it consequently does not evoke women for the respondent. As becomes visible from my response to these five lines my initial analysis stayed very close to the transcript. Further, as is equally clear, I struggled with what is one of the key recommendations by Charmaz: '[c]oding for actions' (2014, p. 116) or 'coding with gerunds' (2014, p. 121). Charmaz instructs, '[a]ttempt to code with words that reflect action ... [as it] reduces tendencies to code for types of people' (2014, p. 116). '[C]oding for actions,' she adds, 'curbs our tendencies to make conceptual leaps and to adopt extant theories *before* we have done the necessary analytic work' (2014, p. 117, emphasis in original). This proved easier said than done, however, as my default was to summarise in statements rather than in actions and perceptions. As codes began to condense into themes, I began to apply gerund-coding more thoroughly.

Theme codes which emerged from the first half of the transcript included 'imagining men only,' 'feeling frustrated/confused' and 'seeing women only in the specific'. A few examples help to illustrate how these codes came into being. For example, 'imagining men only' and 'seeing women only in the specific' stemmed from comments on the impact of language on the ability to imagine characters. In relation to *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Claudia reflected as follows: 'the only time when a woman is specified is to illustrate a metaphor about beauty'. The use of 'only time' and 'specified' highlight that, to the mind of

the respondent, women seem to be linguistically and conceptually excluded from the text, except 'to illustrate … beauty'. She continued, 'if you follow conventions you picture just men,' supporting her previous statement that women are visible only in the 'specific'. Claudia's reference to 'conventions' is striking in this instance. For example, what type of conventions led her to picture only men? Are these linguistically or contextually informed, or perhaps both? Her subsequent comment gives some explanation: 'I think people will have to consciously make themselves picture a female ambassador because that's just not [inaudible] how it is'. Subsequently, the two theme codes emerged from the data, and further, they appeared linked. The linguistic and/or conceptual exclusion of women seems to create the impression that the text is portraying 'just men'.

The third code, 'feeling frustrated/confused,' arose from another key theme in participants' responses, and was mainly, but not exclusively, connected to *The Cook and the Carpenter*. As Martina reflected on her reaction to the text, 'the second text really frustrated me' and 'I just got so confused'. The audible emphasis on 'really' and 'so' highlights the force of her response – an experience connected to the neutral pronoun 'na'. She stated, 'as much as I want to believe in the fact that we can actually use a gender-neutral pronoun to refer to people and etc. etc. I got so confused at some point that I stopped reading it'. This perception proved central also for the other participants and therefore resulted in the code above. As Baker explains in relation to Wittgenstein's thought, language is communal property. And if changes are not agreed on by the speech community, they are likely to be rejected. Nevertheless, these three codes do not explain all the data and additional codes emerged as I continued with the analysis. '[M]aking people think,' 'considering feasibility of changes' and 'linking language and imagination' were new codes originating from the latter half of the transcript. Already, connections between these initial theme codes became visible, which supported the formation of categories later on. For example, 'linking language and imagination' can be employed as an overarching category for 'imagining men only' and 'seeing women only in the specific,' therefore combining three codes into one.

'[M]aking people think' and 'considering feasibility of changes,' however, seemed unrelated to previous findings. A few examples help to illustrate their formation. In relation to *The Daughters of Egalia*, for example, Martina stated, 'it's useful in as far as it kind of makes people realise stereotypes about women and men in our society by reversing them,' which, along with similar comments made by other respondents, led to the emergence of 'making people think'. The second, 'considering feasibility of changes,' stemmed from reflections such as, 'but are we ready to get rid of pronouns completely, I'm not sure in language use'. All of the above are of course not exhaustive and only marked the first step of moving away from in vivo coding to more analytic perspectives. It took a second close reading of my initially coded material to test these initial findings and see patterns emerge. Structural codes aside, which describe the respondents and their environment, eight theme codes crystallised from the data. These evolved from the above emerging codes and developed into 1. 'linking language and imagination,' 2. 'linking language and reality,' 3. 'reflecting on the relation between the texts,' 4. 'reflecting on the effectiveness of texts,' 5. 'reflecting on the feasibility of changes/proposals,' 6. 'commenting on the status quo,' 7. 'misunderstandings,' and 8. 'getting it'.

Again, a few examples help to illustrate how I arrived at one of these theme codes in particular. To return to the first response to *The Left Hand of Darkness*, even though Janine was uncertain about the sex/gender of the narrator, she felt led to assume her/him to be male. She stated that 'the rest of the text' was to her understanding 'only talking about men and kings,' which seemed to imply 'that we're talking only about men here'. The predominantly male language of the excerpt then, according to the participant, appeared to create a link between 'the rest of the text' and the sex/gender of the narrator. This perceived connection formed the basis for 'linking language and imagination' – a code which proved relevant also for other responses. In fact, I applied this code twenty-five times as either a main or sub-code throughout the second close reading, illustrating the significance of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: language seems to influence thought.

The next step in my analysis was to refine these eight codes, with comparing and sorting data an essential component. I created a diagram (see Appendix 2), which provided an overview of all the coded data and allowed me

to construct links between them. It also enabled me to understand which codes had little supporting evidence and might be better off submerged under an umbrella code, and which were fairly comprehensive and therefore of key importance for the analysis. From the eight emerging codes above, 'language' and 'effectiveness' were major themes. Of course, my research design specifically asked participants to consider the language employed in each excerpt as well as its effectiveness in highlighting the linguistic representation of women and men. This is a concern in terms of grounded theory and needs to be addressed at this stage. A key question might be: were these indeed of most interest to respondents, or was their emergence simply preconditioned by my instructions? One could argue either way; however, as Cutcliffe states, issues such as these are hard to circumvent for most researchers. 'The doctoral proposal usually needs to identify not only the area of study, but often the particular research question as well,' Cutcliffe adds, and '[l]ack of precision in the research question can also cause considerable difficulty for ethics committees' (2005, p. 424). A completely open exploration is therefore difficult to achieve. Based on the data available, language and effectiveness emerged as key concerns, and adequate categories were therefore required to reflect their centrality even if their emergence was potentially compromised. Consequently, 'reflecting on language' and 'reflecting on the effectiveness of texts' emerged as two new cores, with 'reflecting on language' now including 'linking language and imagination,' 'linking language and reality' and 'reflecting on the feasibility of changes/proposals' as subcategories. A fourth separate subcategory emerged from comments on the use of 'I' in *The Left Hand of Darkness* and the neutral pronoun 'na' in *The Cook and the Carpenter* and was termed 'considering the ambiguous subject'. 'Reflecting on the effectiveness of texts,' on the other hand, acted as an umbrella for 'commenting on the status quo,' 'misunderstandings' and 'getting it'. I re-included the theme of 'frustration/confusion' under 'effectiveness' as it proved to be of central concern – this now incorporated comments on 'intentionality' and 'writing style'. As became clear from the diagram, the code 'reflecting on the relation between the texts' did not integrate into the core codes. And with only two relevant pieces of data it was eventually discarded.

At first sight, the categories emerging from the diagram complicate the above codes as much as they merge codes into useful categories. However, seeing links between data and codes as well as considering their differences allowed me to progress to the final stage of coding. For example, it enabled me to see a connection between respondents' comments coded as 'linking language and imagination' and 'frustration/confusion'. Reflections on *The Cook and the Carpenter*, in particular, seemed to highlight participants' inability to imagine characters. As Janine reflected, 'I agree with you with the frustrating thing … it's just because you get lost in all the characters I couldn't follow the story, like, who is "Will"? And who is the "cook"? And who is the "carpenter"? And the stranger, is the stranger the woman?'. Not being able to imagine 'who is who' resulted in frustration for respondents and therefore signposted an important connection. It seemed to stem from the incongruence of linguistic neutrality with what Wittgenstein terms 'menschliche Gepflogenheiten und Institutionen'. The linguistic status quo enables speakers to differentiate between 'female' and 'male' – a differentiation which the novel fundamentally challenges. Another example of a link emerging from the diagram is the following comment, 'I don't think it's because they're using "nan" or "na" or whatever, it's because all those characters get mixed up in the way that the story is told,' Janine stated, 'so yeah, the story is really frustrating because you can't actually understand it'. The 'way that the story is told' signals a reflection on the 'writing style' of the text while the latter half of the statement implies 'frustration/confusion'. There are many more examples of how links became visible in the diagram, but again I am unable to explore these in-depth due to lack of space. These connections, however, fundamentally shaped my final categories.

The core category which emerged from the initial coding of data, the comparison of data and codes, and the collation of codes into categories is 'reflecting on (sex/gender and) language'. This category originally included eight subcategories: 1. 'considering feasibility/reality,' 2. 'considering the impact of pronouns,' 3. 'perceiving female-specific images,' 4. 'perceiving male-specific images,' 5. 'struggling with the ambiguous subject,' 6. '(not) getting it,' 7. 'reflecting on effectiveness' and 8. 'noticing the highlighting of issues'. Focused coding established clearer links, resulting in the condensing to four

subcategories: 1. 'perceiving specific images,' combining 'perceiving female-specific images' and 'perceiving male-specific images'; 2. 'considering the impact of pronouns,' which includes 'struggling with the ambiguous subject'; 3. 'reflecting on effectiveness,' which incorporates 'noticing the highlighting of issues' and '(not) getting it'; and 4. 'considering feasibility/reality'. In the following I analyse the data from the native English-speaking focus groups in relation to these subcategories and the data that emerged from the pilot focus group. The aim is to evaluate whether these subcategories remain the most suitable or whether the native English focus group data provides new insights. In effect, I put the emerging categories to the test.

Testing emerging categories – Native English responses

Respondents were recruited by approaching members of two pre-existing groups: one was a postgraduate discussion group and the other a feminist writing group. I was a member of both groups, which, similar to the pilot focus group, resulted in a pre-connection with participants. Four members of the postgraduate group took part, Sam, Jennie, Rich and Sarah, all of whom knew one another from previous discussion group encounters. Two members were newer to the group; the third I have known for over a year and the fourth is a friend of mine. Of the four respondents from the feminist writing group, Jo, Alice, Mandy and Jessica, I knew two relatively well, and the third is a friend of mine. All three had been part of this and another writing group for some time. The fourth participant was new to the group, but a close friend of one of the other members. I chose to work with these networks for two reasons in particular: firstly, I wanted to be able to access an 'ordinary social process,' as Wilkinson terms it. And secondly, I intended to level any hierarchy between the researcher and the researched as far as possible. This enabled a dialogic focus group study, while my awareness of the impact of this setting allowed for a reflective analytic practice.

All participants were native English speakers and identified as either white British or white European. The postgraduate group consisted of three female and one male participant with an average age of 26 years, while all respondents from the feminist writing group were female and the average age was 31 years.

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Prior to the focus group discussions I asked participants to complete a questionnaire, which aimed to assess attitudes toward the issue of sex/gender and language. I decided on 'The Inventory of Attitudes Toward Sexist/Nonsexist Language – General (IASNL-G),' developed by Janet B. Parks and Mary Ann Roberton (2000), to access participants' responses. The inventory has been thoroughly tested by Parks and Roberton and also employed by other researchers. Oriane Sarrasin, Ute Gabriel, and Pascal Gygax, for example, used part of the questionnaire in their 2012 study 'Sexism and Attitudes Toward Gender-Neutral Language: The Case of English, French, and German'. As the authors describe the inventory, it is 'divided into subscales for beliefs about sexist language, recognition of sexist language, and willingness to use nonsexist language' (2012, p. 117), all of which were useful for the purposes of my study. Further, the IASNL-G is open-access and provided 'for use by any interested researcher' (Parks and Roberton, 2000, p. 433). The authors recommend the tool 'should be used exactly as it appears ..., including the presentation of the operational definition of sexist language' (Parks and Roberton, 2000, p. 433). I reproduced the questionnaire as advised with the following results.

The respondents from the postgraduate discussion group shared a supportive attitude toward nonsexist language, with an average score of 86. Results were similar for participants from the feminist writing group, who also had a supportive attitude, but, perhaps predictably, with an even higher average score of 95. According to Parks and Roberton's inventory 'total scores between 73.6 and 105 reflect a supportive attitude' (2000, p. 433-4); respondents from both groups therefore scored solidly within that range. Consequently, it could be expected that all participants would have similar viewpoints on the issue of sex/gender and language. In the following I explore how responses from each group overlap and where they differ. Further, I evaluate how the data from the two native English-speaking focus groups supports or challenges the categories emerging from the pilot focus group. To test the four developing themes, 1. 'perceiving specific images,' 2. 'considering the impact of pronouns,'3. 'reflecting on effectiveness' and 4. 'considering feasibility/reality,' the below analysis is given in separate sections. This is not to say that the categories are fixed or self-contained with no potential for crossovers or linkages. But to

investigate their validity it seemed most useful to keep them distinct at this stage.

Perceiving specific images: How language evokes a particular sex/gender

One key category emerging from the pilot focus group was the perception of specific images. Respondents from the pilot as well as the two native English-speaking groups all commented on the understanding of certain terms, and therefore certain characters, as either male or female. This illustrates the relevance of the hypothesis that language influences thought, and more specifically, of Tohidian's interpretation that language influences perception. However, this association was shaped by the language used in the literary excerpts as much as the context imagined or given. The introductory pages from *The Left Hand of Darkness* stimulated most reflection and debate, which centred on the assumption that nouns and pronouns with predominantly male associations also predominantly evoke men. In reference to Le Guin's text, respondents saw a clear link between sex/gender and language, even if sex/gender did not seem to be openly given. In fact, several participants initially commented that most terms, in themselves, were not necessarily specific. '[T]here are lots of lists of job titles and I thought only one was gender-specific which was "lords",' Sam from the postgraduate discussion group stated. This was supported by Jennie who said, 'yeah professions aren't gendered'. However, 'even though the professions aren't gendered,' Jennie continued, 'they're like traditionally gendered professions'. This highlights that even when terms are not specific on the surface, their historical usage and meaning impacts on readers' understanding.

'Convention' was central to evoking specificity, according to Claudia from the pilot group, which was picked up also by native English-speaking respondents. The interpretation of terms such as 'guards,' 'functionaries' and 'dignitaries' is inevitably shaped by history and context, leading Sam to reflect, '[q]uite honestly with the procession I pictured a medieval procession with this processional order ... so in that context everyone would have to be male'. The impact of convention was explored also in the feminist writing group, where Jessica commented, 'although a lot of the professions or job titles [inaudible]

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were non gender-specific, the context of the piece, which you could see as sort of medieval, sort of defined it'. She explained, 'the fact that, you know, the procession of those, were only those who were in the public life and of high rank and in trade,' and added 'that historical standing would eliminate them [women] from masonry or being a student or an ambassador'. Jessica continued, 'I thought it's kind of because of our knowledge of historical norms that gave us the only, for a while, the only indication of gender'. Jennie from the postgraduate group explored this further, 'I think we're all people that sort of think about gender academically as well so obviously, like, we don't want to just automatically think of like a "mason" as a man or something but actually you still find I have to make a conscious effort'. As the respondent remarked, even those who share an interest in sex/gender and language have to make 'a conscious effort' to override historical associations. Jennie therefore concluded, 'I think for most people probably the instant response to the professions and names would be masculine'.

These reflections built on the explorations in the pilot group, where the discussion developed as follows among two participants:

Martina: I was alerted by the fact that we got a 'king,' we got 'lords'

Janine: hm

Martina: and then come on, we all know that when people say 'mayors' and you know

Janine: yeah and 'masons'

Martina: 'guards' and 'functionaries'

Janine: yeah

Martina: etc. believe it or not they're mostly men … no matter what you say

While male images seemed to be readily available in the excerpt from *The Left Hand of Darkness*, women appeared to come to mind rarely, if at all. As Sarah from the postgraduate group commented, 'even things like "deputies", "senators", "mayors", though we shouldn't associate them with just men, and you can have obviously ... female "senators", but I think, yeah we do associate them more with men'. Linguistically neutral terms are therefore not necessarily

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perceived as such, leaving the association 'female' confined to the specific. '[T]he only time when a woman is specified is to illustrate a metaphor about beauty,' Claudia from the pilot group confirmed. This was commented on also by Jo from the feminist writing group: 'the only time a woman is even referred to is right at the beginning where they talk about the women wearing a jewel ... and that was like metaphorically, wasn't it, not like literally a woman wearing a jewel'. Rich from the postgraduate group added, 'as far as I can see there's no mention, there's no explicit mention of women'; a similar perception led Claudia to conclude that 'for me it [the excerpt] was devoid of women'. Returning to my application of the *salva veritate* principle: this highlights that 'man', and in extension, terms associated with 'male', are unable to evoke 'a human being of either sex', and therefore 'woman'.

But despite the overwhelming understanding of the nouns employed in *The Left Hand of Darkness* as male, one term in particular remained open to interpretation. 'Jugglers' was potentially more ambiguous, several participants commented. '[I]n that context [of a medieval procession] everyone would have to be male pretty much apart from the "jugglers",' Sam from the postgraduate discussion group stated. Alice from the feminist writing group seconded this: 'when it got to the "jugglers" I thought perhaps that in my mind's eye I saw it as a group of mainly men but possibly gender-diverse,' which was picked up on by Mandy: 'you're right as well, I saw the "jugglers" as oddly male and female I don't know why'. But not all participants agreed on this potential ambiguity: 'I'm not very visual so I didn't see the "jugglers" as women as well so I don't read in that way,' Jo added. A potential conclusion given by Claudia from the pilot group was therefore: 'if you want to set the picture and talk about women as well then you have to feature [them] somewhere'. In short, to counteract the predominantly male associations imposed by either language and/or convention, a text needs to explicitly 'talk about women' to stop 'talking only about men'. As the respondent summarises, language influences thought; linguistic change is consequently paramount to effect a change in perception.

Specific images were not only perceived in *The Left Hand of Darkness*; the excerpt from *The Cook and the Carpenter* equally sparked debate. The terms 'cook' and 'carpenter' are on a linguistic level as neutral as 'guards' and 'functionaries' but, to the participants, they also carried specific associations.

Two postgraduate group respondents assigned sex/gender as follows: Jennie stated that 'they're like defined by their professions and I think it was the way you'd expect that the man was the "carpenter" and the woman was the "cook",' while Sarah added, 'we're never told who is the woman, who is the man there and we, I think yeah, we just obviously assume the "cook" is going to be a woman and the "carpenter" is going to be a man'. This 'traditional' interpretation was seconded by Mandy from the feminist group: 'you automatically go "the cook" is a woman, "the carpenter" is a man and it's sort, how much those two professions obviously come with their own sort [of] preconceived gender'. Again, sex/gender was interpreted even if not linguistically present. Nevertheless, not all participants made the same associations; Sam reflected during the postgraduate discussion group: 'I thought the cook was a man I don't really know why' and 'I thought the carpenter was a man'. Jessica from the feminist writing group, on the other hand, commented, 'I saw them both as female'. She explained, 'just because of this story and the pronouns and it just made me think, you know, there's a possibility in that world that they are both female'.

What becomes clear from the above is that the identification of sex/gender mattered greatly to all respondents. Whether characters are 'read' as female or male, participants seemed to understand them as either 'one' or the 'other,' never as neutral or in-between. As Jennie from the postgraduate group stated, 'the assumption is that as we picture a character we'd have to pick a gender for them between these two choices'. She continued: 'I don't know if anyone else pictured like just a completely androgynous person ..., I think probably most people don't get to that as an option. But there's nothing to say that any of these worlds needed to [be] underst[ood] as binary, sexist'. Respondents seemed to feel conditioned to 'pick a sex/gender' even when a 'binary' understanding is not inherent in the language. If terms were potentially neutral, such as 'guards' and 'carpenter,' conventions or context were usually consulted to provide 'clues'. This has serious implications for neutral language – if readers are unable to imagine a neutral being, and further, predominantly associate male, is linguistic neutrality a viable option? As Jennie reflected in relation to *The Left Hand of Darkness*, 'they made a big deal of the first time they gendered somebody and then that was the point that anybody got an identity. So yeah, the name and the

description of the person only followed after having been gendered'. Sex/gender seemed to be linked to identity, and readers made sense of characters through its classification. Pronouns played a considerable role in 'revealing' sex/gender, and in the following I evaluate how ambiguous anaphors complicate perception.

Considering the impact of pronouns: How they shape readers' perceptions

The use of 'I' in *The Left Hand of Darkness* and of 'na' in *The Cook and the Carpenter* had considerable impact on participants' readings. The lack of specificity connoted by these two pronouns led respondents to reflect on the potential sex/gender of a character and the meaning of their assumption. In the pilot focus group a central discussion emerged around the uncertainty of 'I'. While one participant was keen to know the sex/gender of the narrator, the other argued that it was insignificant. Their conversation developed as follows: Janine commented first of all, 'so yeah the narrator usually uses "I" so you don't, he or she doesn't really, like, specify if we're talking about a male or a female'. This highlights an initial ambiguity around the sex/gender of the first person singular pronoun, which was, however, resolved by linking 'I' to the rest of the text. As quoted above, Janine 'came to the conclusion that with the rest of the text because it's only talking about men and kings and everything that we're talking only about men here'. Martina also reflected on the use of 'I' in *The Left Hand of Darkness* but her position differed. She observed:

> Martina: yeah as you said it doesn't reveal the narrator's sex which, however, didn't make me feel the narrator could be male necessarily. For me it was more, like, [to Janine] not to say that
>
> Janine: yeah, no no no
>
> Martina: I mean you know it's just a perception that I had. It was more like it's not relevant
>
> Janine: Hmhm
>
> Martina: to the story and that's why I'm not seeing it

The theme of 'identifying sex/gender' versus 'sex/gender being irrelevant' continued beyond this initial exchange. After the third pilot focus group

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participant, Claudia, shared her perception of the text, Janine and Martina returned to their discussion:

> Janine: [to Claudia] yeah the thing you said about the fact that you can't really know if it's a man or a woman, the narrator, until the end I was thinking, okay maybe at the end we're going to – well the end of that passage at least – we're going [to] have, like, kind of revealed that she is actually the only woman and that's why she is actually looking at the whole picture but because at the end we don't really
>
> Martina: it doesn't matter
>
> Janine: yeah
>
> Martina: I think that's the, that's the
>
> Janine: yeah
>
> Martina: question, does it matter do we need to know whether this is a man or a woman

Despite her initial declaration that the narrator was male, Janine still seemed undecided, which further highlights the ambiguity of 'I'. She also appeared to agree with Martina on the surface that sex/gender might be irrelevant. This conflict over the narrator's sex/gender, however, was far from resolved. Janine still 'needed to know,' as the following exchange illustrates:

> Janine: in the book do you actually know who the narrator is
>
> Martina: it does matter now?
>
> Janine: no, but just who the narrator is, like their story or
>
> Researcher: yes
>
> Janine: do you actually, do you actually get to know that
>
> Researcher: yes
>
> Martina: you need to read the book, you need to read the book
>
> Researcher: yeah
>
> Janine: well that's good

It seems to be a relief to Janine that the sex/gender of the narrator is revealed eventually. Additionally, the use of the phrase 'know *who* the narrator is' shows that sex/gender and identity were perceived as closely interlinked.

This becomes more poignant still in participants' reflections on their understanding of 'na' in *The Cook and the Carpenter*. Again, the pilot focus group data already brings key concerns surrounding the neutral pronoun to the fore. As Claudia commented, 'you read something and you need to picture what's going on in your head. What is that, like, an empty shell of a person?' This reminds of the limitations of any new language in a context which remains defined by the sex/gender binary. The image of 'an empty shell of a person' is a powerful reminder how central sex/gender is to readers' understanding of a character. She concluded, 'you can't portray a character without actually telling people who they are'. Without specificity then, readers, according to the respondent, are unable to imagine 'who' a character is. Claudia related the impact of this ambiguity back to the use of 'I' in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, which resulted in the following discussion:

> Claudia: The same with the first one, the narrator, it's important in a sense that you need to know who's telling the story. Are they reliable? Are they making it all up? Am I going to believe it? Am I going to root for them? Am I going to like them or not? It's like
>
> Martina: yeah
>
> Claudia: if you don't tell me then what's the point in listening to your story?
>
> Janine: yeah
>
> Martina: I don't know, I found it different though, like in the first one it didn't really matter to me, ... I don't find someone reliable because it's, they're a man or a woman

This exchange highlights how the identification of sex/gender potentially moves beyond ascertaining biology to being an indicator of reliability. While Martina openly disagreed with Claudia on this point, as she did with Janine over 'the need to know,' she eventually conceded that, 'at the end of the day, to be fair that's how we see people'. She explained, 'when we see people, we want to identify because that helps us understand things kind of in [a] very stereotype

way but still this is the way we make sense of reality, so I do understand what you mean'. Despite her reservations Martina admitted that the identification of sex/gender is key for many readers.

The theme of pronouns as a tool to help readers 'make sense of reality' emerged in all three focus group discussions. As Janine reflected on the use of 'na,' 'the pronoun it feels weird … I think it's just because we're so used to hav[ing] "him" or "her"'. This reliance on specific referents, which Wittgenstein terms 'menschliche Gepflogenheiten', is explored also by participants from the postgraduate discussion and feminist writing group. Rich from the postgraduate group commented, for example, 'I found it quite difficult to place everything, as in I couldn't tell who was who, whether the "cook" was a man or the "carpenter" was a man or woman cause normally you'd rely so much on the pronouns to sort of build around'. Jessica from the feminist writers seconded this: 'I found it a little bit difficult to follow because we use "his", "her" so much as a shorthand for who the character is, to establish it'. Sarah from the postgraduate group explained this dependence: 'you have a set of assumptions that are just kind of, like, engrained and someone says "he" you see like a "man" and you kind of, you make certain assumptions, certain kind of associations with that'. She added, 'so when something like as basic as that, as a pronoun which you have to use or you use them all the time and [inaudible] you can't have sentences without them'. This feeling was shared by Rich from the same group: 'the main thing for me [is] just how unsettling it was to try and read it and how surprising that it's just such a small feature, that's so arbitrary and so easily replaceable'. He concluded, 'I couldn't get my head around it quite, I couldn't read it'. This illustrates Shaviro's argument in relation to Wittgenstein that language cannot be altered individually; any linguistic change needs to be agreed on by the speech community. In short, in the current context, a character might become unreadable if sex/gender is not 'revealed'.

Although the use of 'na' challenged respondents much more profoundly in their understanding than the use of nouns such as 'cook' and 'carpenter,' for which convention or context could be consulted, most participants nevertheless found a tactic to reintroduce sex/gender to the neutral pronoun. Sarah from the postgraduate group reflected, 'I just had to replace it for "he", "she" or "they" with the "nan" because I was just kind of like, oh I need to just actually get to

read, like, in my head'. To this Mandy from the feminist group added, 'I was sort of wondering what the effect of that was because all it did, it meant I went through and implanted my own "he", "his", "she", "hers"'. She summarised, 'as much as they might want me to read it "na", my head was automatically planting in so it's, like, how just how engrained that is I suppose'. However, this replacement is not necessarily permanent. As Alice commented, 'I think when you're first reading it, I'm replacing "nan" with "his", "her", "na" with "she", "he" and I'm doing that but I think as you read on you would get used to [it]'. This was picked up also in the postgraduate discussion group where Rich stated, 'well I imagine if, once you read the whole book you probably get used to it'. Janine from the pilot focus group agreed: 'if we're going to use at some point in life a neutral pronoun, we're just going to get used to it like we got used to using "him" or "her"'. As Davidson and Smith argue in extension to Wittgenstein's thought, language is not a fixed entity; it can and does evolve in accordance with new social practices. Martina, however, made an important point regarding the limitations of neutral language in the current sociocultural context:

> [T]he point for me is that I think there was an episode of, not violence, but something similar that was going to happen to the girl, when the girl is named and I think this is important because you don't want to get this violence lost. Cause it was violence or threats or whatever from, done by specific people who were male on a specific person that … was female and I think that if you kind of mix all the pronouns up and everything, this might get lost which is something important to bear in mind. And I'm very gender-conscious and I'd like to get rid of all the pronouns and everything but there are points in which you need to be strategic about the use of pronouns

While allowing readers to imagine either sex/gender, the very ambiguity of neutral pronouns could potentially do harm in certain instances. As I explored in Chapter 3, neutralising the sex/gender of perpetrators in violent acts, especially those predominantly committed by men against women, obscures reality. And in doing so, neutral language could potentially weaken arguments for social change, i.e. if a perpetrator is presented neutrally some might argue that both women and men are equally likely to commit violent acts against women. This

could prevent the implementation of targeted initiatives to redress social norms and inequities. Martina's observation also moves us beyond considering the impact of pronouns and points toward the final two categories to be explored in this section: 'reflecting on effectiveness' and 'considering feasibility/reality'. She effectively asks whether neutral pronouns are a useful tool in all instances, which highlights a concern for the link between language and reality. I explore other responses relating to the 'effectiveness' and 'feasibility' of linguistic propositions in more detail next.

Reflecting on effectiveness: How literary texts thematise representation

When reflecting on the effectiveness of the literary excerpts, participants' readings fitted into two main strands. The first theme revolved around the intention of the texts, and the second around their success in highlighting the issue of sex/gender and language. To begin with the first, comments on intent frequently surfaced during the focus group discussions. *The Left Hand of Darkness*, for example, puzzled many participants precisely due to its perceived lack of intentionality. As Martina reflected, 'I've got a preconception of *The Left Hand of Darkness* as being a kind of subversive text,' but 'I was a bit surprised cause I didn't find much subversive stuff'. Rich from the postgraduate discussion group agreed with this interpretation: 'I didn't really quite know what to make of it,' he said, 'cause I was sort of looking for a really blatant feminist point to come out of it, if you know what I mean, relating it to sort of, you know, real society let's say. And it did nothing'. This expectation of a 'feminist point' was influenced by the research context, as Rich explained at a later point: 'I found it difficult ... to take any clear points out of it, of a let's say, regarding a feminist agenda specifically, which is what I was sort of on the lookout for given the topic of discussion'.

The perceived lack of making a 'clear point' was understood by other respondents as potentially useful in itself. As Jennie from the postgraduate group commented, 'even though the professions aren't gendered, they're like traditionally gendered professions so that's probably supposed to be leading so you think that like "masons" and "artisans" and stuff might be men'. While the language used in *The Left Hand of Darkness* might not provoke an instant

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reaction, the impact of 'traditionally gendered professions' on the imagination of readers did not go unnoticed. Further, when the excerpt did openly specify the sex/gender of a character, it had a powerful effect. As Sarah from the same group reflected on the sexing/gendering of Estraven, 'then the person [next] to her [the narrator] becomes a man and it's really, it's made really obvious, like, it's kind of trying to jolt you, like almost with force to make [inaudible] you to reflect on it'. This was seconded by Mandy from the feminist writing group:

> I quite liked the fact that it does that quite telling bit where it sort of says 'man I must say, having said he and his' that sort of points out to you what you've already made your mind up about and … how you've sort of already, and even though she [the narrator] said 'person on the left' very clearly, you've already made your mind up that it's a man

Jessica agreed: 'I feel like it's kind of intentionally drawing attention to itself'. The intention of the text was therefore perceived by some participants as knowingly understated. This approach, however, was considered problematic by Martina as the excerpt seemed to her 'a bit too subtle'. Sam from the postgraduate discussion group, on the other hand, saw power in this. She stated, 'I preferred the first one because it sort of just ambles along and then it hits you'. Overall then, it seems fair to say that participants were undecided as to the text's effectiveness.

A different discussion emerged around *The Cook and the Carpenter*. The use of 'na' especially provoked debate on intent, with a key concern arising from the use of the neutral pronoun in conjunction with specific terms. Claudia from the pilot focus group argued, for example:

> [A]t some point I thought the text identified the 'na' or 'nan' person as a woman anyway cause they're like calling her a crazy woman and then they're calling her a girl so I don't understand, I didn't get the whole intention of well, if it's a woman why can't you say it's a woman why can't you say it's 'her'

Other respondents agreed; as Sarah from the postgraduate discussion group reflected, 'when they talk about "woman" and "man" then you're almost

surprised, you're like, oh we've just kind of avoided the whole issue of like who is a woman or a man so far'. This was supported by Jo from the feminist writing group: 'I was quite disappointed when I got to the use of "woman", I was like, ah it's not what I thought it's going to be … the use of the "woman" I did wonder then, oh what are they trying to achieve, what's trying to be achieved with the "na"'. Participants were 'surprised' and 'disappointed' by this perceived inconsistency; however, that did not mean they considered the neutral pronoun ineffective. 'Na' was felt to cause a profound disruption to traditional pronoun usage. As Rich from the postgraduate group commented, 'I was finding it difficult to track who was saying what and who was just obviously cause of not being used to the replacement of the pronouns'. He added, 'I think [this] is the whole point of it so as to make you rethink the arbitrariness of "his" and "her"'. Martina, from the pilot focus group, agreed: 'I think for me on a deeper level, I think it's trying to show us what it says on the last page which is "it was the same thing either way". Maybe we shouldn't give too much importance to "he", "she", "her", "him"'. In effect, the new language leads to reflections on the linguistic status quo and, in consequence, to the imagination of a new form of life – one which is not as centrally defined by the sex/gender binary.

In terms of overall effectiveness *The Cook and the Carpenter* was ranked highly by Martina. She explained, 'I think the most successful is the one we all got frustrated and confused about, cause that is actually pointing out that we do work by binaries, we do want to know whether it's a man or a woman cause otherwise we don't understand, we can't make sense of things'. However, Martina's description of the text as 'the one we all got frustrated and confused about' also highlights a central struggle participants experienced – one that was upheld across all focus group discussions. As linguistic changes were at odds with what Wittgenstein terms 'menschliche Gepflogenheiten', they fundamentally challenged the participants' understanding. But respondents seemed unsure whether the experience of 'frustration/confusion' was due to the inability to identify the sex/gender of the referent or down to different reasons entirely. Either way, it had a profound impact on the perception of the text. Responses regarding the use of the neutral pronoun were strong, ranging from 'alienating' and 'disorientating' to 'clunky'. In consequence, 'it made it very difficult to read as well, like, I had to go back a thousand times and try and

understand it … and then the next sentence you have to do the same, it just made it really slow, it kind of interrupted the flow,' according to Martina. For many participants this 'slow' and 'interrupted' reading experience was linked to the writing style of the excerpt. For example, several postgraduate group respondents considered the text a 'language exercise' or 'linguistic exercise,' while participants from the feminist writing group commented on 'the way that the story's told' from a stylistic perspective. The below discussion between feminist writing group respondents illustrates this:

> Alice: just on this technique … I think when you're first reading it, I'm replacing 'nan' with 'his,' 'her'; 'na' with 'she,' 'he' and I'm doing that but I think as you read on you would get used to [it], I think it's okay. But I think some of the writing style isn't very clear and I think that's what makes this difficult is, I mean I kind of think 1973, I think if someone submitted this as a manuscript now I don't think it would get published based on this little intro about, you know, kind of talking about a warning but there's no idea what that is and a threat but there's no sense
>
> Jessica: it's a, it's a challenge
>
> Mandy: it is
>
> Jessica: to the reader I think, you know, it's a real laying down of the gauntlet because, you know, as first chapters go it's not the easiest or most you know
>
> Alice: and all they're doing is just hanging about like collecting some eggs and doing some
>
> Jessica: yeah
>
> Alice: woodwork
>
> Mandy: yeah it's confusing and who's speaking when … cause sometimes it's reported and then you know it's, like, what I don't understand how this happened

Alice concluded, 'I suppose what I'm saying is, I'm happy to read something with gender-neutral pronouns, I think it's good but it just, the writing there has to be, you know, compelling writing underneath it for me to read on'. Janine, from

the pilot focus group, also pointed to the narrative style as the key obstacle to understanding:

> The story's really confusing I don't think it's because of the pronouns, it's just you don't know who's who so I spent my time going back and trying to actually figure out who's talking and who's doing what, so yeah the story is really frustrating because you can't actually understand it

In her subsequent conversation with Martina, however, the use of 'na' is explored as a key contributor rather than a mere addition to the confusion:

> Martina: the pronouns don't help though
>
> Janine: yeah that's true because actually, actually yeah if you know they are man or woman I can, they use 'her' or 'he,' 'his' or so actually you can sort of place yourself in the story

In effect, Janine felt that specific pronouns are central to understanding and concluded that 'the second one with the gender-neutral pronoun, well it's a failure for me, I can't understand who's who so it's just I don't want to keep reading the story basically'. That is, the respondent feels inhibited from engaging with linguistic practices which are at odds with the status quo. And while Alice, from the feminist writing group, shared similar feelings about the limitations of the text, she concluded, on the other hand:

> I think the, you know, kind of in terms of language and gender, the male is the default and the female is the exception so when an author disrupts that and has these gender-neutral pronouns I think that's when like people get really annoyed by it as well 'cause they're like who but is it male or is it … I don't know are they female but I think that is the most kind of, you know, destabilising this kind of binary, you know, that you've got this kind of dominant and then this ... other so I would say *The Cook and the Carpenter* is the most interesting kind of linguistically even though it's unfortunate the way that the story is told

So while the effectiveness of the text might be impaired by the style of the narrative for some respondents, the neutral pronoun was perceived as effective nevertheless.

Participants were much less divided over the effectiveness of the excerpt from *The Daughters of Egalia*. While respondents did not necessarily reflect on the text as thoroughly in relation to the other categories, *The Daughters of Egalia* was frequently mentioned in relation to its perceived success. Martina, from the pilot group, for example, thought it was 'engaging' and 'funny,' while Janine stated, 'it's so over-the-top it's, … it's kind of a parody, right? So it's, so I guess for me that just that might be the most useful'. This was supported by postgraduate discussion group participants who described the excerpt as 'in-your-face' and striking,' to which respondents from the feminist writing group added 'clear,' 'vivid' and 'in the context of 1977 where, like, you'd be like this is revolutionary'. In effect, these reflections illustrate the potential of humour to liberate, as proposed by Freud's theory. The use of 'revolutionary' points to both 'Auflehnung' and 'Befreiung'. To explore these responses in more depth, Martina's comment is useful:

> It's a good way perhaps to make people realise how sexist society is and how, you know, sexist terms that apply to women, … everything that is usually said of women very stereotypically patronising, patriarchal, sexist and whatever you want is applied to men. … it's good to make people realise certain things, double standards

Jennie from the postgraduate discussion group supported this understanding: 'I thought it did a really good job of showing like how instrumental language is in kind of defining the normative and the aberrant so, like, the fact that it's "men" so that's the, like, the standard kind of position of personhood and then "women" is a sort of lesser secondary type of "man"'. Jessica from the feminist writing group elaborated, 'I liked the inventiveness of the director's "housebound" and the "manwom" and, you know, I thought they were interesting collisions of different, you know, ideas'. This reminds of Redfern's argument that wordplay helps to reveal double standards and thereby the role of language in upholding the status quo. And as emerged from the data,

participants seemed to feel the text was 'obvious' in its intentions and therefore generally effective.

The 'ease of reading' *The Daughters of Egalia* in comparison to *The Cook and the Carpenter* might have contributed to the above perceptions of textual effectiveness. And reflections on the feasibility of the proposed language change arguably also played into such perceptions. I explore comments on the fourth category next.

Considering feasibility/reality: How literary proposals could be transferred

This final category overlaps in many ways with the other core themes. However, as reflections on the feasibility/reality of language use distinctly emerged from the data, it is important to present them separately. Participants from the pilot focus group were the first to comment on the relation between proposed linguistic changes and their place in the 'real' world. As Martina, for example, commented on *The Daughters of Egalia*, 'I don't think it's feasible in normal, it's good of a literary text, I find it really engaging and funny, I think it pushes the point a bit too far'. She clearly felt there is a difference between what is possible in a literary text and 'normality'; as she explained, 'I don't know how feasible it is in real, as in language use on a day-to-day basis'. That it, linguistic change seems to need to match the requirements of speakers to be deemed effective. Martina believes literary language is not necessarily transferable to 'language use on a day-to-day basis' – concerns which were also shared by other respondents. As Claudia, this time in relation to *The Cook and the Carpenter*, stated, 'what's the point in trying to be neutral when you then, to illustrate a character, need to resort to the normal language anyway'. She elaborated, 'like normal as in a guy like this would use a language like this and that's why you need him in the story, that's why you have him use this language in the story because otherwise you couldn't tell the story'. Claudia was referring to the 'episode of violence,' which Martina also took issue with previously. And like Martina, who felt the use of 'na' might potentially obscure the sex/gender of perpetrator and victim, Claudia pointed out the need for 'normal language' to 'tell the story'. To her, the narrative cannot be told if readers are unable to

understand characters, and this understanding includes the identification of their sex/gender, which 'na' complicates.

In fact, reflections on the feasibility of the neutral pronoun emerged across all focus groups. Martina set the tone when commenting, 'as much as I want to believe in the fact that we can actually use a neutral pronoun to refer to people and etc. etc., I got so confused at some point that I stopped reading it'. She added, 'as much as I want to believe that it can actually work, sometimes it doesn't'. In short, the proposed changes seem still too profoundly at odds with 'menschliche Gepflogenheiten'. This perceived failure of 'na' was justified by participants in a variety of ways. Jennie from the postgraduate group felt, for example, that '"nan" would be too much of, like, a sort of glottal stop I suppose,' and explained, 'I would have been interested to see what it would have been like if they'd just used "they" instead 'cause then it doesn't, 'cause it's having to get used to a whole new word'. An existing pronoun, such as 'they,' seemed more viable because it is already in common usage. However, Martina questioned: 'are we ready to get rid of [sexed/gendered] pronouns completely?' altogether. She reflected, 'I'm not sure in language use'. This was seconded by Jennie from the postgraduate discussion group, who queried the use of a neutral pronoun, which presumably includes 'they,' in a narrative context defined by specificity. '[T]hey were linguistically just changing the pronouns but actually it did still seem like a sexist society so then it was, like, will that change anything? Will that matter? Will we still kind of see, like categorise things?,' she asked. Such questions inspired the following discussion between two participants of the postgraduate group, who explored the issue further. In particular, their exploration reveals the popular premise that linguistic change is essentially ineffective.

Rich: it sort of highlights that changing the language without changing the concepts or the sort of prejudices and the stigmas attached to it doesn't necessarily solve anything, if that makes sense, because you could call everyone 'na' and women could still be oppressed …

Jennie: I think you're right

Rich: What do you mean?

Jennie: I think you're right, I agree that it's, yeah it could be a thing about, will just changing pronouns actually change anything 'cause obviously like in this text the concepts of 'man' and 'woman' and the associations of like negative and positive gender are still like really present

Martina agreed that changing pronouns might be problematic in an unequal social context. She stated, 'let's try and change the perspectives and the stereotypes rather than, when they're ready then we'll get rid of the pronouns'. To this Janine added, 'maybe we should try to educate people to actually understand that men and women, we're different but we're still equal … instead of trying to change everything'. A neutral pronoun was consequently considered ineffective if society remained defined by sex/gender.

However, reflections on the feasibility of 'na' were not restricted to concerns around how to best address inequality in an unequal social setting. Linguistic questions also played a central role. While some respondents felt they would 'get used to' the neutral pronoun, two respondents from the postgraduate group reflected on the stylistic hurdles to any widescale acceptance:

Sarah: we're used to like adding new nouns to our vocabulary as well, technological concepts come out and you just, you add them, you get used to them …

Jennie: that's a good point about that we're really used to adding new nouns to our vocabulary so that doesn't pose too much of a problem, 'cause I thought one of the problems with the second [*The Cook and the Carpenter*] was that because pronouns are such common words

The above comments emerged from a comparison of *The Cook and the Carpenter* and *The Daughters of Egalia* in terms of linguistic changes. While 'Egalia' remained 'readable' to most participants despite considerable modifications, Arnold's text caused a profound disruption to the reading experience. As Jo from the feminist writing group commented, 'even when I saw that the roles were reversed [in the translation of Brantenberg's text] I still had a

woman and a man in my head whereas I didn't with this one … and that was simply "he" and "she", and "na" and "nan" that made that difference'.

Disrupting traditional pronoun usage therefore clearly challenged respondents' understanding, as pronouns support the specific interpretation of characters. As Janine stated, 'the pronoun ["na"], it feels weird not because, I think it's just because we're so used to hav[ing] "him" or "her"'. This familiarity has a central impact, Janine explained: 'if, you know, they are man or woman I can, they use "her" or "he", "his" or so actually you can sort of place yourself in the story'. The reference to 'placing yourself in the story' highlights the importance of 'knowing' the sex/gender of referents. Readers occupy a specific 'place' in society, and so do characters in the fictional world. This is potentially why *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *The Daughters of Egalia* did not cause any great concern in terms of feasibility – except for the narrative voice in the first excerpt, sex/gender can be clearly identified. And if language use appeared to be ambiguous, such as in the use of 'I,' participants found relevant clues to aid identification. The narrator of *The Left Hand of Darkness*, for example, was interpreted by respondents as 'female' or 'male' on the basis of the sex/gender of the author, the sex/gender of the reader and the sex/gender of a traditional central character. If such clues seemed to be missing, however, or were not accessible at first instance, feelings of frustration and confusion frequently emerged from the data relating to *The Cook and the Carpenter*. Repeated concerns around 'needing to know' consequently resulted in the formation of a new central category. The next part of this chapter presents the results of theoretical sampling, which tests the boundaries of this new core. I employ the data emerging from the German focus groups to further explore the impact of the literary excerpts in relation to raising awareness of the issue of sex/gender and language.

Theoretical sampling – Native German responses

Identifying sex/gender is, according to Martina, 'the way people actually make sense of reality'. She explained that 'we do want to know whether it's a man or a woman 'cause otherwise we don't understand, we can't make sense of things'. Without linguistic clues as to whether a character was 'female' or 'male,'

Janine felt 'you don't really know who is who,' and, as Claudia termed it, encounter only 'an empty shell of a person'. This core theme of 'needing to know' emerged across all focus groups and informed the subsequent analysis of the two native German transcripts. This specific focus further contributed to the formation of grounded theory.

The research context for the native German discussions differed in several ways from that of the native English groups. First of all, I recruited participants via a general call for respondents within University College London. Participants therefore did not have any previous familiarity with one another or with me. Secondly, I asked respondents to complete 'The Inventory of Attitudes Toward Sexist/Nonsexist Language – General (IASNL-G)' online. While the results of the questionnaire did not impact on the formation of the native English-speaking groups, this time they informed the selection and grouping of participants. Thirteen respondents completed the questionnaire and eight took part in two focus groups conducted in German. Of these, five, Matthias, Antje, Ines, Jochen and Katrin, had a supportive attitude toward nonsexist language, with an average score of 84. The remaining three respondents, Sebastian, Doreen and Berit, held neutral attitudes, with an average of 69 (the range was 52.6 to 73.5). The groups were led with a translated script as well as translated materials; all other processes and procedures remained the same.

The participants identified as white and were native German speakers. The group with supportive attitudes consisted of three female and two male participants, and respondents were on average 26 years old. Two female and one male participant took part in the focus group formed of those with a neutral attitude toward nonsexist language; respondents were slightly younger with an average age of 21. As the focus groups did not originate from pre-existing connections, individual motivations played a more central role in the decision to participate. These ranged from a general curiosity about the study – as one respondent commented, 'eigentlich war's ganz spontan weil ich auch noch nie so was gemacht habe und ich dachte ja das klingt nach einem interessanten Thema, daher wollt ich einfach mal schauen wie das überhaupt so abläuft' – to a comparative interest in the issue of sex/gender and language: 'so eine Sprach- und Geschlechterstudie ist interessant besonders wenn man halt diesen Deutsch-Englischen Kontrast sieht'. The appeal of speaking German

was also mentioned by a third, 'ich mach hier mit, weil ich Deutschunterricht vermisse und weil ich schon richtig lange kein Deutsch mehr geredet hab'. Due to the lack of prior relationships between participants, the dynamics of both native German-speaking groups were decidedly different. However, as I explore in the following, the concerns of respondents were similar to those who took part in previous meetings. As indicated above, particular attention is paid to reflections on the new core category 'needing to know'.

A first close reading of the transcript of the German group with supportive attitudes brought five initial codes to light. These were: 1. 'perceiving sex/gender clearly (due to language and/or context),' 2. 'perceiving a disruption to the assumed sex/gender,' 3. 'potentially perceiving no sex/gender,' 4. 'not knowing who is who,' and 5. 'perceiving sex/gender as helpful to understanding'. Again, I do not have the space to illustrate how I arrived at all of the above; however, an example helps to illustrate how one of these codes emerged. When asked to reflect on the German translation of *The Cook and the Carpenter*, Matthias from the first group commented as follows: 'ich hab das dann als letztes tatsächlich durch "eine", "er," also eigentlich hab ich ihn dann als männlichen genommen, aber ich hätte es auch als weiblichen nehmen können, aber es macht dann den Text viel einfacher zu lesen'. That is, only by referring back to linguistic norms the participant felt able to engage with the narrative. He elaborated, 'also einfach nur weil man, glaub ich, dann mit dieser grammatischen Funktion einfach vertrauter ist, … dann dachte [ich], na ja wenn ich das ersetze … also dann wenn ich einfach nur irgendein Geschlecht einsetze, dann liest sich der Text viel einfacher'. Matthias reflected that traditional pronouns were a familiar grammatical feature. And further, he felt that this familiar feature supported the reading of the text. Replacing a neutral pronoun with a specific one, according to the participant, therefore resulted in an 'einfacher' reading experience. Essentially, he was 'perceiving sex/gender as helpful to understanding,' which along with similar comments made by other participants, led to the emergence of this particular code.

Evidence for all the five codes above also surfaced from a close reading of the second German transcript. As previously in the evaluation of the pilot and English-speaking focus groups, diagrams enabled me to compare data within and across both transcripts as well as see connections between codes. For

example, I noticed a link between comments made on 'potentially perceiving no sex/gender' and 'not knowing who is who,' which allowed me to test and develop each category. Through this comparative process, four final subcategories emerged: 1. 'perceiving sex/gender clearly,' 2. 'perceiving sex/gender as helpful,' 3. 'having doubts about sex/gender,' which now included 'perceiving a disruption to the assumed sex/gender' and 'not knowing who is who,' and 4. 'potentially perceiving no sex/gender'. In the following I test the boundaries of each and explore whether they hold up to scrutiny. This classification expands my previous investigation into the effectiveness of literary texts thematising sex/gender and language.

Perceiving sex/gender clearly: How language categorises human beings

Repeated identification of the sex/gender of characters by participants resulted in the creation of this category. As in the pilot and English-speaking focus groups, respondents perceived certain characters as specifically male or female. As Katrin from the first German group (supportive attitudes) commented in relation to *Winterplanet*, this understanding was often shaped by the language used in the excerpt. '[A]lso was mir schon aufgefallen ist, also jetzt die "Herrschaften" wurden auch alle als "Herrschaften" benannt ... also aus meiner Sicht wirkt das wie gezielt männlich bezeichnet,' she stated. Berit from the second German group (neutral attitudes) agreed with this interpretation. When prompted to reflect on whom she imagined when reading the excerpt, she said, 'ich finde männlich, weil wenn immer, also es werden auch manchmal Männer explizit erwähnt und dass, dann denkt man sich, dass bestimmt auch ansonsten nur Männer da sind, zum Beispiel wird gesagt "dann kommen die Herren, Bürgermeister und Vertreter"'. This again illustrates the relevance of the hypothesis that language influences thought, and more speficially, perception. However, Sebastian from the same group doubted whether such nouns necessarily referred to men only. He argued that certain terms are 'theoretisch' open to interpretation. Nevertheless, he also admitted that in combination with specific nouns these quickly become restricted:

[D]as stimmt, also im Bezug auf die eine Textstelle, wo nur 'Herren' kommt, da ist es sehr komisch, dass nur 'Herren' steht und nicht 'Frauen'

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> ... manche Bezeichnungen sind ja an sich offen, zum Beispiel, also meiner Meinung nach 'Bürgermeister' und 'Vertreter,' aber dadurch, dass eben ein Begriff 'Herren' sehr explizit ist, stimmt das, das wird abgeschwächt. Die Herren an sich also sind, das sind nur Männer und könnte man die Schlußfolgerung daraus ziehen, dass die anderen Teilnehmer auch nur männlich sind

Consequently, he agreed that the language used in the excerpt seemed to encourage the identification of one particular sex/gender, and further, one rather than the other.

Context and association were another aid in deciding whether characters were female or male. As Jochen from the first group commented in relation to the translation of *The Cook and the Carpenter*, 'beim Tischler war es irgendwie so, weil der auch irgendwie mit der Arbeit assoziiert wurde, dass um irgendwelche[s] Brettersägen oder so was ging, da hab ich mir den einfach als männlichen Tischler vorgestellt, so assoziiert'. In addition, context encouraged specific interpretation, as Sebastian from the second group suggested: 'das gab es ja früher auch, dass eben manche Berufsbilder eben vor allem männlich geprägt sind und dadurch wenn jetzt du über eine Gilde oder über irgendeinen Verein halt, dieses Berufsbild dann dort in dieser Prozession langmarschiert, dass es dann sozusagen indirekt auch nur Männer sind'. This line of reasoning was similar to participants' reflections during the pilot and English-speaking focus groups; most participants seemed to find evidence for sex/gender either in convention or context. However, the German groups also drew on grammatical gender to identify whether a character was male or female. For example, in my translation of *The Cook and the Carpenter* I replaced the default article 'der' (masc.) with 'de' (neut.) to obscure the immediate connotations of grammatical gender. Consequently, 'der Koch' was referred to as 'de Koch,' and 'der Tischler' as 'de Tischler'. Nevertheless, the neutral article was unable to override the dominant associations for most respondents. Ines from the first group explained that 'war das "de" für mich einfach nur, da hat jemand das "r" vergessen und damit war das nach wie vor männlich und dann "de Koch" blieb einfach "Koch", "der Koch"'. Doreen from the second group agreed that the dominant connotations remained, 'da ja auch "Koch" und "Tischler" ja die

männliche Variante der Berufsbezeichnungen sind, ansonsten wär es ja "de Köchin" und "de Tischlerin"'. The familiar grammatical gender of terms therefore also played a key role in identification.

As clearly emerged from the data, language contributed to the perception of sex/gender. It generally seemed to guide readers to decide whether a character is one *or* the other. However, as Berit from the second group argued, this linguistic sexing/gendering goes further than nouns referring to characters directly, and also included actions and emotions. She reflected in relation to *Die Töchter Egalias*:

> [I]ch glaub es will halt auch darauf anspielen, dass Leute, dass viele Leute sagen zwar ja es macht doch gar nichts, dass halt die Sprache so männlich geprägt ist, zum Beispiel mit 'Beherrschung' also wenn ich sag, ich verlier die Beherrschung, dann denk ich gar nicht darüber nach, dass also ich hab noch nie bei dem Wort 'Beherrschung' darüber nachgedacht, dass das irgendwie so männlich geprägt ist. Das ist einfach nur ein Wort und viele Leute sagen, ja ach lass doch die Sprache die Sprache sein, und das find ich auch meistens, aber dieser Text zeigt halt wenn [man] das dann mal vertauscht und sagt 'Befrauschung' das klingt direkt total seltsam

As 'Egalia' illustrated to the respondent, even terms which did not seem to connote sex/gender directly are weighted. Antje from the first group agreed that the third excerpt made this particularly obvious. She stated, 'teilweise wurde einem dann so ein bisschen vor Augen geführt was man gar nicht merkt in der Alltagssprache, wie also, wo überall solche Geschlechtssachen auftauchen'. As Barr argues in relation to Brantenberg's text, the subversion of dominant norms renders it 'a social corrective – a weapon'. Through wordplay the novel effectively highlights the extent and impact of the status quo. Participants noticed how used they are to 'reading' sex/gender, and often, they felt led to interpret one sex/gender rather than the other, i.e. male-as-norm. As Sebastian from the second group responded in relation to the translation of *The Cook and the Carpenter*:

> [A]lso was bei mir dazu geführt hat, dass ich es als Männer wahrgenommen hab, ist vielleicht eher so die grundlegende Voreinstellung – ist vielleicht komisch, da müsste man auch länger drüber nachdenken, das ist nur das Erste was mir in den Sinn gekommen ist. Dass es, dass man solange dazu neigt von einem Mann auszugehen, bis im Text das Gegenteil kommt

In support of the pilot and English focus group data, sex/gender was also perceived clearly by most German focus group members. Further, respondents reflected that 'knowing' the sex/gender of a referent was helpful when reading and understanding a text. I evaluate such comments in more detail next.

<u>Perceiving sex/gender as helpful: How linguistic norms rely on classification</u>

Participants did not comment as frequently as in the English-speaking focus groups on the helpfulness of sex/gender, i.e. that this marker enabled them to imagine a particular character. However, reflections were strong enough to merit the creation of this particular category. A good example is the following observation by Matthias from the first German-speaking focus group. As quoted above, he explained the replacement of 'na' with 'er' in the translation of *The Cook and the Carpenter* by stating, 'ich hab das dann als letztes tatsächlich durch "eine", "er," also eigentlich hab ich ihn dann als männlichen genommen, aber ich hätte es auch als weiblichen nehmen können, aber es macht dann den Text viel einfacher zu lesen'. This perception of an easier reading experience was seconded by Antje from the same group. She stated, 'irgendwann hat man es dann ersetzt, dann ging es eben wieder, weil irgendwie es war mühsam'. When prompted to reflect on the choice of pronoun, she added, 'jeweils manchmal ausprobiert, bezieht es sich jetzt auf die Person ... und dann ja jetzt macht es Sinn okay'. Antje considered the use of 'er' or 'sie' less 'mühsam' than the neutral pronoun: 'dann ging es eben wieder' and 'jetzt macht es Sinn,' she confirmed. The data from the second group supported these findings. Berit, for example, mentioned that she also replaced 'na' when reading: 'ich hab das immer ersetzt durch das passende normale Pronomen'. The use of 'normal' is here revealing – having linguistic access to the referent's sex/gender is consequently judged routine, a familiar grammatical function.

In fact, as long as specification followed traditional conventions, it was not even perceived as a feature of language. Matthias from the first group stated in relation to *Winterplanet*, 'also der erste Text war einfach ein Text, der sich mit de[r] Geschlechtersache vielleicht gar nicht so explizit beschäftigt'. Linguistic specificity was not noticed precisely because it seemed ordinary. Antje agreed that 'beim ersten Text ja stimm ich dir auch zu ... es wurde halt ein Bild gezeichnet und dadurch, dass das eh in so einer nicht-realen Welt war, hat man es halt einfach so akzeptiert wie es ist ... halt viele Männer waren da und die sind diejenigen, die in den hohen Positionen sind'. The predominance of male terms and associations might have been frequently reflected on by focus group members as problematic; however, specification in itself was understood as commonplace. Katrin confirmed: 'weil es halt realistisch eben in der Zeit, aber eben auch in der Sprache auch so rüberkam, weil eben die meisten patriarchalischen Bezeichnungen eben männlich waren, weil dass eben alles Männer sind … also unter dem fand ich das gar nicht so unpassend'. Further, as became obvious from the data leading to the emergence of the next subcategory, sex/gender seemed a central requirement to comprehend a text and its portrayed characters. In the following I focus on participants' comments regarding 'having doubts about sex/gender' and the consequences of this uncertainty.

Having doubts about sex/gender: How neutral terms complicate classification

Similar to the responses by pilot and English-speaking focus group members, the German participants struggled when unable to identify sex/gender. Antje from the first group, for example, commented in relation to the use of 'na' in the translation of *The Cook and the Carpenter*: 'man weiß eigentlich nicht um wen es sich handelt ... ja ob es nun ein Mann oder eine Frau ist oder ein Mädchen oder ein Junge, was aber sehr verwirrend ist, weil man selten weiß, auf wen sich das jetzt genau bezieht'. She added, 'dadurch dass immer nur "na" [verwendet wurde] war das sehr ungenau in meinem Kopf auf wen es sich jetzt bezieht'. As the proposed changes were at odds with linguistic norms, readers seemed unable to 'make sense' of the narrative. 'Verwirrend' was also a key term employed by respondents from the second group. However, not only the

neutral pronoun caused confusion, the use of 'de,' rather than 'der,' as default article was additionally perceived as problematic. Berit from the second group argued: 'ich fand das ganz verwirrend mit dem "de" das hat mich total gestört,' and added, 'das hat mich mehr gestört als das "na" weil das "na" konnte ich ganz einfach ersetzen im Text'. She explained, 'soll ich da jetzt sagen "de" oder "der" oder meint jetzt halt das einen komischen Eigennamen? Das hat mich total gestört'.

A name, however, is often associated with a particular sex/gender. As explored above, respondents interpreted terms referring to characters as either female or male. And 'de Koch' and 'de Tischler' were often classified according to their default grammatical gender and/or dominant associations, whether understood as names or job titles. For example, Doreen from the second group reflected, 'das "de" kann ja auch ein Adelstitel "von" sein, deswegen hab ich das dann nachher als Eigennamen gewertet, aber ich konnte es von diesen Berufsbezeichnungen konnte ich es nicht lösen … also bei "de Tischler" hab ich die ganze Zeit an einen Tischler gedacht, das war so verbunden'. I prompted both German-speaking groups to consider whether the use of the female/neutral suffix '-In,' as in 'KöchIn' or 'TischlerIn,' would have had an impact on their perception. And while I evaluate specific responses in more depth in the final section, one comment was instructive in relation to this subcategory. As Doreen from the second group reflected on the use of the 'Binnen-I':

> [I]ch hätte mir auf jeden Fall darüber Gedanken gemacht ob es ein Mann oder eine Frau ist, weil so hab ich direkt vom ersten Satz an, war mir klar das sind beides Männer 'de Koch' und 'de Tischler'. Es wär aber auch an sich nicht nur wegen des Geschlechts merkwürdig gewesen, sondern einfach bei einer Einzelperson das einzufügen, weil das, müsste es eigentlich klar sein ob es männlich oder weiblich ist

The expectation of the respondent was that the sex/gender of an individual referent would be known. Neutrality or 'doubts about sex/gender' would consequently be an oddity. So when sex/gender was obscured, however, such as by the use of 'na,' it created difficulties for the reader. And these difficulties

manifested themselves not only in the understanding of characters, but in terms of engaging with the text in general.

As Ines from the first group stated: 'ich find das baut Distanz zum Text auf. Dadurch, dass man auf diese Art und Weise denken muss, ist es ein bisschen Analysearbeit und wenn das Prosa ist, die zur Unterhaltung dient, das würde ich nicht in meiner Freizeit lesen'. She explained, 'das ist ein Gefühl wissenschaftlichen Arbeitens, wo ich gucken muss, okay was bezieht sich auf was, wer ist wer, was möchte gesagt werden ... also ich würde nicht so in die Handlung reinfallen'. This reminded of Janine's comment during the pilot focus group: 'the second one with the gender-neutral pronoun well it's a failure for me, I can't understand who's who so ... I don't want to keep reading the story basically'. That is, the perceived clash with 'menschliche Gepflogenheiten' leads participants to disengage, highlighting the limitations of a new language proposed in isolation. Not all respondents agreed with this position, however. Alice from the feminist writing group felt that the use of the neutral pronoun helped to disrupt binaries and thereby made a valuable point regarding sex/gender and language. Matthias from the first German group agreed: 'der mittlere Text, der war viel sprachlicher für mich, weil der halt durch dieses "na", was ich halt nicht so wirklich verstanden habe am Anfang ... und das hat halt diese Sprache viel mehr hervorgehoben und das damit zu experimentieren'. 'Having doubts about sex/gender' can therefore be perceived as fruitful as well as 'verwirrend'. I evaluate responses on the final subcategory, 'potentially perceiving no sex/gender,' next. This concludes theoretical sampling in relation to the core 'needing to know'.

Potentially perceiving no sex/gender: How classification can be obscured

The final subcategory of 'needing to know' emerged from participants' reflections on potentially neutral terms. While most nouns referring to characters were understood as sexed/gendered for linguistic and/or contextual reasons, some remained 'theoretisch' open to interpretation. For example, Matthias from the first German group commented on his understanding of 'Tischler': 'ich denke, das war eher so als Name hab ich das wahrgenommen als jetzt, also ich hab da kein Geschlecht [wahrgenommen] keine Ahnung'. 'Koch' also remained

potentially neutral, as Jochen from the same group reflected, 'während ich mir "de Koch" irgendwie gar nicht vorgestellt habe, war es beim "Tischler" irgendwie so, weil der auch irgendwie mit der Arbeit assoziiert wurde'. However, it was the prompt to consider the use of the '-In' suffix which resulted in most reflections on neutrality. Matthias from the first group suggested: 'so ein Binnen-I, dann würde das halt ganz explizit meinen Gedanken darauf gehören, dass es geschlechterneutral ist. Also ich … hätte mir dann kein Geschlecht vorgestellt, dann wäre ehrlich gesagt das egal quasi'. Sebastian from the second group agreed: 'das [Binnen-I] hätte einen Unterschied gemacht, weil dann konkret darauf hingewiesen wird, dass es geschlechtsneutral sein soll'. He explained, 'für mich war das bis jetzt einfach nur ein Name, hinter dem sich eine verborgene Persönlichkeit eben verbirgt und wenn man "TischlerIn" oder "KöchIn" geschrieben hätte, dann hätte man explizit gemacht, dass es neutral ist'. This illustrates the potential of a new language to evoke a new form of life. The 'Binnen-I' is a relatively new addition to German and continues to be highly contested. Nevertheless, its increasing familiarity is, judging from the responses, beginning to result in acceptance as well as the conception of a neutral alternative to the status quo.

But while characters might have potentially been perceived as neutral due to the '-In' suffix, participants' difficulty in understanding the neutral pronoun suggests the suffix might have created equal complications. As Jochen from the first group reflected on the use of 'na':

> [A]n manchen Punkten war es aber einfach auch zweideutig, dass man nicht ganz genau wusste, bezieht sichs jetzt auf eine männliche Person oder auf eine weibliche Person und da war es dann besonders schwierig. Aber ich denke aus dem Zusammenhang vielleicht hat es sich dann ergeben, ich glaube das war schwieriger zu lesen auf jeden Fall

However, if the use of the suffix would have the same impact remains to be tested. What did emerge from the existing data is that most respondents reacted strongly when unable to categorise a character as either male or female. This reaction generally manifested itself in feelings of frustration/confusion, as well as a reduced engagement with the text. Despite

the very different environments and social hierarchies presented in *Winterplanet* and *Die Töchter Egalias*, the excerpts remained 'readable' to participants, arguably because of the recognisable specification of referents. The translation of *The Cook and the Carpenter*, on the other hand, disrupted the usual associations. Consequently, focus group members often felt unable to tell 'who is who' and struggled to make sense of the excerpt altogether.

Having access to the sex/gender of characters seemed key to understanding a narrative, just as knowing the sex/gender of human beings is key to understanding reality. Being able to identify whether someone is 'female' *or* 'male' is central to human interaction in the readers' sociocultural context, and this centrality visibly emerged from the data. Participants' responses across all focus groups highlighted that they 'needed to know' and voiced frustration and confusion if clues were not given by terms and/or contexts. All data from this study supports the new core category 'needing to know' – *The Cook and the Carpenter* and its translation, in particular, prompted readers to reflect on this central requirement. In the following I draw some first conclusions before I assess the findings in relation to my overall argument.

Conclusions

Previous research in the field of sex/gender and language has illustrated the link between language and imagination, as well as its impact on speakers. As Gastil's study showed, the English pronoun 'he' largely evokes 'man' in participants' minds. Equally, German male generics lead respondents to predominantly presume 'male', according to Stahlberg et al.'s research. This cognitive bias has profound consequences. For example, if a job advertisement is worded in male terms, women feel less motivated to apply for the position, as Stout and Dasgupta's study highlighted. And even if women apply for a male-worded role, recruiters consider female applicants less suitable, according to Horvath and Sczesny. Building on these findings, researchers have explored potential solutions to the linguistic male-as-norm. 'Beidnennung', for example, results in a more egalitarian conception of the sexes/genders, according to Braun's study. Similarly, Lassonde and O'Brien found that explicit mention of women helps to counteract male bias. Moreover, the impact of inclusive

language has been investigated by Vervecken et al. As their results show, when children are presented with job titles in pair forms, they perceive women and men as similarly successful. Additionally, girls show more interest in pursuing traditionally male positions when pair forms are employed. A follow-up study by Vervecken and Hannover confirmed this further: pair forms lowered the perceived difficulty of male occupations and enabled children to feel more confident in succeeding in such a role.

However, inclusive language remains far from the norm. Despite revisions of (some) official language use, such as in schoolbooks and job advertisements, linguistic change continues to be fraught with tension in public discourse. Nevertheless, the biggest hurdle seems to be the reluctance of general language users to employ inclusive terms, as Sczesny et al.'s study showed. Lack of familiarity and awareness, in particular, seem key demotivators, as Koeser et al. highlighted in their research. But the authors also found that speakers adapt their language use when presented with inclusive terms. Furthermore, male participants increase their usage after encountering awareness-raising texts. This was the starting point for my study: I hypothesised that fiction can help to sensitise readers to the importance of inclusive language and, in extension, contribute to linguistic change. And as the focus group responses showed, literary texts encourage engagement with the issue of sex/gender and language. Moreover, as the data highlighted, literary texts prompt readers to reconsider disparate language use. But not all literary approaches illustrate the issue equally. For example, the excerpts from *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Winterplanet* were felt to be too subtle by most focus group members. Because of its 'traditional' use of nouns and pronouns, i.e. those which favour a male interpretation, respondents frequently did not notice that it was making a point about sex/gender and language at all. *The Cook and the Carpenter* and its translation, on the other hand, provoked many participants to think about the function and usefulness of neutral pronouns. Being presented with 'na,' instead of the familiar 'she' or 'he,' focus group members felt frustrated and confused, but also reflected on the binaries inherent in language. In contrast, *The Daughters of Egalia* and *Die Töchter Egalias* stimulated discussion on sex/gender and language by reversing androcentric terms. This approach was most readily understood as effective by participants – maybe

because it remained 'readable' in terms of clearly identifying either sex/gender. The impact of the *The Cook and the Carpenter* and *The Daughters of Egalia*, in particular, is summarised by Martina as follows:

> I think, you know, all our reactions ... kind of show that they [the literary excerpts], even though we haven't understood anything about the second one, even though the third one was confusing ... it's proof of the fact that it's doing something to us even if we don't understand what they're talking about. We're getting frustrated, we're getting angry, we're kind of engaging with the text and I think that's the whole point about texts and that's how things can perhaps change when you come across something like this

Prompting in-depth responses and reflections shows that literary texts are highly effective, and in this case, highly effective in illustrating the issue of sex/gender and language. Additionally, as the emergence of grounded theory highlights, responses to the literary texts reveal the importance of the linguistic category 'sex/gender' to begin with. Participants seem to 'need to know' a character's sex/gender in order to make sense of a narrative. As McConnell-Ginet argues, in the current sociocultural context human beings are identified as either 'female' or 'male'. Consequently, this information seems essential to facilitate communication and understanding. Arnold's text illustrated the reliance on the sex/gender binary to respondents, and in turn, prompted them to reflect on the linguistic status quo. In the following I relate the findings of my focus group study to the literary and linguistic insights of this thesis. In the conclusion I draw together my evidence for why literary texts are a valuable tool to raise awareness of the issue of linguistic representation. As a result, I propose how this tool can be most effectively applied, as well as open up fruitful avenues for future research.

Conclusions

In this section I provide an overview of the insights I gained from the literary, linguistic and sociological discussions throughout this thesis and present my conclusions. I also point to opportunities for future research.

Review

This thesis was guided by four main research questions, namely: 'How do literary texts engage with women's and men's linguistic representation?'; 'How effective are they in engaging with this issue?'; 'Can literary texts help to raise awareness of the importance of inclusive language?,' and 'Can they help to shape attitudes and debates?' To address these questions I employed an interdisciplinary approach. In the first part of my thesis I evaluated literary texts from a linguistic and philosophical perspective to assess their engagement and effectiveness. In the second, I conducted a focus group study to gauge their ability to raise awareness in readers and shape wider debates.

The issue of sex/gender and language remains highly contested in English- and German-language contexts. Despite decades of research and empirical support for the significance of inclusive language, opponents maintain that linguistic change is unnecessary and moreover, 'gegen die Sprache'. While some progress has been made – many official guidelines recommend inclusive language – calls to preserve the linguistic status quo remain popular. Additionally, the opposition is led by high-profile voices. Gatekeepers, including linguists and journalists, frequently argue against equal linguistic representation, thereby fuelling oppositional views and curtailing profound change. In effect, debates are in deadlock, with contemporary opponents as unwilling to consider linguistic revision as predecessors some forty years earlier. However, not only public figures oppose the revision of the linguistic status quo; many English and German speakers are equally reluctant to use inclusive language. While some might share the views of adversaries, these are not the only motivations. As a studies by Sczesny et al. and Koeser et al. have shown, habit and awareness also play a key role in determining attitudes toward linguistic change – familiarity and sensitisation can therefore make a real difference. This was the

starting point for my argument throughout this thesis; I proposed that literary texts can help to engage speakers with the issue of sex/gender and language. And through this engagement, I suggested, literary texts can help to raise awareness of the importance of inclusive language and shape supportive attitudes toward linguistic revision.

The persuasive potential of literary texts has been illustrated by narrative studies. First of all, Green and Brock found that through the process of transportation readers accept narrative characters and events as 'real'. Moreover, depending on the level of transportation, readers adjust their beliefs in line with the fictional perspective. Additionally, as Hoeken and Fikkers's research showed, this adjustment takes place even when readers hold different views to the ones presented in the narrative. That is, transportation encourages readers to tap into feelings of identification and empathy, and restrain critical faculties. The desire of readers to engage with a narrative therefore allows literary texts to 'get under the radar' of certain preconceptions. This ability of fiction, I hypothesised, makes literary texts a useful tool for progressing debates on inclusive language. I first investigated this proposal from a linguistic and philosophical perspective, addressing my first and second research questions. I then provided empirical evidence with the help of a focus groups study, addressing research questions three and four. My analysis was guided by three clusters of literary approaches I identified, namely 'Problematising the linguistic status quo,' 'Proposing linguistic neutrality,' and 'Reversing the linguistic status quo'.

The central texts I evaluated in the first cluster were *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *Häutungen*. Both problematise the linguistic status quo – Le Guin's novel queries the generic use of 'he' and 'man,' while Stefan's text questions the third person pronoun and the default grammatical gender. In effect, each text highlights that male terms are unable to represent women and men, or non-binary people, equally. My application of Leibniz's *salva veritate* principle supported Le Guin's and Stefan's literary problematisations. 'Man' cannot be equated with 'a human being of either sex' as both terms fulfil a different function in language; one is specific and the other generic. However, a link between the two was forged through a sociocultural shift – as my etymological analysis illustrated, 'man' and 'human' became interchangeable

due to the increasing dominance of an androcentric worldview. But as this link can be exposed as illogical as well as *man*-made, it can, and must, be reconsidered to enable truly inclusive representation.

The texts I assessed in the second cluster build on this premise and experiment with linguistic revision. *Woman on the Edge of Time* and *The Cook and the Carpenter* suggest new terms of reference to enable a more inclusive understanding. Both employ epicene nouns and pronouns – Piercy's novel uses 'person' to refer to the inhabitants of a future society, while Arnold's text employs 'na' in relation to the carpenter's community. Wittgenstein's notion 'eine Sprache vorstellen heißt, sich eine Lebensform vorstellen' proved valuable for framing Piercy's and Arnold's proposals of linguistic neutrality; a change in terminology opens up conceptual possibilities. However, as Wittgenstein also argues, new linguistic practices need to become widely accepted to shape human imagination. This was confirmed by my evaluation of epicenes; many attempts to introduce an English neutral pronoun have failed. On the other hand, I also illustrated that the familiar pronoun 'they' has been, and continues to be, employed as a neutral alternative to 'she' and 'he'. Consequently, neutral language is not only possible, but already has a place in the English language, in particular.

The key texts I analysed in the final cluster, the English and German translations of *Egalias døtre*, reverse the linguistic status quo to highlight the extent and impact of biased terms – if linguistic practices privilege one sex/gender only, the novel shows, the other is rendered conceptually insignificant. *Egalias døtre*, and its English and German translations, accentuate this via female generics such as 'Direktorinnen' and linguistic creations such as 'wom' and 'manwom'. Brantenberg's, and her translators', use of wordplay is particularly effective, as illustrated by my discussion of Freud's work on 'Humor'. Freud proposes that humour enables speakers to ridicule figures of authority and thereby experience release. While the long-term consequences of this release remain contested, the novel certainly helps to expose the artificiality of the linguistic hierarchy. My etymological study further confirmed that male supremacy and female dependency are historical and cultural products. In fact, as the analysis of the term 'woman' highlighted, the conception of the

sexes/genders has changed profoundly over the years. Consequently, a change in worldview can lead to a change in language once more.

To evaluate the ability of the three approaches to raise awareness in readers, I conducted a focus group study. I asked English and German speakers to read the introductory pages of *The Left Hand of Darkness*, *The Cook and the Carpenter*, and *Egalias døtre* in their native language and focus on the employed nouns and pronouns. In particular, I prompted participants to reflect on who they imagined when reading, and discuss which text they considered most effective in illustrating the issue of sex/gender and language. Most respondents remarked that they predominantly pictured male characters in the scene described in *The Left Hand of Darkness* – German speakers even more so due to the male grammatical gender of the terms. In reference to *The Cook and the Carpenter* participants reflected that they felt confused and frustrated by the neutral pronoun. In order to 'make sense' of the narrative, respondents stated that they replaced 'na' with 'she' or 'he' in line with sociocultural expectations – with German speakers additionally relying on grammar to make the distinction. When reading the English or German translation of *Egalias døtre*, on the other hand, most participants commented that they were able to picture either sex/gender clearly. The reversal caused little concern as created terms could be interpreted in line with the familiar pronouns 'she' and 'he'.

I subsequently asked respondents to select the excerpt they considered most effective in highlighting the issue of sex/gender and language. Responses were generally split. While some participants considered subtlety a useful tool, most respondents felt that *The Left Hand of Darkness* was too understated. Outside of the focus group context, participants remarked, they would not have noticed the text's problematisation. *The Cook and the Carpenter* again provoked a mixed response; some respondents considered the linguistic and conceptual challenge presented by the excerpt a powerful means to highlight the issue. The majority, however, considered the text too confusing and frustrating to have any real impact on general readers. The translations of *Egalias døtre*, on the other hand, were deemed effective by most participants. Respondents commented that the text was both accessible and engaging. It allowed readers to reflect on the linguistic status quo through its humorous

reversal and thereby effectively raised awareness of the impact of linguistic representation. Brantenberg's novel was therefore considered most useful by readers. In the following I assess the consequences of my findings, and reflect on their potential to shape attitudes toward and progress debates on sex/gender and language.

Consequences and possibilities

As my research has shown, literary texts engage with the issue of linguistic representation in three distinct ways. Furthermore, as the outcomes of my focus group study have illustrated, the texts raise awareness of the issue of sex/gender and language. However, as the results also highlighted, the depth of engagement was directly related to the literary approach. *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *The Cook and the Carpenter* were both found to be lacking in either language – one was considered too subtle, the other confusing. The English and German translations of *Egalias døtre*, in contrast, were deemed accessible and effective. Judging from participants' responses then, Brantenberg's novel could be employed to raise awareness in general readers, whereas Le Guin's and Arnold's texts could not, or only in a guided setting. These estimations provide a useful insight into the excerpts' effectiveness; however, they also give an indication of attitudes toward the issue of the linguistic representation of women and men. In effect, reader responses clearly indicate the boundaries of acceptable change. Despite the use of wordplay, the translations of *Egalias døtre* remained recognisable to readers which, as respondents commented, was linked to the familiar pronouns 'she' and 'he'. Consequently, Brantenberg's novel while subverting the linguistic status quo, did not challenge readers' understanding. Similarly, *The Left Hand of Darkness* reproduced the familiar sex/gender constellation. And while the text's problematisation gave cause for concern in terms of wider effectiveness, it again did not compromise the binary conception of human beings. Both excerpts reproduced the sex/gender hierarchy and therefore remained 'readable'.

    The Cook and the Carpenter, on the other hand, profoundly disrupted the norms of the reader's sociocultural context. By referring to characters as 'na'

and 'carpenter,' Arnold's novel set out to render sex/gender linguistically irrelevant. Readers were consequently unable to instantly categorise according to the familiar 'she' or 'he,' that is, divide characters into 'male' or 'female'. While most participants tried to replace the epicene pronoun in order to 'make sense' of the narrative, the inability to distinguish sex/gender with certainty resulted in frustration and eventual disengagement. This response is of course problematic in terms of the text's ability to connect with general readers; however, it also exposed participants' dependence on linguistic sex/gender. Without the categories 'female' and 'male,' respondents felt lost – in effect, participants felt they 'needed to know' a character's sex/gender in order to understand the excerpt. As this need was not met, they struggled to engage with the narrative. Arnold's novel thereby provides a telling commentary on the linguistic status quo – speakers seem unable to conceive human beings as simply people, that is, as unsexed/ungendered. Moreover, *The Cook and the Carpenter* revealed both the profound relevance of sex/gender and language's central role in conveying a binary conception of human beings. By highlighting the link between language and imagination, the excerpt proved a valuable resource for discussions: it directly illustrated opportunities for and boundaries of linguistic change.

Interestingly, as part of their response, participants reflected on existing neutral terminology in either language, such as the use of 'they' in English and 'Binnen-I' in German. Respondents commented that these forms would be less likely to cause frustration and confusion – firstly, because they are already familiar to speakers, and secondly, because they are understood neutrally. Whether the use of 'they' instead of 'na' would indeed override the 'need to know' needs to be assessed in future research. However, current studies certainly illustrate that attitudes toward neutral language are shaped by familiarity. That is, if a term is known to speakers they seem less likely to reject it. Oriane Sarrasin, Ute Gabriel and Pascal Gygax's 2012 research 'Sexism and Attitudes Toward Gender-Neutral Language: The Case of English, French, and German', for example, evaluated whether the official commitment to and promotion of neutral terms influenced speakers' attitudes. The authors asked 446 British, German-speaking Swiss and French-speaking Swiss students, of them 336 women, to complete a series of questionnaires, including the

Language Use Questionnaire. The authors hypothesised that English speakers who have been familiarised with neutral terminology since the 1970s would be more supportive in their assessment – and true enough, the data confirmed that 'attitudes toward gender-neutral language were more positive among British students … compared to Swiss students' (2012, p. 121). It is important to remember that neutral terminology was contested in the UK context when first introduced, and, in fact, continues to be to this day. Nevertheless, the responses of British students highlight that linguistic change is possible, leading Sarrasin et al. to conclude that 'if opposition to gender-neutral language exists, it is likely to decrease over time, as shown by the more positive attitudes held by the British students' (2012, p. 122). That is, if it becomes common practice neutral language can eventually become a new norm. Another example of the profound impact of familiarity on usage is the epicene Swedish pronoun 'hen'. Marie Gustafsson Sénden, Emma A. Bäck and Anna Lindqvist assessed the change in attitudes toward the neutral pronoun between 2012 and 2014 in their 2015 research 'Introducing a Gender-Neutral Pronoun in a Natural Gender Language: The Influence of Time on Attitudes and Behavior'. The authors evaluated 190 questionnaires and the data showed that 'the very negative attitudes … decreased over time' and 'the very positive attitudes increased' (2015, p. 6). In effect, despite strong initial resistance to the neutral pronoun – heightened by factors such as political orientation and sex/gender – 'time was the most important predictor of the attitudes, even after controlling for various other factors' (2015, p. 8). Therefore, aversion to change, including to a novel epicene, can be overcome in a relatively short time period.

Still, 'hen' has been first introduced in the 1960s and used more widely since 2010; in contrast, speakers are entirely unfamiliar with Arnold's pronoun. As such, the novel has to be read in a guided environment in order to reach a deep level of engagement with its linguistic revision. Read on its own, as the focus group responses highlighted, it might be considered too disruptive to have any profound impact on speakers' attitudes. However, I would argue that this is essentially the case for all three literary texts – including the translations of *Egalias døtre*. The reasons might be different, but major hurdles also limit a wider impact of Brantenberg's novel. Firstly, by belonging to the genre of '1970s activist literature,' general readers are unlikely to encounter the text. Moreover,

Egalias døtre, and its translations, are neither widely available nor listed on contemporary bestseller lists. Additionally, readers who seek out the text are likely to already subscribe to Brantenberg's problematisation. As a result, it might only be able to 'preach to the converted'. Consequently, even if considered the most accessible and effective by focus group participants, the text is unlikely to be read widely enough to shape attitudes toward linguistic representation. To reach general readers and encourage in-depth engagement, I believe, one of the most useful environments for the English and German translations of *Egalias døtre* is an educational setting. In fact, in this environment, all three texts are valuable tools to progress debates. My own experience of employing these excerpts in secondary education provides first evidence of their effectiveness. In 2015, I designed and taught a six-week course for Key Stage 5 students which aimed to give an introduction to the issue of sex/gender and language. The course combined different approaches, such as theoretical perspectives, empirical studies and examples of general language use, to set the linguistic frame. It then dedicated one session each to the discussion of the three literary excerpts – beginning with *The Left Hand of Darkness*, followed by *The Cook and the Carpenter*, and concluding with the English translation of *Egalias døtre*. In the final two sessions, students developed their argument on how the excerpts relate to the theoretical positions. They also explored which of the texts they considered most effective in illustrating the issue of linguistic representation.

I taught this course at a London state school and the literary excerpts, especially in comparison, encouraged plenty of debate. For example, some students initially felt that the use of inclusive language was no longer contested; however, when encountering *The Left Hand of Darkness* they recognised both the presented norms and their continued prevalence. Moreover, students' mixed responses to the neutral pronoun in *The Cook and the Carpenter* highlighted the difficulties around unsexed/ungendered terms of reference. At the same time, *The Cook and the Carpenter* allowed them to consider the possibilities, and limitations, of change, while the translation of *Egalias døtre* illustrated the cultural and historical origins of linguistic bias. The outcomes of this teaching experience highlighted the value of literary texts for linguistics education, in particular. Rather than being confronted with rhetorical arguments and empirical

findings in isolation, students were able to engage with language-in-use and, moreover, language as an experimental space. Through this engagement, students gained a deeper understanding of why linguistic representation matters and what is at stake: unequal linguistic representation leads to disparity in imagination.

This is a valuable experience for English and German speakers of any age – language is not the preserve of linguists or official voices but an adaptable tool to express human interactions and relations. In a guided group setting, readers are able to reflect on linguistic norms and the possibility of change. However, this experience should not be restricted to education, and higher education, in particular. In fact, it needs to reach a much wider audience for profound changes to take place. As outlined above, the literary texts discussed throughout this thesis face substantial hurdles to connect with general readers; but this is not to say that these obstacles are insurmountable. There are multiple ways in which language users can be engaged beyond formal education. First of all, debates on sex/gender and language are already part of the public realm. As a recent exchange over the use of 'Studenten' and 'Studierende' in a *Zeit CAMPUS* piece indicates (Scholz and Kerstan, 2016), both opponents to and proponents of inclusive language are given public platforms. However, as dominant media coverage also highlights, the anti-change position seems to hold sway – see for example the 2016 *Telegraph* headline 'US Marines Denounce "Crazy Political Correctness" after Order to Remove the Word "Man" from Job Titles' (Allen, 2016). To counteract the prevalence of adverse viewpoints and to provide an alternative perspective, feminist linguists and activists employ a variety of formats. Luise F. Pusch, for example, has been publishing accessible essays and 'Glossen' since 1984 to reach general language users; since 1998, she also publishes online. Equally, English- and German-language activists create 'zines,' such as 'Mixed Up!' and 'Donna!', write blogs and contribute to online forums to present their pro-change arguments.

I believe these existing channels could help to also bring literary texts to a wider audience. For example, zines could publish excerpts from *The Left Hand of Darkness*, *The Cook and the Carpenter* and the translations of *Egalias døtre*, or, in fact, more recent texts such as Ann Leckie's 2013 award-winning novel

Ancillary Justice. The excerpts could be framed with questions, such as 'Who did you imagine when reading the text?' and 'Why did you imagine a particular person?', to encourage readers to engage more deeply. Publications could additionally be linked to an online forum to allow readers to exchange ideas, or they could advertise reading groups to bring language users together and explore the excerpts' impact and implications. This could help to reproduce the guided reading environment of my focus group study and raise awareness more widely. Another option could be an official drive to encourage language users to engage with texts such as *The Left Hand of Darkness*, *The Cook and the Carpenter* and *Egalias døtre*, and its translations. A 2015 Swedish campaign, led by the Swedish Women's Lobby and publisher Albert Bonniers, distributed a copy of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's essay *We Should All Be Feminists* to every high-school student. The aim was for Adichie's text to 'work as a stepping stone for a discussion about gender equality and feminism' (Flood, 2015, n. pag.). Similarly, via a public programme, Le Guin's, Arnold's and Brantenberg's text could be made available to English- and German-speaking readers to stimulate discussions. Associated reading groups could encourage in-depth reflection and thereby promote supportive attitudes to linguistic change.

However, such initiatives are still potentially exclusive of a wider audience. For example, feminist zines are usually sought out by readers who already prescribe to the presented viewpoints. Equally, official campaigns, such as the one conducted in Sweden, are likely to predominantly reach speakers of a certain background and education. Consequently, the texts would be unable to fundamentally influence debates. The literary problematisation of sex/gender and language might therefore have to be presented more accessibly to begin with. To address this hurdle two avenues seem particularly fruitful: firstly, the English and German translation of *Egalias døtre*, in particular, could be adapted for film or TV in order to connect with adult speakers, and secondly, children's and young adult fiction could be employed to raise awareness from a young age. The satiric tone of Brantenberg's novel renders it a valuable resource for visual adaptation. And as film and TV reach a much larger demographic than literary texts, it could play a profound role in sensitising speakers. A potential downside is of course the high cost associated with film production; however, a low-budget online version could circumvent this issue. Furthermore, when

effective, online resources are widely shared – the 2014 short film *Majorité Opprimée* by Éléonore Pourriat is a good case in point. Like *Egalias døtre,* the film illustrates a reversal of the linguistic (and social) status quo; moreover, it attracted 12.5 million viewers. A short adaptation of *Egalias døtre* could potentially reach a similar number of viewers. The novel could be advertised alongside to encourage deeper engagement; in effect, the film could function as an introduction to the novel which is likely to be read by a much wider audience as a consequence. Again, associated forums and reading groups would allow speakers to engage more deeply with the issue of linguistic representation.

Children's and young adult fiction have even more potential for profound impact. By shaping understanding from an early age, this literature might provide the basis for broad linguistic change. Just as children are trained to learn the dominant norms – Wittgenstein terms it 'Abrichten' – they can equally acquire a different point of view. On the one hand, a simplified version of *Egalias døtre* could familiarise children with the notion that both language and sex/gender roles are cultural constructs. On the other, existing storybooks such as Andrea Beaty's 2013 *Rosie Revere, Engineer*, enable children to imagine a girl in a historically 'male' career, while Tanja Abou's 2011 *Raumschiff Cosinus. Der Bordcomputer hat die Schnauze voll* avoids sex/gender-specific nouns and pronouns to allow for a neutral conception of characters. Exploring and discussing these books with parents and in classrooms would allow children to develop a more inclusive understanding. As a result, children would grow up to become more flexible and tolerant thinkers, and therefore more receptive to inclusive language. But not only early exposure can have a profound effect; young adults are also open to new understandings. Suzanne Collins' 2008-2010 *The Hunger Games* trilogy, for example, has captured the imagination of teenagers. By challenging what girls can and cannot do, *The Hunger Games* is presenting an effective counterpoint to the status quo. The novel also addresses the implicit norms of language, i.e. the assumption that concepts such as 'hunter' and 'leader' are linked to 'he' not 'she'. The mass appeal of texts such as Collins' novel holds a powerful potential for shaping debates on sex/gender and language – it is through reaching a wide audience that profound changes can be made.

A shift in public opinion is crucial to move forward at this stage. Norms have changed throughout history, and while male-as-norm remains a remnant of a former understanding, society is progressing toward a more inclusive picture of humanity. Language can, and must, express this shift to reflect and reinforce this new conception. As empirical research has shown, changing the linguistic status quo is paramount, as language and imagination are closely interlinked. That is, if only 'men' are mentioned, speakers imagine predominantly 'male'. Literary texts effectively illustrate this bias as well as provide suggestions for alternatives. Making them more widely accessible, particularly in guided educational or reading group settings, can contribute to promoting positive attitudes and thereby effect change. However, that is not to say that all kinds of revision are helpful at this stage. For example, I believe that as long as the premise male-as-norm remains prominent, neutral terminology will be interpreted accordingly. As my focus group study has shown, neutral nouns and pronouns continue to be categorised according to sex/gender, and moreover, in line with social and grammatical expectations. In the current sociocultural context, female visibility is therefore key to undermine androcentric interpretation. My understanding of inclusive language therefore means addressing both sexes/genders specifically. Linguistic strategies, such as linking English nouns with 'she' as well as 'he' and extending German terms with the suffix '-in,' are consequently crucial to ensuring women's conceptual availability.

However, inclusive language presents challenges as well as opportunities. Split and double forms, such as 'Direktor/Direktorin' or 'carpenter, she or he,' or female generics, such as 'Direktorin' or 'woman,' can be argued to address both sexes/genders but they equally raise concerns. First of all, split and double forms ensure that each sex/gender is specifically mentioned, while the generic use of female nouns and pronouns is shorter and therefore more economical. But at the same time, these very advantages present issues: split/double forms are lengthier, while female generics predominantly evoke one sex/gender. In writing, the length of terms might be negotiable; however, in speech, shorter terminology is often preferred. And while this might speak for female generics, the issue of bias remains – 'Direktorin' might be linguistically inclusive of 'Direktor'; however, it undeniably evokes 'woman' more than 'man'.

Nevertheless, the use of female generic terms has a valuable shock factor; as the English and German translations of *Egalias døtre* effectively illustrate, reversing male-as-norm has a powerful impact. When confronted with a female-centric language, speakers are prompted to realise both the extent and implications of linguistic norms – female generics can therefore be a useful strategy to raise awareness. On the other hand, using split and double forms is most egalitarian; both sexes/genders are named and therefore visible. Still, not only naming is paramount, the positioning of each sex/gender is equally important. That is, alternating 'Direktorin/Direktor' and 'Direktor/Direktorin' or 'carpenter, she or he' and 'carpenter, he or she,' is equally crucial to undermining the notion of 'default male'.

While alternated split/double forms are my preferred choice, two key concerns remain for the German language, in particular: the implications of the suffix '-in' and potential slippage into male generics. First of all, the suffix signifies female deviation – as terms are created by extended male nouns with '-in,' it enshrines male-as-norm. This problematises the use of existing female terms altogether. On the other hand, however, speakers are familiar with suffix-creations, and as studies have shown, familiarity is the first step toward linguistic change. In a sociocultural context where any change is frequently met with outright rejection, a compromise might be needed to move forward. And as female nouns and pronouns are becoming more commonly placed next to male terms, a more thorough revision might eventually take place. However, split and double forms are still far from common practice and speech economy remains a key hurdle to change. I myself am much more successful at writing, than at speaking, inclusively in German – I frequently slip back into male generic terms in speech both out of training and convenience. I am aware of the impact and attempt to correct slippages whenever possible; however, consistency is certainly lacking. Nevertheless, I believe it is this awareness, in addition to familiarity, which is paramount for any fundamental revision to take place. Employing alternated split/double forms, even if not consistently, is the first step to wider change. Once speakers, myself included, get into the habit of employing inclusive terms, they are more likely to persevere.

This is not to say, however, that my ambitions for linguistic change are guided only by pragmatic considerations. In fact, my ambition for the long-term

is a truly inclusive language – one that no longer categorises between 'women' and 'men'. Terms would be economical and representative at the same time because sex/gender would no longer be relevant to understanding. In this future language, human beings would simply be referred to as people, that is, neutrally. Both *Woman on the Edge of Time* and *The Cook and the Carpenter* provide useful illustrations of this potential. However, this new conception of humanity need not be a preserve of a future world only – as Wittgenstein proposed, imagining new linguistic practices enables imagining a new way of life. However, as Wittgenstein also argued, these new practices need to become commonly accepted to result in any profound revision. Current sociocultural norms remain informed by the sex/gender binary, therefore any difference in the conception of human beings inevitably remains contested. This is illustrated in Piercy's and Arnold's narratives, highlighted by the general rejection of neutral terms by focus group participants, and confirmed by persisting verbal and physical attacks on people who do not match the sex/gender binary. Nevertheless, it is the suggestion of a new language which allows for the very imagination of a new form of life to begin with. Consequently neutral, or non-binary, terms are crucial for pushing the boundaries of what can be said and what can be imagined. I believe inclusive and neutral language should therefore function in tandem – women need to be named to be linguistically and conceptually visible, but at the same time, neutral terminology will allow speakers to eventually move away from the restrictions of binaries. Alternating between 'carpenter, she or he' and 'carpenter, they,'[11] I believe, will help to open speakers' minds to both inclusive linguistic representation and linguistic neutrality.

Literary texts can contribute to debates on sex/gender and language in a profound way. As I have shown throughout this thesis, the texts provide a fruitful experimental space in which to explore the issue of linguistic representation. *The Left Hand of Darkness* illustrates the extent and impact of male generic terms; *The Cook and the Carpenter* frames discussions around language's role in creating and reinforcing binaries; and *Egalias døtre*, and its translations, highlight the link between linguistic practices and worldview. In combination, the

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[11] As discussed earlier in this thesis, devising a neutral alternative for the German language is decidely more challenging. The SYLVAIN-Konventionen point to a potential solution, albeit a more comprehensive one due to the grammatical structure of German.

three texts make the case for why inclusive language matters and effectively advocate change. This is particularly valuable in the context of linguistics education – literary texts help to bring theoretical arguments and empirical evidence to life. Moreover, fiction provides an immersive counterpoint to the position that grammar and sex are separate entities, as advocated by Kalverkämper and Gauger, and that the issue of sex/gender and language is irrelevant. By engaging readers, literary texts sensitise them toward why linguistic change is necessary. Additionally, readers' desire to engage with fiction encourages them to reflect on perspectives they might otherwise reject – literary texts therefore enable a more open discussion of the issue of linguistic representation. Furthermore, through the experiments presented by authors, readers are prompted to consider the possibilities and limitations of linguistic change. As activist writers highlight, language is neither a fixed nor abstract entity. 'Eine Sprache vorstellen heißt, sich eine Lebensform vorstellen', that is, a change in language allows speakers to arrive at a different understanding of reality, Wittgenstein suggests. And literary texts enable readers to see linguistic norms in a new light and imagine alternatives. However, as Wittgenstein also contends, any change needs to be accepted by the wider speech community to be effective – therefore, literary texts need to reach a larger audience to sensitise speakers and effect change. To do so, guided reading in both educational and activist settings seems most fruitful. In these contexts, especially if widely implemented, literary texts allow readers to engage with why linguistic revision is important. And as a result, literary texts can help to shape attitudes toward inclusive language and, in extension, contribute to progressing debates.

Future research

My research could be built upon in three ways. Firstly, researchers could test whether the three clusters of literary approaches I identified are able to encompass more recent writing or need to be extended. Secondly, they could investigate the impact of other forms of writing on attitudes toward and debates on linguistic representation. And thirdly, they could expand my focus group

study to test the emerging core category, 'needing to know' sex/gender, as well as measure the short- and long-term impact of the texts.

Literary approaches to the linguistic representation of women and men are not confined to the 1960s and 70s. In fact, writers continue to engage with the issue of sex/gender and language to this day. One focus guiding future research, for example, could be how more recent texts confirm and expand the clusters I identified throughout this thesis. Three useful literary texts are Barbara Köhler's 1999 *Wittgensteins Nichte*, Leslie Feinberg's 1993 *Stone Butch Blues* and Ann Leckie's 2013 *Ancillary Justice*. Köhler's texts problematise the German linguistic status quo akin to *Häutungen*, Feinberg's novel challenges linguistic binaries in a similar vein to Arnold's, and Leckie's text employs female generics comparable to those in *Egalias døtre* – at first instance these texts could therefore be argued to fit into the clusters I identified. However, two issues emerge from the outset. Firstly, the above texts differ profoundly from the ones evaluated in this thesis. Köhler's work consists of essays, rather than a perspectival narrative, which are unlikely to result in the same level of transportation. And *Stone Butch Blues* and *Ancillary Justice* do not engage as thoroughly with disparate linguistic representation as Arnold's and Brantenberg's texts. Additionally, of the three, only *Wittgensteins Nichte* broadly corresponds with the approaches employed in the cluster 'Problematising the linguistic status quo'. *Stone Butch Blues*, on the other hand, is concerned with exploring linguistic liminality rather than neutrality. Jess Goldberg, the novel's protagonist, employs the noun 'he-she' and explains, 'I didn't feel like a woman or a man' (1993, p. 7, p. 143). Consequently, the text pushes the boundaries of 'Proposing linguistic neutrality,' potentially leading to the creation of a new category altogether. Equally, *Ancillary Justice* is not an outright reversal like Brantenberg's; Leckie's novel additionally problematises the sex/gender binary. 'She was probably male' (2013, p. 3), the protagonist Breq remarks in reference to another character. Again, this extends, if not surpasses the cluster 'Reversing the linguistic status quo'. New clusters emerging from such a study could consequently be employed to revise or extend my framework to categorise literary texts thematising the issue of sex/gender and language.

Another focus for future research could be to investigate the impact of other types of writing – online pieces, in particular – on debates on linguistic

representation. Today, many speakers engage with social media to inform themselves about issues and gain new perspectives. Equally, activists and linguists participate in discussions to share their views and shape debates. For example, Luise F. Pusch and Deborah Cameron write blogs to connect with language users; and while these pieces are generally non-fiction, they are also more likely to have an impact than formal publications. Blog posts are both accessible and often widely read; Cameron's blog has over 6,000 followers and some of her posts receive 'nearly a quarter of a million page-views' (2016, n. pag.). And while statistics are not as readily available for Pusch's blog, she has been blogging since 1998 and is likely to draw a similarly large audience due to her public stature. Activists also use social media to communicate their views and ideas. They publish via blogs, such as 'Gender Neutral Pronoun Blog' and 'Frauensprache,' and twitter accounts, e.g. 'Gendered Language' and 'Wir Frauen'. Potential resources are therefore plentiful and diverse, and researchers could investigate whether online pieces are as, or even more, effective than literary texts in illustrating the issue of linguistic representation. From my own experience of writing a blog, online outlets, whether fictional or non-fictional, allow a more explorative space than other publications. Firstly, authors are able to self-publish and therefore circumvent gatekeepers; allowing writers to present works-in-progress. Secondly, blog posts can be any length; consequently, authors are able to publish short experiments as well as longer pieces. And thirdly, blogs are interactive; therefore enabling readers to directly comment on their understanding of a text. Studies could investigate whether or not the above contentions are borne out by evidence.

A third potential focus could be to test the emerging core category of my focus group study, 'needing to know' sex/gender. Researchers could reproduce or adjust my materials and procedures to undertake further theoretical sampling. Taking my four subcategories as the frame, 1. 'perceiving sex/gender clearly,' 2. 'perceiving sex/gender as helpful,' 3. 'having doubts about sex/gender,' and 4. 'potentially perceiving no sex/gender,' it would be fruitful to evaluate whether these hold up to scrutiny or need revision. Future studies could explore, in particular, why readers experience the 'need to know' and what the consequences are of not knowing. Additionally, researchers could assess the different strategies readers employ to satisfy the 'need to know' and

whether or not, and why, readers are willing to accept inclusive/neutral alternatives. Another useful empirical avenue could be to assess the short- and long-term impact of the literary texts on readers' attitudes. Questions guiding such research could be, 'Are speakers more likely to use inclusive language after encountering a literary text?'; 'Do literary texts continue to shape speakers' attitudes two weeks later?'; 'If so, why?'; 'If not, why not?'. 'The Inventory of Attitudes Toward Sexist/Nonsexist Language – General (IASNL-G)' could be employed to collect responses before and after the study, and evaluate any shift. This could provide a valuable quantitative extension to my research and illustrate the value of literary texts statistically.

My thesis presents solid foundations for future interdisciplinary research. I have illustrated the merits of fiction for linguistics education, the usefulness of social research methods in literary research, and the current state of play in sex/gender and language debates. First of all, I have shown from a linguistic and philosophical perspective that literary texts effectively engage with the linguistic representation of women and men. Additionally, rather than relying only on my own analysis of the texts' impact, my focus group study provided clear empirical evidence. Reader responses illustrated that fiction encourages speakers to reflect on dominant linguistic practices and moreover, to consider alternatives. However, responses also highlighted that any reflection is directly linked to the linguistic status quo. Neutral terms of reference were deemed unimaginable precisely because linguistic and conceptual norms depend on the binary female/male. Linguistic change is therefore bound by what speakers consider 'possible', and what has been considered 'possible' so far. However, as I have also shown throughout this thesis, what is possible is always subject to change. By problematising and pushing the boundaries of linguistic representation, literary texts bring this to the fore and highlight that language is flexible and malleable. Furthermore, by engaging readers, perspectival literary texts prompt speakers to reflect on the possibilities, and limitations, of linguistic change. As I have illustrated throughout this thesis, literary texts are a powerful tool to stimulate reflection on dominant linguistic practices, and do so particularly effectively in educational settings. In guided discussions, as the results of my focus group study illustrate, they help to raise awareness of linguistic norms and prompt exploration of alternatives. Via an interdisciplinary

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approach, encompassing literary, linguistic and sociological research methods, I have shown the political potential of literary texts. In educational and activist settings, as highlighted above, I believe literary texts can have a profound impact on shaping attitudes and tackling opposition to change. On the basis of my findings, I recommend the integration of literary texts at all levels of linguistics education and activism – in particular in guided reading and discussion group environments. In educational settings readers are able to engage in-depth with the issue of sex/gender and language. And this engagement can help to support a wider revision of linguistic practices from male-as-norm to inclusive terminology.

Appendix 1: Focus group topic guide

BEGINNING:

- *Why the focus group is taking place & how the data will be used:*

  - Welcome and thank you for taking part in my research study! My name is Christiane and I am PhD student at UCL
  - The purpose of this discussion group is to explore your opinions and ideas on how the issue of gender[12] and language is illustrated in literary texts
  - You have all been invited because you share an interest in literature and language and will have valuable perspectives on the literary texts I am studying
  - Your opinions and ideas will help me to explore different viewpoints on gender and language in literary texts and will form a central part of my thesis
  - Your contributions will be anonymous and confidential, and any published research will contain changed names

  - The idea of the group is to allow you to share your opinions and ideas in an open and informal environment
  - There are no right or wrong answers; all opinions and ideas are equally valuable and valid
  - You are not expected to reach a consensus, so please share your point of view even if it differs from that of others
  - Our discussion will last about an hour and a half and will be recorded
  - During this time I will ask you to read excerpts from three literary texts and to give your opinions and ideas on them
  - If you could please turn off your mobile phones as they interfere with the recording equipment
  - Before we begin: Are there any questions at this point?

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[12] I referred to 'gender' rather than 'sex/gender' in the focus group setting as the term is most familiar to speakers.

- Okay, let's start by introducing ourselves: if you speak your name into the recorder and say in one or two sentences why you are interested in taking part

DISCUSSION:

- *Starter activity – reading & writing task:*

  - In preparation for our discussion I would like you to read excerpts from three literary texts
  - Please underline anything that you notice about the language used to refer to characters – I want you to pay particular attention to nouns and pronouns
  - Nouns might be job titles such as 'doctor' and pronouns might be 'he' or 'she'
  - I would also like you to write three or four sentences or bullet points on what you noticed about the language used to refer to characters – again with particular attention to nouns and pronouns
  - Please write your responses on the piece of paper with the matching title of the excerpt (*hand out literary excerpts and three separate pieces of paper*). The pieces of paper are included in your reading pack
  - You have 25 minutes in total to read the three excerpts and write a few sentences or bullet points on each
  - I will let you know once 15 minutes have passed so you are aware of the time you have left

- *After reading/writing time*:

- *The Left Hand of Darkness*:

  - Let's start with what you wrote on *The Left Hand of Darkness*
  - If we could go round in a circle and each of you read out what you have written (*me to write down ideas/key points on a flipchart/paper*). I will write down some key points
  - Thank you, let's explore your opinions and ideas in more depth, what do you notice about the comments?

- (*me to prompt with help of flipchart/paper*)
- What did you notice about the nouns and pronouns used to refer to characters?
- What impression did they create of the characters?
- Who did you imagine?
- How does this highlight the issue of gender and language?
- How are women and men represented by the language used?
- What did you think?
- What does anyone else think?
- …

- *The Cook and the Carpenter*:

  - Let's move on to the second excerpt and your opinions and ideas on it
  - What did you notice when reading *The Cook and the Carpenter* regarding the nouns and pronouns used?
  - What effect did the nouns and pronouns have?
  - What impression did they create of the characters?
  - Who did you imagine?
  - How does this highlight the issue of gender and language?
  - How are women and men represented by the language used?
  - How does *The Cook and the Carpenter* compare to *The Left Hand of Darkness*?
  - What is similar?
  - What is different?
  - What does anyone else think?
  - …

- *The Daughters of Egalia*:

  - Finally, let's look at the excerpt from *The Daughters of Egalia*
  - If you could all take the paragraphs you've written and put them on the board with blue tack

- Read what everyone has noted down, and once you have read each paragraph please sit back down
- What did you notice when reading *The Daughters of Egalia* regarding the nouns and pronouns used?
- What effect did the nouns and pronouns have?
- What impression did they create of the characters?
- Who did you imagine?
- How does this highlight the issue of gender and language?
- How are women and men represented by the language used?
- How do *The Daughters of Egalia, The Cook and the Carpenter* and *The Left Hand of Darkness* compare?
- What is similar?
- What is different?
- How do the three excerpts highlight the issue of gender and language? How did they highlight the representation of women and men?
- What might be the goal of each excerpt?
- How effective, do you think, are they in meeting that goal?
- What makes the excerpts effective?
- Is there one excerpt that is particularly effective in highlighting the issue of gender and language?
- What does anyone else think?
- …

- *End of discussion*:
  - To summarise, we have discussed our different perspectives on the three literary excerpts with regard to gender and language
  - We focused on the nouns and pronouns used to refer to characters, in particular
  - Some said…
  - Others thought…
  - Is this a fair reflection?
  - Have we missed anything?
  - Are there any other points you would like to make?

END:

- Thank you for taking part in this discussion group and for sharing your opinions and ideas!

- Your responses are very valuable and will help me to explore different viewpoints on gender and language as illustrated in literary texts

- Just to reiterate: your contributions will be anonymous and confidential, and any published research will contain changed names

- I will wipe the tape as soon as I have transcribed the data

- I have prepared a sheet for you to take away with my contact details, please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or would like to add anything (*hand out*)

- Please also contact me if you would like a copy of my research findings

- Thanks again for taking part!

Appendix 2: Visualising links between emerging codes
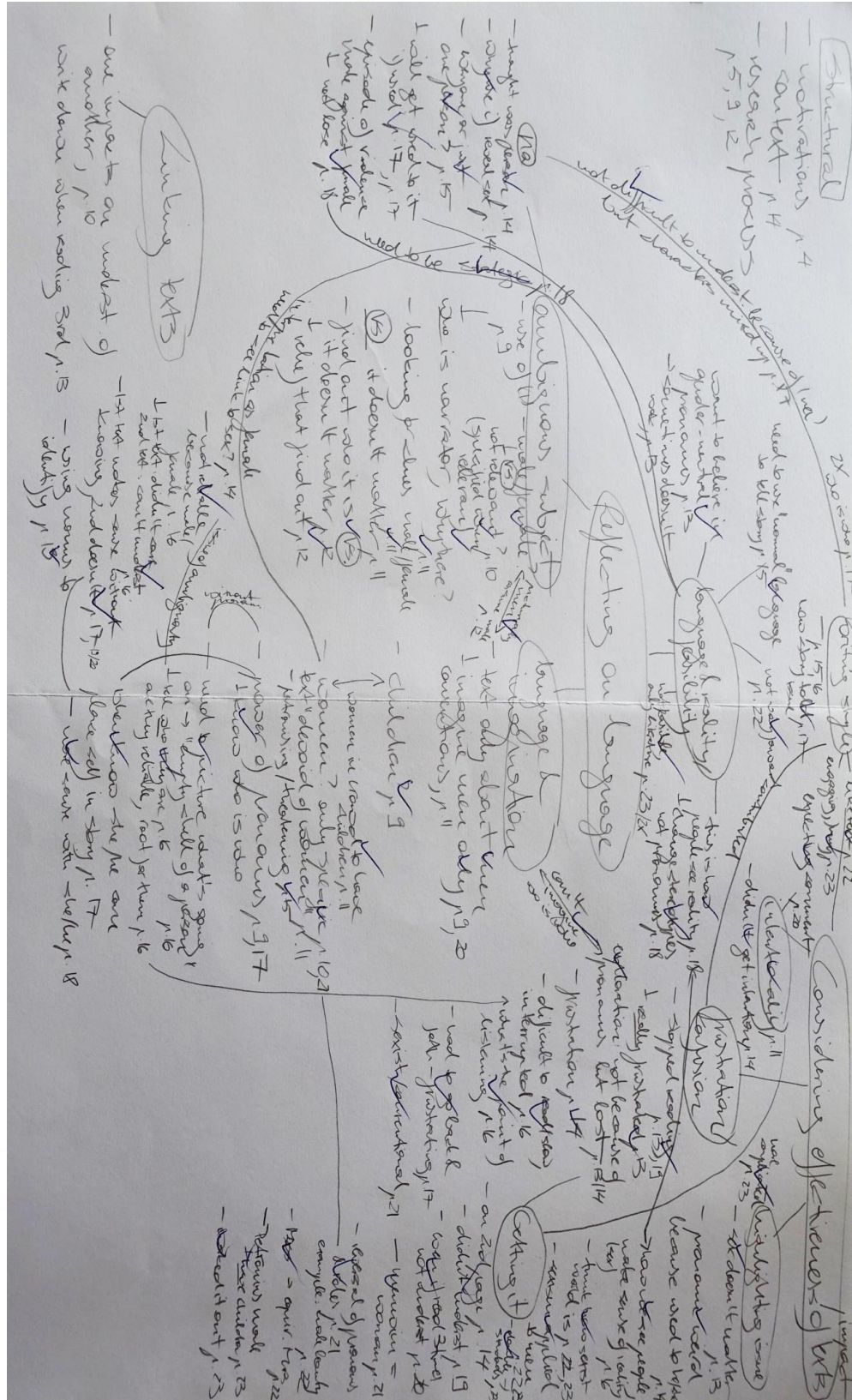
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