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Gender, genre and the (re)invention of life in Charlotte Salomon's Life? or Theatre?

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in Charlotte Salomon's Life? or Theatre?

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Dans ce mémoire multidisciplinaire, il s'agit d'une analyse littéraire approfondie du chef d'oeuvre autobiographique, en texte, peinture et musique, Life? or Theatre? de Charlotte Salomon.

Dans le premier chapitre, on compare les constructions du genre féminin mis en place par la famille Salomon et la société de Berlin pendant les années 30. Salomon a non seulement résisté aux limitations du rôle de la femme déterminés par la société dans laquelle elle était élevée en montrant sa tendance bisexuelle, mais elle a aussi mis fin au cycle de suicides parmi les femmes dans sa famille. En exposant le secret de ce cycle, en créant sa vie à travers la peinture et l'écriture, elle a aussi résisté à la perpétuation des stéréotypes racistes dans un pays contrôlé par les Nazis.

Dans le deuxième chapitre, on met l'accent sur le fait que l'oeuvre ne suit pas le format « traditionnel, » et patriarcal du genre autobiographique, en mélangeant les éléments du film, du théâtre, de l'opéra, de la bande dessinée, ainsi que les différents genres de comédie (satire, parodie, ironie) et de tragédie.

La représentation de l'auteur à la troisième personne, alter ego Charlotte Kann, est notre premier indice montrant qu'elle voulait jouer avec les voix des personnages. Pour cette raison, dans le troisième chapitre, on explore l'intersubjectivité, la narration, le rapport communicatif entre les vivants et les morts, la performance et l'autoréparation des impressions traumatiques de l'auteur à travers son art.

Mots clés

Juif, race, bisexualité, femme, art visuel, singspiel, témoignage, Holocauste, autobiographie, anti-sémitisme

Résumé en anglais et les mots clés anglais

This multidisciplinary M.A. thesis is an extensive literary analysis of the image, text and music interface in the autobiographic work, Life? or Theatre? by Charlotte Salomon.

The first chapter serves as a comparison of the gender constructs determined by the Salomon family and 1930s Berlin society, as they are represented in the work. Not only did Salomon transgress the limitations of the woman's role that was prescribed to her by the society in which she was raised by demonstrating her bisexual tendencies, but she also put an end to the feminine cycle of suicides that had plagued her family for generations. By exposing the secret of this cycle, by (re)creating her life through gouache paintings and autobiographical writing, she also showed a resistance to the perpetuation of anti-Semitic stereotypes in Nazi-controlled Germany.

The second chapter sheds light on the multifarious ways with which Life? or Theatre? subverts the conventions of the "traditional," male-dominated framework of the autobiographical genre. By borrowing devices from film, theatre, opera and the graphic novel, and by mixing genres of comedy (satire, parody, irony) and of tragedy, Salomon effectively pushes past the constraints of generic boundaries.

The representation of the author by way of third-person, alter ego Charlotte Kann, reflects Salomon's desire to experiment with different voices and temporalities. The third chapter therefore explores intersubjectivity, narration, communication between the living and the dead, performativity and healing of the author's traumatic impressions by way of artistic expression.

Mots clés

Judaism, race, bisexuality, visual art, operetta, testimony, Holocaust, autobiography, anti-Semitism.

Table des matières

Liste des figures

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Avant-propos

Il est évident que ce mémoire est situé dans le champ de la littérature comparée, ainsi que dans d'autres études multidisciplinaires. En approchant Life? or Theatre? de Charlotte Salomon, d'une perspective historique, féministe, psychanalytique, théorique et analytique, nous mettons l'accent sur tous ses côtés difficilement classables et multidimensionnels. En outre, il est important de considérer tous les traitements analytiques possibles de cette autobiographie, car chaque interprétation individuelle de chaque moyen de représentation—l'art visuel, les encadrements auditoires créés par le leitmotiv, le texte et les récits intertextuels, les voix concurrents et la performance des personnages dans l'imagination du lecteur—est enrichi l'un par l'autre.

En se focalisant sur la manière dont Salomon est allée au-delà des limites des constructions des genres sexuel et artistique, ce mémoire explore l'ambiance ironique entre les peintures et l'écriture. Le mélange de la tragédie et de la comédie, de l'art canonisé et de l'art populaire ainsi que de la fiction et de la non-fiction met l'accent sur le fait qu'elle s'est trouvée dans un espace créatif où plusieurs genres se rencontrent et fusionnent ensemble, un espace où la vie et le théâtre co-existent et la ligne entre la fantaisie et la réalité, entre le conscient et l'inconscient, entre les morts et les vivants, disparaît.

Nous trouvons aussi dans l'œuvre de Salomon un récit de qualité pour les théoriciens des témoignages de l'Holocauste et de la représentation de l'Histoire. En effet, ce mémoire montre le parallèle entre le passé intime de la famille Salomon et celui tumultueux des femmes Juives en Allemagne. Ces deux histoires montrent un thème cyclique de la violence, ce qui est implicite dans le premier, et explicite, bien sûr, dans le dernier.

Voici une dernière remarque pouvant exemplifier à quel point l'œuvre de Salomon mérite la lecture multidisciplinaire qui est illustrée dans ce mémoire : En recherchant les analyses théoriques de Life? or Theatre?, il est impossible de trouver tous les articles et livres dans la même section d'une bibliothèque. En fait, il faut même aller à plusieurs d'entre elles, spécialisées en arts et lettres, en arts visuels, en musique, et enfin de monter des dizaines d'escaliers pour rassembler toutes les analyses variées sur Charlotte Salomon. Une telle recherche paraît aussi efficace pour les cuisses que pour l'obtention d'une perspective multidisciplinaire de cette belle œuvre!

Introduction

While researching for the biography of Charlotte Salomon, Mary Lowenthal Felstiner began to notice similarities in people's descriptions of her. Over the course of conversations with Salomon's stepmother, Paula Salomon-Lindberg, which spanned over a ten-year period, she noted, "Paula always described Lotte as a child so withdrawn as to be almost 'unknowable'" ("Create" 198). All of Salomon's schoolmates she was able to track down also described her as "nondescript," a "shadow" and when asked "Could you describe [her] qualities?" they replied, "No...She didn't have any" (198).

However, Salomon's 1 325 page autobiographical work of art, complete with nearly 800 gouache paintings, Life? or Theatre? proves otherwise. Born at the height of WWI, in 1917, to a Jewish family in Berlin, Salomon's childhood and adolescence were sandwiched between the two greatest tragedies of the 20th Century: the two world wars. Though her work references Nazi racism as a source of the trauma she endured, her relationship with family, close friends

and especially her mentor and lover, Daberlohn, had as much, if not more, of an impact on her.

The Salomon family lived in an apartment at 15 Wielandstrasse in Charlottenburg, which is located in western Berlin. In the 1920s, under the Weimar Republic, the political climate was one of democratic, liberalized reform, but the country's economic progress was falling behind. The Social Democratic Party was blamed for continued inflation, and the bourgeoisie frowned upon the decriminalization of abortion and homosexuality, in addition to the lifting of censorship of sexually explicit films and literature. An anti-Semitic, militantly nationalist rightist campaign surfaced and seemed to offer a solution to the economic plummeting Germany went through after signing the treaty of Versailles. The Nazis viewed democracy as "un-German," and claimed the loss of World War I was due to problems within the country and not on the front. At blame were essentially Jews, blacks, homosexuals and other minorities. A return to traditionally "German" ideals was in demand. This meant not only purifying the Aryan race, but also denigrating women's rights and marking their return to the background; the homestead where they could take care of the family (Bridenthal et al. 7-8).

In the late 1920s, as Berlin was on the brink of the Depression, women were further discouraged from working outside of the home since "double-earning" families were seen as taking jobs away from unemployed German men (Kaplan 182). Jewish women therefore suffered the double discrimination of a society that both eschewed Judaism and treated women like second-class citizens. In Salomon's family the women were brought up to be well educated and cultured in literature, art, philosophy and history, and like so many other upper-middle class Jewish women in Berlin, they were not used to channeling all of their energies into housewifery. As the Depression began, the rate of depression—and suicide—among Jewish women increased. Salomon wrote of her mother and aunt as children: "(they) showed an early interest in their parents' enthusiasm for Greek history, Goethe, and Schiller. Nothing disturbed the peace of the cozy family circle until suddenly one day the younger daughter killed herself" (To Paint Felstiner 4).

She was referring to her aunt Charlotte, after whom she was named. When she was almost nine years old, in 1926, Salomon's mother committed suicide as well. The family history of suicide among women was kept a secret from

her, however, until 1939 when her grandfather told her there had been six suicides in two generations of her mother's family. This discovery of her family's legacy is what led Salomon to paint and (re)invent her life story.

One of the most interesting aspects about Salomon's work is that she created it in hiding during the first years of WWII. In this way, her story resembles Irène Némirovsky's Suite Française which is likewise hailed for the narrator's ability to regard the situation of war from an outsider's perspective, even though it was written during the war. Both Némirovsky and Salomon were killed in Auschwitz, which further accentuates the emotion conveyed in their writing from the years immediately leading up to the war.

Aesthetically, Life or Theatre is similar in form to Frida Kahlo's diary. Begun in 1916, the Mexican artist's day to day inscriptions consisted of a collage of poems, letters, paintings, drawings, text overlaid onto images and images overlaid onto text. But the resemblance continues on a subliminal level as Sarah M. Lowe describes Kahlo's diary and self portraits as, "an act of transgression" (25). Though both works of art are autobiographical, they subvert the conventions of the genres of life-writing and autobiography by

blending styles of Impressionist, Expressionist and Surrealist art with music and text.

Almost a century later, women autobiographers continue to blend different art forms and media in order to adequately represent their life. For example, Alison Bechdel's Fun Home, published in 2006, is an autobiographical graphic novel that not only beautifully interlaces the visual and literary aspects inherent in the book's format, but also contains hand-written excerpts of her childhood diary, illustrated copies of her family photographs and minutely traced passages from great works of English literature. Like Bechdel, Salomon recreated detailed images from her youth, as well as portraits of the people in her life, and extracts of the art, music, theatre and literature that had an impact on her development as an artist. From Michelangelo to Goethe to Glück, the artistic and cultural education she received is everywhere present in the images and the text, either explicitly through reference and citation, or implicitly through her painting style and her perceptions of love and family.

Furthermore, Salomon chose to tell her life story in the form of a German singspiel, not only for its visual and performative aspects, but also for its generic flexibility. The singspiel is a style of popular opera that originated in 17th Century Italian Baroque theatre, and is characterized by both its musical and comic style of representation (Wade 1-2). The characters' dialogue is either spoken with music playing in the background, or sung with instrumental accompaniment. In addition to this musical element, the singspiel script also includes a wide range of art forms that blend the prestige and merit of "high art" with the entertainment of "low art." Since the genre was established at a time when theatre was extending its reach from the Kings' courts to the popular stage, singspiel scripts commonly included passages and citations from popular poetry, myths, fairytales, folklore and folk songs among libretti, ballads and symphonies of the most astute European composers. "The combination of poetry and instrumental, and especially vocal, music achieves the highest emotive possibility for the expression of the text, pleasing the ear with double acoustic offerings" (40).

For Salomon, these double offerings of sound also presented double offerings in meaning. Her use of music, ranging from Schubert's symphonies to

national anthems, when played as an accompaniment to either the narrated story or to spoken lines of characters, as well as painted images, often has the effect of inducing two emotions at once. Renowned playwright and director Bertolt Brecht discussed the role of music in epic theatre as playing the part of director, impacting the spectators' reaction to the actors. "It would be particularly useful to have actors play against the emotion the music called forth" (90). Productions he refers to, such as The Threepenny Opera in 1928, which innovatively blended love duets and ballads with scenes involving criminals, created the effect of irony. Because of the music, spectators empathized with characters they might otherwise have judged as villains. The layering of music over the play's conventional dramaturgy thus added complexity to the characters. In Life? or Theatre? not only does the music in combination with the dialogue and paintings create irony, but each song's beginning and ending signals an aural framing to a particular emotion in the viewer. As the story progresses, some songs are repeated, thereby linking certain scenes with previous ones and cueing the return of similar emotions in the reader.

Created between 1940 and 1942, Salomon's work is extraordinary on numerous levels. Perhaps the most mysterious and chilling aspect of her story is that she felt the impulse to feverishly paint, write and finally complete the work just before her transportation from her "safe" hiding spot in the South of France to Auschwitz, where she died in 1943. Her urge to finish her life story before she was sent to Auschwitz begs the question, how did she know that her death was imminent? As we will see, her impulse to create was partly a result of the racism she endured during her tumultuous coming of age in Berlin, as well as the pressures she faced from her family.

A closer reading of the work shows that Salomon's desire to "create her world anew," as she puts it (822), stemmed from her rejection of the gender constructs and prescribed roles assigned to her by both society and family. As an extension of the question Mary Lowenthal Felstiner asked upon analyzing Charlotte Salomon's Life? or Theatre?: "Was the genesis of this peculiar autobiography in some degree linked to the gender of the autobiographer?" ("Engendering" 184), this thesis will explore the connection between gender, genre and the (re)invention of life in this astounding text.

Salomon's treatment of gender as a factor in her overall identity is complex from the outset. By representing herself through her main character, Charlotte Kann, whose sexuality is an important theme, as well as through the narrator and author of the work, she becomes a plurality of "selves" working under various pseudonyms and symbols. Furthermore, scholars such as Judith C.E. Belinfante argue that Life? or Theatre? does not fit into any one genre of art or literature. Given Charlotte Kann's bisexual tendencies and the racism she experienced as a Jew, how does the interface of voice, temporalities and genre of the gouache images, text and music create a new generic space of representation for the identity of Charlotte Salomon?

In an effort to reclaim the roles she played as both a woman and a Jew, while also revealing the truth about her family history, Salomon had to bridge the gap between traumatic memory and narrative, fiction and nonfiction by employing various devices of artistic formats such as the graphic novel, film and theatre. Charlotte Salomon represents herself by way of third person, autobiographical performative narrative in order to author her own life as art, at once working through personal and family trauma and creating an empowering identity for her alter-ego character/herself in a time of

persecution and discrimination of Jews in Nazi Germany. In particular, her work's performative aspect allows her to transgress the predetermined roles that were imposed upon her by her family, her lover and society. The next three chapters explore how she engineered this transgression, and what provoked her to do so. I offer below an outline of the issues discussed in these chapters.

Chapter I: Recasting Gender and Racial/Ethnic Determinations

There are two factors that had a major impact on the initial construction of Charlotte Kann's gender in Life? or Theatre? The first and most obvious factor is her family and close friends. The second important factor that determined the conception of gender is the political climate of 1930s Germany.

The exploration of gender in Life? or Theatre? diverges into many different avenues, including the cycle of suicides that seems to prey on the women in Charlotte's life. Starting with the suicide of her own mother, Charlotte is repeatedly exposed to death either literally or figuratively in art and in the

teachings of her stepmother's singing coach, Daberlohn. But all of the circumstances of her relatives' deaths are kept a secret until she is a young woman—at the end of the play. Salomon identifies the act of suicide with women in particular by demonstrating a shared sense of identity among the female characters. This feminine descent into melancholy and, eventually, suicide, becomes a major gender construct against which Charlotte constantly struggles.

The fact that Charlotte's family keeps the suicides a secret reflects the desire of the Jewish population in Germany at the time to withhold any information that could have been exploited by the Nazis. Jewish women suicide victims, in particular were often portrayed as insane and the Nazis defamed the Jews by arguing that this insanity was a hereditary, racial problem. Instead of hiding the truth of her family's past in order to protect their reputation, Salomon exposed her story, but inversed the context. Rather than the women being insane and then committing suicide because of a supposed biological flaw, her characters gradually become disillusioned by the society they struggle to fit into. How does Salomon show that it is not the women who were born flawed, but the system that was flawed/racist? In what way does an

interface of different literary and artistic devices portray the different vantage points among characters, depending on their generation and role in society?

During her childhood and adolescence, Charlotte resists prescribed gender constructs and is rather androgynous in several aspects. She also has bisexual tendencies, as demonstrated by her crushes on several females and intimate feelings for her stepmother Paulinka. Furthermore, the theme of androgyny extends to include the author and narrator as well as the main character. All three are representative of the Charlotte Salomon who created the work, and they all have pseudonyms and some masculine characteristics. Since this "male self-gendering," to use Michael Steinberg's term, traverses the textual framework of Life? or Theatre? and extends to the author as subject-object, it is evident that Salomon was struggling against the limits of the autobiographical genre.

In content, Salomon's autobiography bears significant resemblance to Virginia Woolf's memoir from the late 1930s and early 1940s, Moments of Being. Like Salomon, Woolf lost her mother at a young age, she was sexually abused by her older half-brother—Salomon's grandfather made sexual

advances toward her—and she had a love affair with a woman, Violet Dickinson. Unlike Salomon, who only considered suicide and later chose to paint and write her life story instead, Woolf finally did commit suicide in 1941 (Bell xv). In form, however, Salomon's work is multi-dimensional and includes music and paintings in addition to textual story.

Critics such as Van Alphen and Benstock argue that the entire genre of autobiography is structured by the male perspective and that women autobiographers are therefore faced with serious constraints that disallow them to express their experience as women within these male frameworks. "The self that would reside at the center of the text is decentered—and often is absent altogether—in women's autobiographical texts. The very requirements of the genre are put into question by the limits of gender—which is to say, because these two terms are etymologically linked, genre itself raises questions about gender" (Benstock 151-2).

Throughout Life? or Theatre? Daberlohn imposes several gender stereotypes upon both Charlotte and Paulinka, but it is he who creates his own image of women and projects it on them. How does Salomon use the interaction of

image and text to portray Daberlohn in this dominant role as "creator," while also implicitly demonstrating her own (re)creation of the story as an ironic, somewhat parodic autobiography?

Chapter II: Genre Remix

In terms of humour, the singspiel is similar to the graphic novel, which is rooted in comic book literature. Both forms of representation are inherently comic, and like Bechdel's Fun Home, Salomon's work blends the comic with the tragic in order to create dark irony. Indeed, Fun Home's cover reads "A Family Tragicomic." Salomon used comic undertone as a tool to communicate with her reader/viewer, the purpose of which being to both incorporate her own voice as author through subtle sarcasm, and to shed light on the arbitrariness of the culture of nomenclature, that is, the names, titles and constructs that, by association with stereotypes and connotations, determine one's identity.

This irony is first made apparent to the reader/viewer by Salomon's renaming of her characters. The pseudonyms are comical or ironic references to their

personalities and idiosyncrasies. By giving them stage names, Salomon claims authority over the portrayal of their roles and identities in her story. Dropping their real names signifies a resistance to the power of language within the particular society of 1930s Berlin, which parallels Lacan's observation: "Le sujet aussi bien, s'il peut paraître serf du langage, l'est plus encore d'un discours dans le mouvement universel duquel sa place est déjà inscrite à sa naissance, ne serait-ce que sous la forme de son nom propre" ("L'Instance" Lacan 252). This resistance against the characters' given birth names is symbolic of Salomon's desire to free them, and herself, from the imprisonment of predetermined identity.

Moreover, Salomon's juxtaposition of the tragic and the comic shows a quiet violence toward traditional (male-dominated) discourse that her work shares with the diaries of Virginia Woolf. In response to what Woolf called novelist D. H. Lawrence's "ruler coming down and measuring" a people, Benstock writes, "The relation of the conscious to the unconscious, of the mind to writing, of the inside to the outside of political and narrative systems, indicate not only a problematizing of social and literary conventions—a questioning of the Symbolic law—but also the need to reconceptualize form itself" (151). In

order for Salomon to effectively transgress the limits created by racism and gender constructs, she had to surpass the representational limits of language and genre by fusing together different artistic formats.

Abridging the distance between high and low art and seeping through the ontological boundaries of genre, Salomon created a new generic space in which to frame her story. What sacrifices does Salomon make in order to maintain the authenticity of her family's feelings, emotions and trauma and to overcome the representational limits of the autobiographical genre? Does the blending of subjective, figurative and fictional elements into an autobiographical narrative, compromise the credibility of her story?

Chapter III: (Re)Inventing (a) Life

To understand how Salomon came to create a new generic space in which to break through the boundaries that so tightly "bound" her predetermined identity by society and family, it is important to discuss the impulse that led Salomon to recreate her life through art. As a reaction to her childhood and adolescent experiences, Life? or Theatre? can be considered a working

through of trauma, as Van Alphen suggests. Salomon's play is a performance piece laid down on a two dimensional plane. In an effort to explain the multifarious genres and formats incorporated in the work, he concludes that it is through the act of creating the work that Salomon recovered, both in the sense that she recovered from the trauma she went through, and that she *un*covered her memories along with those of her ancestors.

In addition to Life? or Theatre? being a work-through of trauma, Salomon's play also shares some of the qualities of Virginia Woolf's autobiographical diaries and personal letters, which likewise exceed and reconstruct generic boundaries: "I might in the course of time learn what it is that one can make of this loose, drifting material of life; finding another use for it than the use I put it to, so much more consciously and scrupulously, in fiction" (150). Woolf went through the same activity of wading through a sea of drifting, unconscious material that was not available to her consciousness in the narrative form. Moreover, the material proved easier to crystallize into one coherent story when woven together by fictive elements. In order to bring the disjointed fragments of experience that existed in their memories together in a way that was communicable to readers/viewers as a narrative, Woolf and

Salomon both filled in the blanks with imagined scenes and descriptions. The aspects of Salomon's work that might be considered fiction are fictional in relation to the traditional standards of the autobiographical genre that are framed in a dominating male/Symbolic order.

In Life? or Theatre? the creator, the one who names, is Salomon, and the primary "creature," the one who is named, is Salomon as well, meaning that she is both subject and object. By taking authority over the representation of her own identity, she also recreated it on her own terms. During this act of re-creation, what types of changes did Salomon the author undergo? As Benstock writes: "Indeed, [certain forms of self-writing] seem to exploit difference and change over sameness and identity: their writing follows the 'seam' of the conscious/unconscious where boundaries between internal and external overlap" (148). How does Salomon's work, as a materialization of her internal, unconscious traumatic memories, demonstrate her quest for a name and enable her to "create her world anew" (822)?

Chapter I:

Recasting Gender and Racial/Ethnic Determinations

Charlotte Salomon's work experienced resurgence in popularity in the 1990s, which was primarily due to its themes of gender and male-female and female-female relationships and eroticism. Since a new wave of feminist criticism was, at the time, reinterpreting art and literature in an attempt to shed light on more gendered aspects, Life? or Theatre? offered—and still offers—fertile reading ground for feminist theorists. Writers such as Mary Lowenthal Felstiner brought the theme of "identification between women" ("Engendering" 183-92) to the fore in the genre of female self-representation and, particularly in her 1994 biography of Salomon, her book To Paint Her Life: Charlotte Salomon and the Nazi Era.

One of the most important points that Felstiner makes is about Salomon's rejection of the self-image and female identity imposed upon her by her family and society. Felstiner stresses this point in her discussion of Salomon's 1940 self-portrait, painted in oil: "It showed no background, no clues to what

she was: a German Jewish woman without a passport, trained in art, hiding in France" ("Create" 195). Salomon's representation of her unmade face, simple brown hair and blue-collared shirt against a grayish background reflected her desire to appear as a stateless, timeless and, most importantly to this chapter, genderless person whose background, family and society did not determine who she was. As we will discover, although Salomon may have intended to represent herself through her story's main character, Charlotte Kann, as being stripped of the societal roles and identity assigned to her, it is evident that rather than freeing Charlotte of any and all gender determinations, she created a new generic space in which to portray her particular identity.

A Fatal Fate

In order to understand the internal conflicts of Charlotte Kann, it is important to take a closer reading of the various pressures she feels from her family and friends. Although her intense relationship with her stepmother, Paulinka Bimbam, has a major impact on Charlotte's development as a young woman, the roots of her desire to represent herself on her own terms are

much deeper. Paulinka becomes an official benchmark in Charlotte's life only when she marries Dr. Kann in 1930, when Charlotte is thirteen. Four years earlier, when she was nine, her mother commits suicide. Though it is not until 1940 that Charlotte found out that Mrs. Kann's death was a suicide and not caused by influenza as she had been told, the loss of her mother at such a young age cemented in Charlotte an early understanding of death.

Right before taking her life, Charlotte's mother says, "And my husband loves me not. And my child needs me not. Why, oh why, am I alive?" (177) At the root of her depression is the unbearable thought that she cannot adequately fulfill the roles of wife and mother in seeing to the needs of her family. In fact, she considers her roles in the family to be her *raison d'être*. This desire to fill the roles of wife and mother and ensure safety, happiness and health within the family was typical of Berlin women in the 1920s. But for Jewish women in particular, the failure to do so meant not only letting down the family, but also facing rejection from the German society they tried so hard to fit into.

According to Felstiner, this depression, which was deep seated in Jewish women's desire to personify the German ideal, was the cause of a high percentage of suicides among the minority Jews. "More educated as a group than other women, they nonetheless gained bourgeois status by staying at home. In the genteel German world they were dying to join, women were not to work" (To Paint 16). As the Jewish women had had a different upbringing from those of their Christian German counterparts, many found adapting to a life at home difficult, but as unhappy as they were staying at home, and settling into domestic responsibilities, they knew they would be even more unhappy if they were not accepted by society. Many of them did commit suicide and the rates among Jews and Jewish women in particular being higher than those among Christian Germans, presented the Nazis with more evidence to further promote their propaganda that Jews were a weaker race.

In her essay, "Create her World Anew: Seven Dilemmas for Re-presenting Charlotte Salomon," Felstiner identifies suicide as being a sort of rite of passage among the women in Charlotte's family. For, as she would discover, seven relatives, including her namesake aunt Charlotte, her grandmother and her mother fell victim to what seems to be the family curse of suicide. Surely

Salomon must have realized that suicide was what the women in her family saw as an escape to a better place. Her response thus might have been to learn from their example and to obediently follow in their footsteps if ever she decided she had had enough of the life prescribed to her. However, Salomon did not adopt their behaviour and instead went counter-current to the flow of her family's cycle. As Felstiner put it: "she understood she too could take her life. Instead, she decided to paint her life" ("Create" 196).

What Felstiner calls a "mysterious choice" on the part of Salomon to create an autobiographical work of art may have gone against the trend of suicides in her family, but it is also symbolic of Salomon's choice to make a name for herself, which she made against the will of all those around her. She did not follow in the footsteps of her mother and grandmother because she did not see these women as her role models, either in terms of their decision to commit suicide or in their choice to try to fit into a predetermined role of what it meant to be a woman. In Life? or Theatre? Salomon made it clear that not only would her gender not be determined by the past women in her family, but she would construct her own identity determinations according to what was natural for her. And, as we will discuss in the following section, what

was natural for her was intimacy—sometimes sexual—with those she loved, whether they be male or female.

Sexuality and Charlotte Kann

Although Salomon never exposed the Charlotte Kann character explicitly as being bisexual, she does show her feeling attracted to many women throughout the play, and even has intimate feelings for her stepmother Paulinka. There are many references to the differences, both sexual and in terms of gender, between the men and women in the play. Although the roles are very distinct, Charlotte's character is androgynous—sometimes impartial to, and sometimes a mixture of, the male and female gender constructions—both in appearance and in personality.

The emotions Charlotte goes through over a series of relationships with different women are characteristic of infatuation, lust and desire. In some cases, this desire manifests itself in the form of jealousy, such as the case of

her feelings toward Hase, the governess: "One day on a meadow [Charlotte] comes across a girl playing a lute as she watches a child. She is the governess of a family whom the Knarres happen to know quite well. Charlotte decides that she must have 'that governess' for herself" (86). Up to this point in the story, Charlotte has been trying to convince her father that, as an adolescent, she did not need a governess anymore. Hase plays the role of a replacement for the feelings Charlotte once felt for her mother, and would soon feel toward Paulinka. However, instead of looking up to Hase as a role model and a protector, Charlotte rather feels ownership over the girl, and pursues her in an aggressive way that juxtaposes the passive submission that characterized her behaviour while in her mother's care.

The feelings of intimacy Charlotte felt for her mother combined with the feelings of ownership she feels toward Hase reach a new height when she projects them on Paulinka: "Charlotte's head is full of Miss Paulinka Bimbam, but she is far too shy to let her or anyone else notice it. She goes with Hase the governess to the seaside, and windmills – houses – lighthouses – airplanes – sea seem to whisper 'her' name in her ear" (94). Her feelings of infatuation and desire are typical of most adolescents teetering on the brink of puberty,

but the fact that the object of her lust is a generation older, soon-to-be family member and female goes against all of the conditions of what was conventionally considered a "healthy" pubescent crush.

Charlotte's feelings of jealousy extend toward anyone who might steal affection from the object of her desire: "but now our model is overcome with shame, and she hurries up the stairs, to be tenderly embraced by the beloved figure in the black dress...The little girl was even jealous – believe it or not – of her father" (124-6). The gouaches on pages 124 and 126 curiously show Charlotte and Paulinka hugging and kissing, but their positions on each page are inversed. In the first series of images, Paulinka comes to Charlotte's bed where she is resting and takes her in her arms (figure 1) while in the second series, it is Charlotte who approaches a sleeping Paulinka in her bed and acts as the aggressor (male) in the embrace (figure 2). The roles she plays in her various relationships with women often cross gender borders, indicating that Charlotte feels comfortable playing both roles.

In "The Birthday Present" chapter (129), Charlotte and Paulinka have their first quarrel (132), which is followed shortly thereafter by a repeated gouache

of the first two affectionate scenes, this time depicting the two women "making up" : "But we will leave Mrs. Knarre alone for a while with her astonishment and pain. And will return to our lovers, who have now made up again" (137) This time Charlotte is shown in bed sleeping and then Paulinka wakes her up and they hold each other in various positions (figure 3).

The fact that Paulinka is not Charlotte's birth mother presents her with the opportunity to project both her residual feelings of abandonment since the death of her mother and thus her need for a female figure to relate to, as well as her mounting adolescent sexual desires onto her stepmother. Since the only role model she has had since her mother's suicide is her father, it is possible that, seeing his lust for Paulinka, she mimics his feelings and behaviour. As Nanette Salomon writes: "Her love for Paulinka and its framing outside the genetic, suicidal model is significant not only for the life-giving forces of the homosocial, but also for those of the homoerotic" ("On the Impossibility" 221). Her feelings, which almost reach the point of obsession, are a mixture of the affection she felt for her mother and her physical attraction to Paulinka.

It is questionable as to whether Charlotte views herself as the male/aggressor in their relationship meaning that she has transgender tendencies, or if she is experiencing either lesbian or bisexual feelings. Although in the translated version of Life? or Theatre? that is used in this thesis, the author refers to herself/himself as being female, in the original text, written in German, the author's gender is male:

> The creation of the following paintings is to be imagined as follows: *Der Mensch*—a person is sitting beside a sea. He is painting. A tune suddenly enters his mind... The author has tried to go completely outside himself and to allow the characters to sing or speak their own voices. In order to achieve this, many artistic values had to be renounced, but I hope that in view of the soul-penetrating nature of this work this will be forgiven.
>
> The Author St. Jean August 1940/1-2 Or between heaven and earth beyond our era in the year I of the new salvation. (qtd. in "Theater" Pollock 62)

As Griselda Pollock points out, the character embodied by "the author" is illustrated in the last gouache of the book, but "his" body is characteristically female, complete with a woman's swimsuit. She is sitting by the sea as foretold in an almost fetal position. Her head is down with her back to the viewer and she is painting on a transparent paper (824). Not only does the character transform from one gender to the other when traversing

representational terrain from text to image, but the narrator signs the end of the text as "St. Jean." The painting, by contrast, is signed (almost illegibly) "CS."

Why would an author who looks female in appearance—according to the gouache—refer to himself/herself by using the third-person masculine pronoun? As Daberlohn repeats throughout the play, "one must first go into oneself to be able to go out of oneself" (610), it is possible that the text represents Salomon's internal voice projecting her self image outward, while the painting showing her characteristically feminine body represents how the artist sees herself when looking from the outside in. In other words, the third-person male refers to the gender she relates to on the inside, while the woman in the painting refers to the gender the outside world sees her as. Her feelings express one gender while her body expresses another.

Because of Charlotte's and Paulinka's concurrent love affairs with Daberlohn, Michael Steinberg suggests "the erotic aura [between Charlotte and Paulinka] is completely destabilized by the narrator's male self-gendering" (6). Charlotte's male self-gendering is characteristic of transgender individuals,

while her love affairs with both Daberlohn and Paulinka are characteristic of bisexuals, so clearly, even in contemporary times, Charlotte would have difficulty fitting into any one gender construct.

To further complicate the question of subject position and authorship, Salomon considered all of the characters to represent parts of herself; they represent not only their real-life counterparts, but Salomon too, as they had been a part of her life: "'I was all the characters in my play... and thus I became myself" ("Create" Felstiner 196). What Pollock describes as a "mobile subjectivity that could traverse a whole cast of characters alive and dead, masculine and feminine, young and old" (62), could be viewed as either a fragmented identity or a plurality of selves. In terms of gender, Salomon's self-referencing, either by way of images or text, shows that she identifies with both genders at the same time, but not on the same terms as society would suggest.

Salomon made no secret of her distaste for the stereotypical woman's role in both her own household and in 1920s Germany. In her biography, Felstiner writes, "she'd always kept clear of woman's work" (134), and during her stay

with her grandparents in Nice, her freedom and happiness were jeopardized by her grandparents who required her to take on the role of "woman of the house" (134). In Life? or Theatre? they give Charlotte two choices for her future, none of which include artistry. When the Grandfather suggests she become a housemaid, the Grandmother says no, only to suggest she find a man instead:

> *Grandmother* 'Are you here in the world only to paint?' *Grandfather* 'You are much too lenient with her. Why shouldn't she work as a housemaid, like all the others?' *Grandmother* 'Just look at her. She needs a man. She has no idea yet what love is. Young girls of a certain age need men.' *Charlotte* 'I've never been interested in men, and I ask you once and for all to spare me that topic.' (723-7)

Despite Charlotte's lack of interest in men, or even the discussion of men, it would be wrong to assume she is a lesbian or bisexual. Though she may have qualities of both, the story depicts Charlotte Kann as a young girl who, despite often rebelling against the traditional feminine values that her family imposes upon her, sometimes regrets not fitting the ideal image of a girl. Before Charlotte's affection grows for Paulinka, she engages in a close relationship with her friend Hilde. The two girls never leave each other's sides

until one day when Charlotte is again abandoned by someone she loves: "Charlotte has reached a melancholy age. Her friend Hilde has found a new, much prettier friend than Charlotte, and during recess she now goes around with Marianne while Charlotte trails sadly behind or sits on the stone cairn" (93). The fact that Marianne is "much prettier than Charlotte" is paramount to her jealousy; not only is she taking her best friend away, but Charlotte cannot compete with her beauty. It is evident that Charlotte's feelings of friendship for Hilde are mixed with feelings of physical attraction, otherwise her appearance would not be an issue in competing for her friend's affection.

Although neither of the conventional gender categories is a perfect fit for Charlotte, she maintains a strong identity as the main subject in the play. Therefore, by surpassing the limits of both culturally-constructed gender roles (and especially the one imposed on her by her family) while still maintaining a separate identity, Charlotte overcomes what Judith Butler calls "the zone of inhabitability" which constitutes the defining limit of the subject's domain, causing the subject to "circumscribe its own claim to autonomy and to life" (368). According to Butler, if a person is unable to conform to the "cultural norm that governs the materialization of bodies" and determination of those

bodies as corresponding to one of the two "artificially imposed" gender constructs—men and women—then that person is, and will remain, an "abject being," forever struggling to attain the status of subject and leave the zone of inhabitability. Since it is difficult to transgress into the domain of subjectivity if one does not fall into one of the two prescribed gender categories, most abject beings remain as objects governed by a dominant subject's choice to recognize them or not.

As we will explore in the following section, in order for Salomon and Charlotte to overcome this zone of inhabitability, they must first overcome the male-imposed gender constructions with which they are "supposed" to identify. By resisting this imposed gender construct, Salomon in fact reclaimed autonomy, authority and life.

Resistance to Male-Imposed Identity

Having already discussed the unique way in which Salomon assigned a mixed gender to "the author" and thus the narrator(s), it is important to examine her

conception of gender in light of the history and theory of women's autobiography in the 20th Century.

In his essay, "Autobiography as Resistance to History: Charlotte Salomon's Life or Theater?" Ernst Van Alphen suggests that Salomon's conception of gender is constituted by way of associations. However, unlike the conventional associations that Charlotte is exposed to in her family and in society, what she associates with women are not necessarily the roles of housemaid, wife and mother; and what she associates with men are not necessarily the roles of provider and head of the household. Instead, she characterizes suicide as a tendency of women, and creativity as a tendency of men (67). An example in Life? or Theatre? that supports Van Alphen's theory is the gouache on page 183. The painting shows six female heads of different ages with their eyes closed, suspended above three figures, Charlotte, the Grandmother and a man, who have their eyes open and their heads still attached to their bodies (figure 4). Beside all of the heads with closed eyes, there are crosses, indicating death. Although this picture is meant to illustrate the Grandmother's story of family suicides, including that of her brother, he is shown as being alive in the image. This would suggest that he is not

included in the family cycle of suicides that to which only the women seem to succumb. In this way, Salomon creates a link between women and suicide.

Charlotte's inspiration and the person who encourages her most in her art is her stepmother's male singing teacher, Daberlohn, and she therefore considers creativity to be a male characteristic. According to Van Alphen, this linkage between creativity and masculinity is common among women autobiographers:

> The frameworks that women have at their disposal to narrate their autobiographies are the products of a culture dominated by men. This makes it impossible for women to "confess" their stories, because those stories are not self-present to them. Women's lives can become stories only in the act of representation or narration, that is, in the resistance to and transgression of the unavoidable male frameworks with their male assumptions and prescriptions. (68)

Only in this act of resistance and transgression can women tell their life story. In Salomon's case, she not only resisted the assumptions and prescriptions determined by the men in her family and social circle, she also demonstrated these assumptions by having them be performed throughout Life? or

Theatre?. In a way, her play catches her characters in the act of projecting their own female stereotypes upon her.

These stereotypes, which, in the case of Charlotte's grandparents, are most often rooted in conventional family roles of men and women, are more complex in Daberlohn's perspective. On the one hand, he identifies women as being less able to achieve what men achieve: "'There's something I have always found, a woman needs a thousand paces, but never mind how fast she races, a man can do it in one bound'" (295). This admonition implies that women complicate tasks that, for men, are easy and apparent. On the other hand, he puts women on a pedestal of almost sacred proportions: "'But for myself I also have faith in – in redemption through woman'" (294). Daberlohn's judgment of "women" is, in both cases, comically sexist and reductive.

When Charlotte rejects her Grandfather's sexual advances after her Gandmother's suicide, he is alarmed: "I don't understand you. What's wrong with sharing a bed with me when there's nothing else available? I'm in favour of what's natural" (804). Since he desires her, he assumes that his feelings are

natural, thus giving himself the authority to determine what she should do and be. Furthermore, his inability to understand why Charlotte would not want to perform the "natural" woman's role of sleeping with a man (a role that must be performed at all cost, despite the generation gap and incest) shows that he views her first and foremost as woman of the house—not his granddaughter—who has the responsibility of replacing the former wife and the roles she carried out. From his perspective, her gender is her entire identity and he is shocked when she resists this imposed identity.

Another way of resisting the male-imposed gender construction that Charlotte experiences is through what Felstiner calls "the identification between women." In her essay, "Engendering an Autobiography in Art: Charlotte Salomon's 'Life? Or Theater?'" Festiner explores the relationship between Charlotte and her Grandmother in the final scenes before her death. She calls the six-page series of Gouaches "The Rescue Drama" because Charlotte is portrayed as fighting to rescue her Grandmother from her melancholy while also fighting to rescue her own identity (187). This double rescue act on the part of Charlotte demonstrates a symbiotic relationship between the two women; on the one hand, her Grandmother needs her to

rescue her, and on the other, Charlotte feels that by saving her Grandmother, her own identity and perhaps fate will in turn be saved, since the cycle of suicides will have ended.

According to Felstiner, the identification between women occurs when "women allow boundaries to blur between themselves and others; and that this tendency derives in part from interdependence between mothers and daughters" (184). In order to rescue her Grandmother, Charlotte "forces herself to go completely out of herself and to give all her attention to Grandma Knarre" (737). The blurring of the two women's identities is most evident in the repeated paintings of Charlotte standing next to her Grandmother's bed. The two identical orange bodies are shown against a white background. Though they are not touching each other, Charlotte's raised arm somehow magnetizes the Grandmother to follow, raising her from her deathbed (738-43). The two bodies are thus connected by an unseen magnetism of which Charlotte has control.

The blurring of the bodies and identities of the two women suggests that Salomon wanted to portray unification or solidarity between them. Despite

their differences, Charlotte sees her Grandmother as her last hope for breaking through the gender constraints assigned to her by both her family's history and cycle of suicides and the male perspective. She associates her identity with that of her grandmother because if she can rescue the latter from suicide, then she can also stop the cycle to which she, as a woman, is predisposed. And if she can stop the cycle of suicide, she can disprove other roles and associations to which she is predisposed. Furthermore, her effort to connect with her Grandmother shows that she seeks guidance from the only female figure left in her life, thus resisting that of Daberlohn and her Grandfather.

Although this blurring of bodies shows a powerful kinesthetic connection between the two women, Salomon also demonstrates numerous sequences and gouaches depicting the merging of a male and a female into one blurry body. The first time this merge occurs is the first time Charlotte and Daberlohn make love (545-8) and it recurs every time they embrace with very little text in accompaniment (560-1, 585, 590-1). Then, page 706 shows the last time that Charlotte and Daberlohn are together. In this painting, they form one dark silhouette and Daberlohn says, "May you never forget that I

believe in you,'" which Charlotte echoes during the sequence with her Grandmother: "'May you never forget that I believe in you'" (757).

In his essay, "Creative Synergies: Charlotte Salomon and Alfred Wolfsohn" Edward Timms suggests that Salomon's numerous references to and depictions of lovemaking between a man and a woman are not only representative of the "oneness experienced in erotic love, but the concept of androgynous creativity" (107). According to Timms, Daberlohn's and Charlotte's love-making scenes are symbolic of art-making. For Daberlohn, in order to create profound art one must access feminine qualities that are essential to women. His obsession with Paulinka is partly due to her representation of his theories on singing:

> Do you know that sometimes you can look devilishly beautiful? Your head like your voice, encompasses both the lofty and the deep, the male and the female, in a perfection such as I have never seen before. It reminds me of a train of thought that came to me while thinking about tenors with high falsetto notes like Richard Tauber...and women with narrow hips and a deep voice, like Zarah Leander. My thoughts go like this: when the present singer and man switches his roles, when the women with narrow hips bear womanish sons – the person of the future might unite both extremes with each other, and this would open up possibilities... (362-3)

According to Timms, Daberlohn's real-life counterpart Wolfsohn's theories of the feminine creativity and the manifestation of masculine traits, such as a husky voice and thin hips in a woman, took form as a result of his experience in WWI where he was constantly pressured to "adopt a heroic posture" which led to an "overemphasis on the masculine principle and a denial of the forces of feeling" ("Creative" 108). Since "the theory of bisexuality acquires a critical edge, as a form of resistance to the macho ideology of militarism," (108) Wolfsohn's theories are reflective of his desire to challenge the gender construct of masculinity in association with heroism and denial of sensitivity that was assigned to him during his time at war.

Wolfsohn's emphasis on the importance of the creative principle, Timms writes, was one of the "sources of his appeal" for Salomon. Moreover, their shared desire to be freed of the constraints of the male/female constructs led Salomon to blur the lines between not only constructions of gender, but also categorizations of art and genre.

Daberlohn repeatedly launches his discussion of the male-female unification in one body by referencing the myth of Orpheus and the story of Creation: "To know the meaning of good and evil meant, for Adam, knowing Eve, but that reminds me of my point of departure, from which I have deviated – I mean, your head, which unites the male and the female within itself. As the first proof of my theory: the fusing of both sexes in one human being" (369).

But Timms compares Wofsohn to Otto Weininger, who philosophized that, 'the idea that man and woman are divided into two different categories simply cannot be true... It must be the case that in every man there are feminine qualities, and in every woman masculine qualities'" (qtd. in "Creative" 107). And although he writes, "Unlike Weininger, Wolfsohn makes it clear that it is the feminine qualities that he most admires," (107) there could be another way to interpret Salomon's representation of Daberlohn's so-called "admiration." In her story, Daberlohn may admire feminine traits, but whether he appreciates the women who possess them as people and not just for their feminine qualities questionable.

For example, he frequently asks for permission to "mold" Paulinka into the creature she has the potential to be: "'Loveliest Madonna, let me shape you, let me form you.' He mentally constructs his Madonna – his Mona Lisa. She smiles mysteriously," (372) and even begs to do so at times: "Let me shape you, let me form you. That's all I ask, all I ask" (383). The authority Daberlohn assigns himself to "construct" his Madonna out of Paulinka implies that he assumes the role of creator and thus defines and shapes women into creatures of art. However romantic his art theory may be, he is still the one with the power to assign gender associations to Paulinka. He is still the subject, and she the object. Furthermore, he justifies his right to construct Paulinka by interpreting the story of the Creation of Adam: "That is why the path lead from Adam to Christ, so that the words might be spoken: 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?'" (570). The theory always comes back to the same idea that man plays the active role, of the one doing, while the woman plays the passive role, of the one to whom something is done.

Yet he insists that women and men have a symbiotic rapport and that their unification will enhance their creativity: "woman and man united in one person. One complementing the other in a circle, they are to enjoy the

pleasures of earthly life" (577). However, what he assigns to women as their role in "complementing" men does not give them as much freedom as the latter.

Despite Daberlohn's theory that implies the man's role is to construct the woman or to access art through the woman, it is evident that he fails to do so in both the case of Paulinka and Charlotte. Daberlohn frequently references the stories of the Creation of Adam by God and of Orpheus and Eurydice, and he sees himself as playing the roles of the lead male in both. According to Van Alphen, he tries to embody the role of Orpheus while assigning the role of Eurydice to Paulinka: "His art is no longer a means by which he can reach his goal—Eurydice [Paulinka]. Rather, his love for Eurydice is the context, the precondition, for his homosocial competition in creativity with the God of the underworld" (70). In this way, Daberlohn sees Paulinka as a means to the realization of his best creation; in other words, he uses her and her voice to reach his highest potential as an artist.

With Charlotte, Daberlohn sees himself as representing both Christ and Adam, while Charlotte represents Eve. Pages 579-81 depict Charlotte and

Daberlohn in a canoe. Daberlohn notices how much Charlotte's pose resembles Michelangelo's "Night" and projects the image of the female muse onto Charlotte. Van Alphen writes, "Daberlohn turns the competition [between God an Adam] into a justification of the fact that women have no role in the story of creation" (74). As Van Alphen points out, Daberlohn's theory backfires when he tries to manifest his art through the two women. They are not tools to use at his whim, and they both prove to have their own artistic ambitions. Although they are at times inspired by his theories, which, in turn are inspired by classic stories of creation, they both prove to have more in common with Orpheus and God as creators than Daberlohn does.

Van Alphen suggests that Salomon had Charlotte overcome Daberlohn's projected gender role by transgressing and resisting the categorization of muse or object that he assigns her. However, Daberlohn's initial theory of the merging of male and female into one body, is a recurring theme for Charlotte throughout the play. Although Daberlohn constructs distinct gender roles based on well-known stories of creation, at least one aspect of his theory resonates in Charlotte and allows her to overcome the passive role he assigns her. The merging of two sexes—indeed the act of sex itself—to create one

androgynous organism is what Daberlohn deems as the gateway to creative art: "'Take, for example, a couple embracing under a bath robe. It is almost like one human being...'" (364).

His goal of uniting male and female qualities in one person both in terms of character and corporeality is perhaps what attracted him to Charlotte. Her androgynous tendencies and appearance fit his vision of the ideal person: "He suddenly finds Charlotte significant for his theories of the future. *Daberlohn* 'To judge by the various expressions on your face, you are quite a fertile object for me'" (507). According to his "theories of the future," "the person of the future might unite both extremes [the male and the female] with each other, and this would open up possibilities... in the realm of art..." (363). Therefore, if Charlotte represents the "person of the future" and the "person of the future" is an androgynous combination of female and male characteristics, then Charlotte represents androgyny.

Even the nickname he gives Charlotte evokes androgyny: "In the midst of his best reflections he is suddenly reminded of a promise to go boating with

Charlotte—or Junior, as he has christened her, alluding to his relationship with Paulinka" (578). The name Junior implies both youth and gender ambiguity. Furthermore, the value he places on androgyny is associated with creative art: "Quaint little creature, this Junior" (593). By calling her a "creature" and "Junior," he is renaming her or giving her a new, androgynous identity according to how he sees her. By naming her, he again demonstrates his role as the subject and hers as object.

Charlotte blurs the boundaries of bisexual and transgender by engaging in affairs with both sexes as well as through male self-gendering and playing the aggressor (male) role in some of her romantic liaisons. However, her identity also has a dimension of fantasy and otherworldliness to it. In addition to Daberlohn's philosophizing on "the underworld" (572) and "earthly life," he advises to "'coax your dreams into reality!'" (577) Charlotte believes and practices his teachings and strives to identify with something other than gender altogether. Instead of submitting to the conventional construction of gender, she decides to construct her own gender/identity on her own terms. Although she demonstrates both male and female characteristics, she also

transcends the constraints of these two choices and identifies with qualities of all organic matter, that is, with life.

For example, though Charlotte says explicitly that she is not interested in men, she does have an affair with Daberlohn. However, she could have been interested in him not for his masculinity but for his passion as a human being – whether he were man or woman, it was his character that attracted her, after all, she does refer to the two of them as "souls." "Here the author cannot but abandon Daberlohn's soul and enter that of his partner" (533). This suggests that the connection between she and Daberlohn transcends that of a conventional male-female relationship. Rather than being attracted to his masculine qualities, she is attracted to his qualities, period. Many of his ideas and philosophies arrest her in a way that manifests itself as a physical attraction.

When the text reads, "he endeavours to implant something of himself into her..." (591), there is a double meaning. The accompanying gouache shows the couple in an embrace, signifying that he both wishes to make love to her and penetrate her with his ideas. Like the double significance of the verb "to

implant," however, we will explore the double significance of Charlotte's feelings toward Daberlohn in the following chapter.

Charlotte's resistance to the male-imposed gender construct and identity is important because she does not stop at resisting the limitations of one gender choice, she surpasses the limitations of both genders by identifying not only with male and female characteristics, but also by engaging in a loving relationship that transcends physical attraction. Her admiration for Daberlohn has little to do with his gender and is rather a result of her attraction to his ideas.

As we will discuss in the next section, the resistance Charlotte demonstrates has largely to do with the bigger picture of Jewish resistance against the Nazis just prior to the Second World War. The parallel between Charlotte's close friends and family and Jews as a group shows that just how for Charlotte, "L'amour est un oiseau rebelle" (117), reclaiming one's life was an act of rebellion in 1930s Germany.

1930s Germany

Up to this point, we have discussed the impact the Salomon family has on Charlotte. Like her immediate family members and grandmother Charlotte seeks an escape from the life prescribed to her, but unlike these formers, she chooses to escape by way of creating a piece of art, rather than committing suicide. If we take the example of the Salomon family and regard it against the backdrop of the 1930s Jewish-German demographic to which they belonged, it is evident that the family cycle of suicides was a symptom of a greater-spanning societal malaise.

Quoting the "Jüdlische Rundschau" of February 16, 1926 and October, 1927, Darcy Buerkle writes, "By October 1927 the newspaper reported an official statistic for Jewish suicide in the major cities in Central Europe with particular attention to Berlin: since 1922 the number of Jewish suicides had risen sharply, and by 1927 had nearly doubled" ("Historical" 80). Charlotte Salomon's family history was not an unusual case within the Berlin Jewish

community at large. Moreover, the Salomon family's efforts to hide the truth from Charlotte parallel the Jewish press' efforts to minimize the problem of suicide in the community. According to Buerkle, theories of heredity, genetic degeneracy and their association with race were rampant in Berlin, "the results of such ideological thinking in the case of Jews, and Jewish women in particular, were clear: suicide, since the nineteenth century, was the result of insanity..." (80).

The Salomons kept their secret to protect their community as much as to protect Charlotte. As Felstiner writes: "If this family admitted its suicides, the pattern would prove the degraded fiber of all Jews. It would bolster the old belief (now enhanced by science) that craziness runs through the blood, and watch out for the female line" (To Paint 17). For the last half of the 19th Century, Jews had sought assimilation through *Bildung*. Any associations between Jews in general and high suicide rates would only fuel the arguments of those seeking to affirm cultural hierarchy differences among the German and Jewish *Bildungsbürgertum*. As Buerkle points out, the right-wing press in late Weimar had already preyed on the latter by taking satirical stabs at Jewish women's suicide (80).

Although like the Salomons, most Jewish families affected by patterns of suicide kept it a secret, Salomon wrote about it sometimes repetitiously (once in Act 1, Scene 2, and once through the narration of her grandmother, pp. 143-91) and painted vivid depictions of the deaths scenes. In spite of the suicide patterns and the trend among families to keep them a secret, for, as Felstiner puts it, "only silence would fend off a sweeping conviction of guilt" (17), Salomon represents the suicides in an effort to preserve the truth of her family's history at the cost of being judged. Instead of feeling guilty for the tragic pattern of suicides, her artwork and writing is an unapologetic narrative that ends up exposing the real reasons for her mother's (and her other relatives') depression that was rooted in the rejection she faced from German society, rather than an inherited dementia or insanity.

This separation between the German and Jewish educated bourgeoisie is evident in Salomon's depiction of her father, Dr. Kann, and the rejection he faces at the university where he works as a surgeon (194), as well as in several brief mentions of the Nazis' exclusion of Jews, e.g., signs in the windows of stores: "*No Jews admitted*" (672). Part of the reason this rejection was so

devastating for Jews was because they were one of the more assimilated peoples in Europe up until the end of the 19th Century. As Michael P. Steinberg writes, Salomon's incorporation of Bach's music in the work, coupled with Paulinka's joy at singing in churches, shows that "the protestant culture of Berlin Jews remains a narrative 'assimilation,' meaning that the resulting cultural experience or indeed cultural hybridity is understood here to have been deeply and sincerely experienced [by Salomon]" (13).

This assimilation was offset by the Jews' continued struggle to be accepted by society based on their shared German-ness, and despite religious differences. Like the Jewish women who struggled to conform to the German societal norm of staying at home and taking care of the family, Jewish men also felt their identities being compromised by the German rules and laws that unfairly excluded and criticized Jews. Nanette Salomon draws a link between an episode in Life? or Theatre? and the emasculation many Jewish men felt at the time:

> Charlotte Salomon's life-saving repulsion and rejection of her grandfather as a sign of a totalizing male aggressor is also telling. Her grandfather figures German Jewish manhood,

> before the Holocaust's impact on the subjectivity of that group had yet taken its full effect, one which essentially feminized Jews as a group and thus emasculated the Jewish male...Her grandfather's relationship with her is epitomized by the sexual advances he made after the suicide of his wife. He still feels it is his right to have sexual access to her; that he is in favor of anything, as he calls it 'that is natural'... as if his sex act is a natural one regardless of whom he thrusts it upon. ("On the Impossibility" Salomon 221)

The Grandfather's attempt to reclaim some control and some masculinity by engaging in sex with Charlotte is, according to Nanette Salomon, a result of the Nazi feminization of the Jewish race. In his essay, "Historical Effacements," Darcy Buerkle likewise creates a link between the belittlement Charlotte faces from her family and the condescension with which the Nazis treated Jews. The last page of Salomon's work bears the text, "Leben oder Theater???" (823). According to Buerkle, this question, the title of the work, is "a reference to the German admonition: 'mach doch kein Theater'—which is the admonition that women hear in some form or another throughout the play. Don't exaggerate, don't make up stories, they are told. What kinds of stories are you making up? they are asked, as they lie in their beds and coffins" (87).

This "don't make theatre" or "don't make up stories" admonition is rooted in the family's desire to keep their history of suicides from being exposed and exploited by Nazi propaganda. In order to forget about the tragic deaths in the family, many try to ignore them and if Charlotte wonders about them, she is told to stop being melodramatic or that she is "crazy" (397). Such debasing is also similar to the patronizing and mocking manner with which the Nazis treated the Jews as a group: "'The honour would be mine.' (Under his breath—'You filthy swine')" (204).

Again, similar to how Salomon depicts the male-imposed gender constructs discussed in the previous section, she, in an effort to "catch them in the act," portrays "Jewish" constructions as they existed in German society: "Just at this time, many Jews—who, with all their often undesirable efficiency, are perhaps a pushy and insistent race, happened to be occupying government and other senior positions. After the Nazi takeover of power they were all dismissed without notice. Here you see how this affected a number of different souls that were both human and Jewish!" (192).

Salomon also reflects the Nazis' stereotypes of Jewish women subliminally in various scenes. For example, when Dr. Singsong rejects the affections of a young woman the texts reads, "But, being a woman, she wanted to have her revenge and looked for a victim" (118). Thereafter, the young woman throws a bottle of poison at Paulinka in a fit of rage. What is interesting, however, is that the reason given for her violence is that she is a woman, as though this sort of thing is typical of all woman. The reader is left to assume the scene is a metaphor for another message. Rejection was something Jewish women faced as a group from the German society—"'At last one can breathe again—the air is not polluted by Jews!'" (201)—but the jealousy and vengefulness, though not necessarily common to all Jewish women, parallel the negative characteristics the Nazis associated with them. It is therefore possible that Salomon wanted to mirror these prescribed racial attributes of Jews with her story of prescribed gender attributes of women.

Some of Daberlohn's teaching and writings are also reflective of his reaction to the political climate in Nazi Germany at the time. Shortly after Dr. Kann is taken away by SS officers, Daberlohn starts brainstorming for his next book: "*Daberlohn* 'I can see mankind's future before me. Many crosses will be

borne. Many people will fall by the way. Only a few will survive, but for them, suffering is the...swiftest animal to carry them to perfection'" (657-8). Given that he—and Salomon—prophesize an event that resembles the Holocaust, though without explicit reference to the Jewish situation at the time, it is evident that the racism that surrounds them has an impact on them in ways that extend to their work and art. As if addressing survivors directly, as well as Salomon in her attempt to preserve her life in autobiography, he continues with: "'Rejoice in life, ye who suffer, for ye will rise from the dead. Those will be the final words of that book'" (660).

Though there are very few explicit references to the war in proportion to the entire volume of the work, the war affects Charlotte personally and she demonstrates her feelings as a Jew toward the Nazis by way of analogy. While listening to the radio one day at her Grandparents' home in the south of France, where she is in hiding, she hears the following: "*Les troupes allemandes ont franchi aujourd'hui les frontiers de la Rhénanie. La guerre est déclarée et il paraît qu'aussi Angleterre sera engagée. La guerre est déclarée*" (728). What is interesting about this text is that it is accompanied by a gouache depicting Charlotte sitting next to Daberlohn. Both of them are focused and listening intensely.

However, according to the story, Charlotte left Daberlohn with her parents a few pages prior in Berlin and she is never to see him—or her parents—again. In the pages that follow, Charlotte is overcome with passion and begins to feverishly paint. The only accompanying text that follows the radio announcement is the following: "Never was woman courted in such a mood" (729). In these images, Charlotte's lips are pursed and bright red, suggesting she is the "woman" being "courted." Daberlohn's imagined presence in the room with the radio indicates that Charlotte relates what she is hearing to him. Furthermore her being "courted" by Daberlohn is reflective of her being "sought" by the Nazis. In both cases she is "wanted" and in both cases, Daberlohn and the Nazis endeavour to take authority over who or what she is to become. When she left Berlin, she left Nazi territory and Daberlohn at the same time, therefore, Salomon shows Charlotte painting as if to further escape Daberlohn's clutches, but the radio announcement suggests that she is also trying to escape the Nazis as well.

Shortly thereafter, Salomon introduces the series of paintings and narration of what Felstiner calls the "rescue drama" already mentioned above. As if looking for a way to escape the anxiety of hiding from the Nazis, the

torments of her Grandfather and the residual feelings of resistance toward Daberlohn's efforts to impose his gender determinations on her, Charlotte seeks solidarity in her relationship with her Grandmother: "In fact, their conflicts revolve around their common qualities: their tendency toward depression, their uselessness, their loneliness. Sharing a perilous situation, Charlotte perceived in her grandmother's mind something she found in her own—an inability to separate personal from political stress" ("Engendering" 186).

This solidarity between Charlotte and her grandmother is comprised of a sharing of the burden of both being the victims of racism and having their roles as women predetermined by their family history and the men in their lives. However, it is evident that Charlotte responds to these problems by reclaiming her life as opposed to her Grandmother's taking her life. Although Charlotte does not reject the women's role entirely, she does resist its limitations. By contrast, Mary Felstiner writes:

> Each stage of the Nazi program was directed against a so-called race. But it seemed to me CS responded not primarily as a Jew but as a woman, perhaps because the role of woman was one

> she thought she could still play—whereas to be a Jew was to be whatever the Nazis said she was. Life? or Theater? used female experience for perspective, especially when it accounted for suicide. What the Nazis considered biological, congenital, and racial, she explained as the suffering of women. ("Create" 207)

There is no doubt that Salomon—by way of Charlotte Kann—played the role of woman to a certain extent, and she might very well have chosen to respond to that role more than to the role of Jew, as Felstiner suggests. However, as accurate as Felstiner may be in pointing out that Salomon resisted recognition as a Jew on Nazi terms, this chapter argues that instead of then responding more to the role of woman, she rather resisted the limitations of the imposed role of woman as well, though to a lesser extent. In fact, the reasons she gives for beginning Life? or Theatre? show that she wanted to reclaim her own identity; to surpass the predefined gender construct and to "find—what I had to find! It is my *self*: a name for myself" (To Paint Felstiner 130). Furthermore, in addition to resisting these roles that were imposed upon her by family members and society, she also reconstructed the gender role that she assigned to Charlotte Kann. Instead of being presupposed by a gender already constructed for her; one that she was expected to adapt to and fit into, Salomon wanted to be associated with a gender that was custom-made to fit her particular identity and life experiences. Rather than her unique being

fashioning itself to fit assigned roles, she fashioned the roles to fit her unique being.

Conclusion

Over the course of Life? or Theatre? Charlotte has a series of romantic entanglements with both male and female characters, the most important ones being with Daberlohn and Paulinka. In terms of her gender, Charlotte is referred to as a girl and later as a woman while the author/narrator refers to himself/herself in the third person male in text and illustrates himself/herself as a woman in the final painting of the work. Furthermore, all the characters in the story are meant to play the role of parts in a representational whole of Salomon, indicating she has either a fragmented identity or a plurality of selves. Charlotte is also often depicted as an androgynous character.

Like the leitmotif, "L'amour est un oiseau rebelle" (117), that accompanies scenes of Charlotte's and Dr. Kann's love for Paulinka, Charlotte seeks to

resist and rebel against both the imposed gender constructions and the racist stereotypes she faces in her home and in her society. However, her emancipation from the gender assigned to her at birth by her family proves to be difficult and the drama of her various disappointments—Daberlohn's coercing her to play certain roles, her Grandmother's suicide—is often subtly, sometimes explicitly portrayed over the course of Life? or Theatre? Furthermore, Salomon exposes various effects that the encroaching war has on Charlotte. But the overall work and the building of Charlotte as a character—who represents Salomon—abolishes the constraints, breaks through the limits of these constructs and reclaims her identity and her life.

Charlotte Salomon was an individual who refused to subordinate herself to a collective ethic or religious identification. Although "family and kinship are metaphors for belonging, as well as experiential grounding for imagining social and moral communities" (Gullestad 224), Salomon did not accept the role of woman in her family, even at the expense of losing the sense of "belonging" that would be her reward for following her mother's example. Likewise she did not accept the stereotypes the Berlin society made of Jewish

women. For her, being recognized as she was on her own terms was more important than meeting the expectations of her family and society.

It is evident that Salomon reclaimed—painted—her life by way of autobiography, but in order to do so, as she wrote in the beginning of the work, "many artistic values had to be renounced" (46). In order to reconstruct her identity on her own terms, she had to "make every sacrifice in order to create her world anew out of the depths" (822). What artistic values did she renounce? What sacrifices did she make in order to reclaim her life and identity? In the next chapter, we will explore the ways in which Salomon surpasses the limitations of artistic and literary genres in order to break through racial and gender constraints and create the life story she identifies with on her own terms.

Chapter II:

Genre Remix

Like Charlotte Kann's resistance to categorization (either in terms of gender or race) Life? or Theatre? resists categorization into a single genre: "Salomon's is a transgressive act that resists both the normatively male genre of autobiography and the categorical disciplines of art and history that have suppressed or deformed the representation of women...her innovative work confounds both art-historical genres and the history of the Holocaust" ("Autobiography" Watson).

In this chapter we will explore Salomon's creation of a new generic space that frames her unique story. In order to represent her life experiences and the people who had an impact on her she has had to bridge the gap between tragedy and irony, fiction, non-fiction and metafiction, and theatre and film. As Astrid Schmetterling puts it: "Working in exile, between countries, between realities, Charlotte Salomon has invented an artistic language that points to the contingency of the modern quest for homogeneity and embraces ambiguity and ambivalence" (143). By uniting the high art of Expressionist and

Impressionist art with the low art of the comic as well as various registers of music, from national anthems to folk songs to religious hymns and the classical music of Schubert, Salomon has erased the boundaries that once separated them and set them in the same space, at once giving them equal values and shedding light on the distinctive styles upon which she drew.

Tragic Irony

Much like the double significance of many lines and scenes throughout the play, Salomon projects her voice as author through those of the characters and through images. The references to her family's imposed gender constructs and the racism she faced as a Jew growing up in 1930s Berlin are indeed recurring themes. But Salomon also, discreetly, inserts her own commentary and opinions by way of subtle irony or what Mieke Bal calls "the apparently contradictory moods of tragedy and humour" (171). The sometimes mocking tone with which the narrator describes certain characters and scenes is evidence of Salomon's own voice claiming authority over the story.

As discussed in the previous chapter, from the very beginning, starting with the title, Salomon demonstrates what Darcy Buerkle calls "the admonition that women hear in some form or another throughout the play: 'mach doch kein theater'" (87). Salomon makes her work's title into a question because of that admonition. Though she considers her feelings to be real, her family members tell her they are an exaggeration and that she should not make a scene out of everything. The result is that finally Salomon did make a scene, she did make theatre: life is in the theater; her life becomes a play, which at once submits to her family's criticism of her melodramatic nature while also unapologetically mocking them. There is a violence in her work that shows a motive to retaliate against her family's pressure and control over her. This violence is expressed both tragically and ironically, bridging the genres of tragedy and comedy. Her art is therefore a weapon meant to shield and protect her identity from the family history that preceded her.

The readers'/viewers' first clue to this irony is the characters' names. The pseudonyms Salomon assigns to her cast are fused with a Brechtian mix of unapologetic irony and humour. The Grandparents' name Knarre means "groaning" or "rattling," Charlotte and her father are given the name Kann,

meaning "able" and referring to Dr. Kann's ambition and tenacity—e.g., when he was kicked out of the university, he sought work at the Jewish hospital and helped Paulinka and Dr. Singsong start a Jewish theatre (194-200)—and Alfred Wolfsohn is called Amadeus Daberlohn; Amadeus refers to his musical genius that in Charlotte's eyes is similar to Mozart's and Daberlohn or "Daber lohn" means "without pay," referring to Paulinka's constant judging of him for being poor (Belinfante 31).

Although the comedic stage names create associations with each character based on aspects of their personalities, there is also significance in the fact that Salomon chose to replace their real names in the first place. As Astrid Schmetterling writes, the pseudonyms reflect "the German Jews' endeavor to emulate the dominant native cultural patterns and values," which "...requires the abandonment of Paulinka's Jewish surname, Levy [also spelled "Levi" (Belinfante and Fischer-Defoy 15)], in favor of Bimbam, the abandonment of outer signs of difference in favor of the appearance of sameness" (140-1). Salomon's re-naming of the people in her life is also exemplary of her authority over their representation that is dependent on a resistance to the names or labels that society had assigned them. If her goal was to "create her

world anew" (822) then she had to have her characters abandon the names that signified their racial status.

It is true that she did not want them to be identifiable as Jews based on an external symbol such as their names, but the reason for this is more likely because Salomon rejected societal and racial labeling in general and not, as Schmetterling suggests, because Salomon wanted them to fit in to the German society and represent the Jewish desire to be accepted. Though Paula Levy indeed changed her name to Paula Lindberg on Professor Siegfried Och's advice upon commencing her career in Berlin, Salomon's reasons for re-naming her characters had less to do with seeking acceptance in German society. Salomon wanted her characters to transgress the racial, religious and gender constructs assigned to them by society and family history, as well as the stereotypes and expectations that became their identities, and to be knowable to her readers/viewers for their personalities, behaviour, experiences and interests. For Salomon it is these latter aspects that relate to her characters' identities more than birth-appointed signifiers and racial or gender determinations. If she wanted them to be indistinguishable from Christian Germans, as Schmetterling suggests, why did she not give them

traditional German names? By instead giving them names that reflect their uniqueness as individuals she does not name them in order to have them perpetuate a predetermined stereotype based on race or gender, she rather lets their particular identities determine their names. Therefore, there are two reasons why she decided to change their names. On the one hand, she rejected the racial identification of Jewish names and the stereotypes that went with them in 1920s and 1930s Berlin and wanted her characters' names to reflect something more individual and personal than the collective to which they belong, and on the other hand, she wanted their names to be an expression of who they are as individuals instead of their personalities (character, identity) being an expression of their names, or their Jewishness, meaning that she wanted the names to be determined by the identities and not vice versa.

The sarcastic, comical tone of the pseudonyms has the same effect as the exaggerated caricature illustrations of the characters: it transforms them into parodies of themselves. In addition to the stage names being a representation of the characters rather than the characters being a representation of their (Jewish) names, they also make light of the seemingly serious and important

status held by the people in Salomon's life. In her essay "Aestheticizing Catastrophe," Mieke Bal explains the paradoxical effects of parody and tragic comedy. On the one hand, the reader's/viewer's initial reaction is to laugh at irony, but on the other hand, he/she will feel slightly offended that the object of the joke is a sad or serious topic (172). The reference to the Grandparents as "groaning" or "rattling" makes light of their tragic inability to cope with concurring family suicides and societal racism. Salomon's derision of them shows no sympathy for their complaints and rather portrays them as annoying. The characters Paulinka Bimbam, Dr. Singsong and Professor Klingklang are based on Paula Salomon-Lindberg, who was a renowned opera singer, Kurt Singer, who was a conductor and founder of the *Kulturbund deutscher Juden* in Berlin and Professor Siegfried Ochs, who was director of the *Berliner Philharmonischen Chor* respectively (Belinfante and Fischer-Defoy 15-16). The stage names denote actual sounds that an orchestra might make during an opera, creating an informal, organic reference to the musicality of the characters. This onomatopoeia is characteristic of comic books and thus reduces the status and seriousness of the characters' roles in classical music to the making of childish noises.

These musical stage names as either sounds or verbal descriptions of what the characters do—their actions—make them mobile, animated. Salomon purposely took authority over the re-naming of the characters in part to re-make them, since "onomatopoieo" comes from the Ancient Greek and means "to coin names," from "onoma," meaning "name" and "poieo," meaning "to make, to do, to produce" (Wiktionary).

Moreover, the fact that the characters are named with alliterated, onomatopoeic signifiers demonstrates Salomon's rejection of arbitrary, constructed names that predetermine definitive boundaries of social class, race and gender. Salomon questions the arbitrariness of classifications and names in society and aestheticizes her characters by giving them names that are the written equivalent of the actual sounds they make, instead of labeling them by association with constructed stereotypes. In this way, she shortens the distance between the referent and the signifier by removing one degree of separation. The written word (name), which, according to Aristotle, Rousseau and Hegel is in fact a "sign of a sign," is always twice removed from its referent; represented first by a phonetic symbol (sound), and second by a graphic representation, letters and spaces ("signe de signe" Derrida 45). By

way of onomatopoeia, Salomon disables the arbitrariness of the signifier and transforms the medium of written language into an immediate reference to the sounds the characters make, their actions and thus their individual physicality.

The Saussurian analogy of the sign comprised of the inseparable signified and signifier, just as a sheet of paper is comprised of two inseparable sides, in the case of Salomon's onomatopoeia therefore also includes the referent for two reasons ("Grammatologie" Derrida 23). First, the sound is inherent in the phonetic expression of the names and second, the sounds implied are identifiable with the sounds they represent. The signifier "klingklang" represents the concept of the sound of the conductor's orchestra (percussion): "klingklang" which in turn represents the actual referent: the sounds made by the orchestra. For if Salomon endeavoured to re-name her characters by associating them with what they "do" in societal terms, she would have named Professor Siegfried Ochs "Professor Orchestra" or "Professor Conductor," but by re-naming them by association with the actual sounds and material they produce, she shed light on their distinctiveness and removed the arbitrariness

of nomenclature. In this way, she was able to represent or mediate her characters in an immediate way.

This immediate representation parallels Marshall McLuhan's dictum that "the medium is the message," and his insistence that media are connected to the body and are extensions of the senses (Boenisch 106). Though he was referring to relationships to apparatuses and tools such as the eye to the camera lens, the immediate perception of sound by the senses and its representation by way of onomatopoeia indeed brings the medium and the message closer together. Salomon also emphasizes the immediacy of sound and its relationship to the body in quoting Daberlohn:

> For me, singing has always been the most primordial form of artistic satisfaction. The infant cries because it is hungry—sometimes for hours without becoming hoarse. The true singer should sing in the same way. It is not "he" who sings but "it" singing out of him. The sound should emerge from the deepest place within him... 611

Here he echoes Aristotle : "Les sons émis par la voix sont les symboles des états de l'âme, et les mots écrits les symboles des mots émis par la voix," and in using onomatopoeic names for her characters Salomon likewise echoes Saussure: "Langage et écriture sont deux systèmes de signes distincts; *l'unique*

raison d'être du second est de *représenter* le premier" (qtd. in "Grammatologie" Derrida 46).

By re-naming her characters, Salomon has distanced herself from nonfiction in order to get closer to the real. She also broke down the boundaries and constraints of racially identifiable names while questioning the arbitrariness of not only societal classifications but of language itself. As Bal writes, "Salomon's autobiographical yet, at the same time, imaginative work refuses any attempt to divorce the opposite sides of the founding dichotomies [of her private and public lives]" (177). The double irony of the pseudonyms is that, on the one hand, they make light of the otherwise serious or tragic events and actions associated with the characters and, on the other hand, they simultaneously create distance between the nonfiction of autobiography and the aestheticization of trauma, while bridging the gap between the real and the representation of the real by way of onomatopoeia.

This distancing from nonfiction resembles the concept of frame-breaking in film. Cinematic representations of parody and satire often mimic nonfiction in order to establish a comical "punch line." To do so, the film sequence

"breaks the fictional frame [and] ...appears to be a documentary" (Sommer 402). According to Roy Sommer's analysis, this initial break is followed by a second break of the nonfiction, documentary framing making it "...clear that this is a mock-documentary, deliberately blurring ontological boundaries" (403). Fiction and nonfiction are symbiotic in the portrayal of parody on film, just as Salomon blends them in her work of art. The relationship between Life? or Theatre? and Salomon's employment of cinematic devices will be discussed in greater detail in the pages to come.

Salomon's tragic irony is often less obvious than the blatant and comical re-naming of her characters and extends to individual episodes throughout the play. In the chapter "The Art Teacher," Salomon employs the fiction and nonfiction frame-breaking mentioned above. The two songs on this chapter's soundtrack are "Jesus our Lord, we bow our hands to thee" and "Allons enfants de la patrie." Considering the symbolism of these two songs, one being a religious hymn and the other being France's national anthem, Salomon's flippant introduction of them as "tunes" suggests a hint of sarcasm in her choices. This sarcasm becomes a full-blown parody when she has the professor, who is depicted as an oversized head looking down on his students

from a higher perspective (figure 5), chant: "'Be ever true and constant too, until beneath the sod, and waver not a finger's breadth from ways marked out by God.'" The professor's piety is combined with patriotism on the next page when he says, "'Our German fairy tales are a priceless treasure. Blessed be he who preserves them!'" (236-7). Mirroring the two songs on the soundtrack, the art teacher embodies the two main institutional forces behind the societal pressures Salomon faced in Berlin: Christianity and patriotism.

Because of this somewhat humorous introduction to the ambience of the art class, the description of the beautiful classmate Barbara that follows is equally charged with sarcasm: "'Out there in the forest there goes – there lives many a prince or princess – in the forest, there let us hearken. Sleep gently, Sleeping Beauty, how sweet you look!'" This text corresponds to a painting of Barbara (figure 6) set in a forest that oscillates between Expressionism and Impressionism (244). The comparison between Barbara and Sleeping Beauty reflects the importance the art teacher places on fairytales, and her appearance as a tall, blonde-haired, blue-eyed German girl completes the image of the ideal, Aryan woman according to 1930s Berlin society. The politically and religiously suffused soundtrack cements the scene as a subtle

depiction of the forces behind the imposed gender construction. The scene ends with the following text: "And Charlotte even made friends with Barbara... And they walked home, absorbed in silent communication" (245-8). Charlotte is surprised that such an adored and popular girl would be friends with her, for, by writing, "Charlotte **even** made friends with Barbara..." Salomon stresses the unspoken ranking system among women that was based on their outward appearance and level of conformity to German ideals.

Irony and dark humour come through in many forms over the course of the play. Salomon often sets up a contradiction to emphasize traumatic experiences. One such example is near the end of the Main Section. After meeting Daberlohn for a secret rendezvous, Charlotte prepares to be sent to the South of France to go into hiding with her grandparents. From pages 707 to 719 there is almost no text to accompany the dark, somber images of Charlotte sitting alone in her room in front of an empty trunk, or of indiscernible faces waving goodbye to her from the queue in front of her train. Then, on the last page of the Main Section, Daberlohn and Paulinka are shown against a white background: "*Paulinka* 'So what are your observations?' *Daberlohn* 'Highly favourable, Madonna, dear lady'" (720). The sequence of

somber images is disrupted by Daberlohn's perpetual positive outlook during one of the most difficult changes in Charlotte's life. Salomon emphasizes both the tragedy of having to leave her family, friends and home, as well as Daberlohn's hypocrisy and insensitivity. Charlotte, who is devastated by her departure, is confronted by his unflinching optimism, and by leading readers/viewers to a long, climactic and moving farewell scene only to abruptly end with Daberlohn's flippancy, Salomon builds up the tragedy in order to confront it with irony. The result is that it evokes a disturbance in readers/viewers causing them to disprove of Daberlohn's behaviour while simultaneously realizing how much they have been affected by Charlotte's trauma.

Parody, irony and sarcasm are all tools Salomon uses to project her own voice onto the story without explicitly doing so. By demonstrating her story and her family's story and creating the Berlin setting by way of illustrations, music and text, she made her play into almost a mirror reflection of her family and society. The impression they made on her is reflected in her art, which is why she has "[gone] completely out of herself and [allowed] the characters to sing or speak in their own voices" (46). This reflection can also be considered a

deflection. In addition to the impact of the people in her life and society reflecting or making an impression on Salomon, what she observed and experienced of them is also *deflected* off her and expressed in her paintings. Her impression and expression of her family and society is also manifested in her artwork which "moves between the Expressionism of the early twentieth century—the works of Kirchner, Heckel, Munch, Soutine, evoked by the strong colours and vehement brush strokes...[and] between Impressionism and the Renaissance, between Van Gogh's post-Impressionist brushwork and Gauguin's colours, between Chagall's floating lightness and the minimal means of abstract art" (Schmetterling 144-5).

The theme of irony allows Salomon to subtly portray the characters in the same demeaning and patronizing light that was projected on her during her childhood and adolescence: "all the actors speak in banal and comic rhyme...The unrelenting irony of the trivial little song gives an extra intensity to the somber images" (38). The added repetitious rhyming, musical score and caricature portraits, however, infuse the play with an exaggerated edge that echoes Salomon's own voice and reaffirms her authority over the work. Its comedic undertones are contrasted with the tragedy Charlotte endures. By

using such devices as the multiplication of talking heads (figure 7), the Impressionist floral background in certain scenes (237) and the reduction of characters to transparent outlines of themselves (395-6), Salomon closes the gap between high and low culture: "she dared to cross the borders of the terrain of the comic" (Schmetterling 145). By having her story set in both a comic and a tragic framing, she demonstrated that two seemingly oppositional concepts can be true at the same time. Moreover, she showed that two apparently contradictory characteristics can share the same space or exist in the same person, which she exemplified with mocking sarcasm at the beginning of Act two: "*The swastika – a symbol bright of hope – The day for freedom and for bread now dawns*...Here you see how this affected a number of different souls that were both human and Jewish!" (192). By mirroring the Nazi idea that Jews were less than human with sarcasm, she both reflects her own voice into her art and thus *deflects* the image of Nazi society off her art. Furthermore, by demonstrating that two oppositional ideas can share the same space—whether it be two characteristics in the same person, or two registers of art in the same frame—she shows that the distance between two different ideas is often created by abstract signifiers, names, stereotypes and associations which have been constructed by society and are thus devices of

control. Salomon reclaims this control and authority over these constructs by breaking through the limits of singular signifiers and bridging the gap between seemingly contradictory concepts.

The theme of abridging the distance between high and low art and gender/racial constructs is evident in her work's resistance to genre placement as well. Since she used pseudonyms, and painted some scenes with fantastical backgrounds and imagery, there is no question that Salomon intended her autobiography to have a playful, partially fictional edge. For this reason, Felstiner asked, "How true to life was the tale she told?" (To Paint xii) while researching for Salomon's biography. She discovered that, like the stories her family told her about her relatives' suicides and like the tales the Nazis told the Berlin public, Salomon's autobiography was a mix of fiction and non-fiction.

In order for her story to be both a reflection of her own perspective as well as a depiction of the outside world, while still demonstrating a plurality of voices, Salomon has had to adapt the play's genre to fit a number of different generic spaces at the same time. "In this story I see a spectrum of lies, in

private life and public plots, in secrets kept from Charlotte Salomon and secrets the Nazis kept from everyone" (To Paint xiv). Salomon went beyond the autobiographical non-fictional intention to represent and demonstrate the role that non-truth, fiction, lies and fantasy played in her everyday life: "Here was a victim who scraped away secrets, thickened the lines around each hard-grasped truth, and painted her life knowing that knowing was all" (211). The generic space she created for her work includes themes and moods of seemingly contradictory genres. The co-existence of fiction and non-fiction gives readers/viewers access to the reality of her experiences that they might not have if she had contained her work in a single genre.

In his 2000 book, Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation, Michael Rothberg explores Art Spiegelman's comic book portrayal of his father's Holocaust survival story. By representing a tragic testimony in a comic framing, Spiegelman was able to confront the dilemma every artist faces when representing a true story with illustrations and text. When describing one of Spiegelman's drawings depicting his Maus persona holding a "real" mouse in his cupped hands while standing in front of a Mickey Mouse backdrop, Rothberg writes: "The uneasy coexistence of three

levels of representation in the same pictoral space literalizes the artist's position: backed by an industry but everywhere confronted with the detritus of the real" (Rothberg 204). Spiegelman, like Salomon, faced the problem of losing something essential to the real in the act of representing it.

Representation already implies fiction in that it never fully reproduces the real. Testimonies and autobiographies are not exact replicas of what happened, and no matter how accurate and detailed they may be, they will never be more than a representation, a subjective account based on memories, perceptions and impressions. However, according to Rothberg, "the historical trauma of the Nazi Genocide also de-realizes human experience and thus creates a need for fiction...By situating a nonfictional story in a highly mediated, unreal, 'comic' space, Spiegelman captures the hyperintensity of Auschwitz: at once, more real than real and more impossible than impossible" (206). In order to adequately represent the real, Salomon, like Spiegelman, had to go beyond a representation of the real, that is, she had to make up for the distance between the real and the representation of the real by adding a fictional element, which includes the fantasy-driven, dream-like sequences that resemble the Expressionistic works of Heckel, Munch, Soutine and

others as well as fairytale or mythical depictions of a luminous, angelic Paulinka or a hero-saviour Daberlohn (472, 467, 658). The result is that the representation, thanks to—and not in spite of—its fictional aspects, ceases to be just a representation and turns history into a story; that is, into a more emotionally accessible, relatable story, of which the characters and situations are subject to the readers'/viewers' empathy. Therefore, in order for this emotional reality to be accessible to readers/viewers, Salomon, like Spiegelman, had go beyond the limits of nonfiction and add elements of fantasy.

Entering the realm of fantasy in order to better express an emotional or traumatic reality is an important theme among Holocaust testimonies as well. In a testimony recorded by psychoanalyst and interviewer for the Yale Fortunoff collection of survivor videos, Dori Laub, a woman described witnessing four chimneys blowing up during the Auschwitz uprising. A number of historians who were listening argued that her testimony was not credible since the number of chimneys she cited was inaccurate according to historical accounts of the same event. However, Laub argued that there was a different kind of truth to be found in the woman's testimony: "The woman

was testifying, not to the number of chimneys blown up, but to something else, more radical, more crucial: the reality of an unimaginable occurrence" (Felman and Laub 60). In order to describe the impossibility of an uprising and to relive what it felt like to be there at the time, she had to tell the story with an added element of fantasy and surrealism. "She testified to the breakage of a framework. That was historical truth" (60). Like this survivor, Salomon saw the necessity in merging fiction with nonfiction in order to better deliver her testimony of a different, personal truth.

It is evident that Salomon's work mixes several media forms (image, music, text), temporalities, genres and voices (autobiography, history, fantasy). As a "work"—both in the sense that it is an autobiographical working-though of memory as well as a work of art/fantasy—it is also significant that the genre of "singspiel" further juxtaposes the "work" as a "play" (LaCapra 17). A work (work-through, memory work) represented in the form of a play inherently implies irony in that it resembles a parody/mockery. From a contemporary perspective her work is historical and at the time it was created from memory which adds the testimonial element of performativity, as Walter Benjamin puts it: "'Language shows clearly that memory is not the instrument for

exploring the past, but its theatre'" (qtd. in Pollock 56). As we will see in the next chapter, however, Salomon intended for Life? or Theatre? to be much more than a script. By interacting with her readers/viewers and by breaking traditional framing strategies in art, theatre, music and film, she has created a space that is an immediate intermediality and shortens the gap between "then" and "now," meaning that her period story is both subject to its time in the 1920s and 1930s and atemporal in that its artistic quality is not contingent on its setting, Salomon's role as victim and its classification as a Holocaust story.

Film? or Graphic Novel?

Life? or Theatre? could be considered what Salomon herself described it as: a "singspiel," which is defined in English as a "somewhat dramatic musical work, popular in Germany in the latter part of the 18th century, usually comic in nature and characterized by spoken dialogue, interspersed with popular or folk songs" ("Theatre" Belinfante 38). The work's format and structure as well as clues from the author/narrator and the text-image ambience—what

Schmetterling refers to as "speech bubbles" (145)—suggest that it shares qualities of graphic novels and could even meet what LaCapra calls the "carnivalesque" side of Maus in representing a canonical event such as the Holocaust in a popular genre. However, unlike the format of Maus, that of Life? or Theatre? is not a static "comic book" representation. There is a mix of high and low art including passages from Goethe, Dante, the bible and Nietzsche as well as from poetry by Heine, Rilke, Paul Verlaine and proverbs and folklore; there are songs by Schubert, Weber, Bach, Bizet, Glück, Mozart and Mahler as well as Christmas carols, a cantata by Hoffmann, soldiers' songs and national anthems (Schmetterling 145). Salomon rather combines low art with high art to create a new representational and generic space that transgresses hierarchies, status and registers. Moreover, the cyclical rhythm of the story, as well as the gouache framings, gives it the ambience of a film.

Belinfante writes, "The work does not so much resemble a comic book, as a story-board for a film," (39) However, adapting it to film—and there have already been five films made based on the work (To Paint Felstiner x)—may limit the work's potential as a fantasy. Many of the paintings are not set in any earthly location; dreams and memories are painted in specific ways and

characters' personalities and moods are expressed with unique colours, streaks and other distinctive qualities. The painted images provide a certain freedom to represent elements of the story that would not be feasible on film.

Over the course of Charlotte's stay with her grandmother toward the suicide of the latter, almost all the pictures are painted with a chilling dream-like—or nightmarish—quality. The characters are not discernible and are painted in thick, rough outlines, filled in messily with quick, violent, red brush strokes (776-86). In some cases the painted filling appears to be oozing out of the body outline creating a Surrealist effect that, during Charlotte's attempted rescue of her grandmother, parallels the textual narrative: "...she forces herself to go completely out of herself and to give all her attention to Grandma Knarre" (737). Grandma Knarre's body is only filled in from the chest up, not including her arms and her legs are cut off completely in some gouaches (738, 741, 743, 755-756). From pages 774 to 781 Charlotte's and her grandmother's bodies morph into one organism and the earthy tone that fills in their outlines is smudged and pressed against the page in thick straight lines. In pages 776-785 orange and red colours stream over the initial body outlines as if Salomon painted over the original picture.

Finally, the swirling text that envelopes the characters is as fluid as the streaks of colour. It would be difficult for these and other sequences that depict mythical, fantastical or Surreal images, to read the same way on film.

Secondly, unlike comic books or graphic novels, film is always a motion picture, meaning there is only room for one picture in the frame at any given moment. In Life? or Theatre? the book format, there are often repetitious pictures and the same characters in different positions, saying different things all on the same page, in the same frame. Although simultaneous blending, overlapping and fading of two frames occurs on film—each frame replacing the one before it leaves less room for the viewer to experience the permanency of a plurality of still images on a page. The very basis of Salomon's work is the blending of several genres/genders/constructs, the resistance to definition by difference and the coexistence of multiple "selves," and the book format allows for a "reading" of images in a linear format. Each image is subject to the context of the images that come before and after it.

For example, from pages 362 to 370 each gouache is filled with rows of Daberlohn's head. The numerous heads are all different in shape, size, colours

and expression. Sometimes his eyes are closed, sometimes his skin is brown or orange, sometimes his eyes are small and red and at other times they are big and blue. On page 289 there is a line-up of Daberlohn busts, the most distant of which is a depiction of Daberlohn as Salomon had introduced him in the beginning: with glasses, vacant eyes, a dark suit and tie. Over the course of the four approaching Daberlohn heads, there are distinct changes to his appearance, ending with the closest face that occupies the most space on the page. In this close-up, Daberlohn has lost his glasses, suit and tie, his hair is more unruly and his eyes are big and soft. He has almost transformed into a different person. During conversations between Charlotte and Daberlohn both characters are represented in columns and rows of heads, but Daberlohn's are always bigger and more numerous, literally outnumbering the Charlottes (506-7).

However, the format of Life? or Theatre? bears some resemblance to film in the way that it breaks up different scenes and images into smaller, more detailed pictures, unlike the panoramic stage view and static framing of theatre. "For the film spectator, the represented space of the individual scenes is no longer given as a spatial totality, as in theatre, but as a

concatenation of space fragments, which are welded together as a spatial totality in the imagination of the spectator" (Kattenbelt 36). A series of still images in a book format appear to form one large image at each turn of page in Salomon's work. The first image the reader sees is the larger scale series of several images, and then he/she views each one individually, from left to right, as though reading a text. The work prompts the reader to experience it from different perspectives and by distancing himself or herself from it, he/she is able to understand it on different levels (thanks to his/her different perspectives). Although, motion picture involves less interaction with the reader and can be less subtle in conveying irony, in terms of its ability to involve its spectators, it indeed parallels Salomon's work: "Because the film spectator constructs a spatial totality in their own imagination, they get the impression of being 'surrounded' by the represented space and of being involved into the represented action" (36).

This interaction of the reader is very significant to the work as the embodiment of a performance piece that coerces the viewer/reader into transgressing their role as subject and taking part in the activity of the object. This active role of the reader is important to Salomon as the work suggests

he/she imagine listening to the soundtrack while reading: "Not only are the paintings filled with cartoon-like action and dialogue, but they also suggest the music you should hear in your mind's ear while you're looking" ("Create" Felstiner 194). Furthermore, on several occasions Salomon addresses the reader/viewer directly: "Here he begins systematically to construct the head, and in doing so he becomes aware of a train of thought in which you – starting with the next picture but one – will have the opportunity to participate" (360). She also prompts the reader to interpret the art: "Please compare this pose 1. With No. 22 of the Prelude [p. 30] 2. With Michelangelo's 'Night', No. 308 [p. 528], also No. 325 [p. 545]...Continue comparing" (581-9). The "participation" or interaction with the art closes the gap between subject and object as well as surpassing the limits of representational genres.

The mixing of genres and voices was a calculated choice on the part of Salomon. She divided the work into three parts: a prelude, a Main Section and an epilogue. The prelude is curiously divided into acts and scenes and consists of paintings created from a heightened point of view. The viewer looks down on the miniature image of Charlotte's family. Each painting resembles a stage setting or a diorama view into Charlotte's childhood (56). The Main Section,

by contrast, plays out more like a graphic novel, as Salomon even divided it into "Chapters." The paintings are more humorous and resemble illustrations that accompany the dialogue and narration. In the epilogue, the artwork is much more limited in detail but more vibrant in colour and brush strokes resemble that of Salomon's Expressionist influences. As Belinfante writes, "She starts the first series like a medieval artist, using one painting to tell a whole story, with different scenes on one page. But in the last paintings of the second series...she paints one moment on only one painting in bright colours" (39). The mixed media, mixed genres and mixed styles combined with the work's interaction with the reader/viewer makes it a work of art that is defies taxonomy while also making it adaptable to fit numerous formats.

Although Life? or Theatre? would perhaps lose some of its representational value if it were adapted to motion picture, it still shares many qualities of film. When Salomon began painting, it is evident she had only one artistic goal in mind: "I began to work on the drawings at hand. I had to go deeper into my solitude, then maybe I could find—what I had to find! It is my *self*: a name for myself. And so I began Life and Theater" (Felstiner 130). This statement parallels one in which Daberlohn promotes film as a means for

"producing" oneself: "Love thy neighbour as thyself. In order to follow this commandment it is necessary first to love—to know—oneself. One must first go into oneself to be able to go out of oneself. All men of genius have trodden this path. One means of going out of oneself is, for me, the movie, modern man's machine for producing himself" (610). Salomon therefore, may have—consciously or unconsciously—thought of setting her story in cinematic framing over the course of its conception.

Griselda Pollock perceives the work as less of an operetta and more of a soap opera: "...it is as if we are receiving a script, complete, however, with storyboards and indications of musical accompaniments—as if the paintings were the frames of a film. 'Life' seems to run before the artist-as-director's eyes as a soap opera..." (37). By referring to Salomon as "artist-as-director" Pollock insinuates that the play has not only been created by Salomon, but aspects of it have already been directed, and thus with each new reading/reader, the play is simultaneously performed as well. The above-mentioned interaction of the reader prompted by Salomon throughout the play suggests that she not only wanted a role in what the reader/viewer reads and sees, but also how he/she reads and sees it, that is, how he/she interprets

it. Salomon's role as author/narrator thus includes a directorial aspect as well, in that she has given herself authority over the performativity of the work.

Pollock's comparison of Salomon's paintings to frames of a film introduces a major theme throughout the story: framing. The most significant and ostensible framing within the paintings is the window motif. The first significant window appears as the entrance through which Charlotte imagines her ghost mother descending to meet her after she has become an angel in Heaven (66, 69). The second important window is the one through which Franziska commits suicide. This window is included in the gouaches illustrating Mrs. Knarre's narration of her life story (178-80) In this sequence, the first image is shown from the perspective of the outside looking in at Fanziska who is facing the reader/viewer and looking outward. The second image shows the perspective from behind Franziska, who has her back to the viewer/reader and is looking outward. The third image shows the window open and the room empty; Franziska has thrown herself out. The next and final window scene occurs when Charlotte's Grandmother likewise commits suicide by jumping out the window (786-8): "*Charlotte* 'It's too late. Half an hour ago she threw herself out the window'" (790).

According to Nanette Salomon, "the window is one of the most self-reflexive subjects for painters in general, and has been since the renaissance when the Italian theorist Alberti instructed artists to view the painting frame as a window which illusionistically opens out to an extension of the visible world" ("On the Impossibility" 219). For Matisse with his pastel colors and decorative designs as well as the Surrealists like André Breton and René Magritte with his painting "La Condition Humaine" the window serves to either offer an escape or as Nanette Salomon puts it, "give vent to a discourse of the artist's interior space...The images bespeak the hedonistic indulgence of abandonment to pleasure and leisure." In Salomon's case, the windows do serve as portals to both her interior space and an external escape to a happier, carefree place, but they also denote "passageways from life to death in almost every instance of her work...The window is the site of several deaths and the place where communication with the dead occurs..." ("On the Impossibility" 219).

The theme extends, however, to include other visual references to the window. Though Salomon's use of vibrant and opaque colours is rich, it is

often the absence of colour at precise moments throughout the play that is rich in significance. On the last gouache of the work an artist is shown painting on a sheet of paper, but the sheet is transparent with nothing on it. It serves more as a window or as a transparent frame (824). In the image of the Grandmother jumping out the window her body and the window are reduced to outlines, giving them an airy, weightless feel (786). In this case, the window and her body become frames that encase emptiness, for, in Charlotte's eyes, her Grandmother's body has become an empty vessel, a shell that she has abandoned in pursuit of another existence.

The theme of empty bodies appears earlier in the story as well. In Chapter four of the Main Section, Daberlohn and his fiancée are invited to a dinner party at the Kann/Bimbam residence. The author/narrator describes Daberlohn's nature of strongly believing in certain ideas. During a board game among friends, Daberlohn describes with conviction his belief in the dice: "'Don't laugh at me...anyone who throws three sixes in a row can expect something important to happen to him'" (385). On the next page, the author/narrator says, "In the following pictures a further attempt is made to depict the processes of his artistic vision. He, Daberlohn, sees in all things

only the expression. And the expression of the expression is the tri-coloured line that is built up very slowly and with much deliberation" (386). Over the next few pictures, everyone except Daberlohn sitting at their game table becomes a "tri-coloured," hollow outline, their transparent bodies traced in red, blue and yellow. Paulinka remains filled in as usual, but when she does not throw three sixes as Daberlohn wants her to, she becomes a tri-coloured outline as well. He gets fed up and moves into the next room to play dice with Charlotte. They are both depicted as their usual filled in bodies. Then when Paulinka comes in his attention turns to her once again and Charlotte now becomes an outline of herself (389). When Paulinka sings for him, he becomes a miniature man standing atop Paula's giant head and the text reads, "Now Paulinka has won him back entirely" (392). But when she calls him a child, he becomes a tri-coloured outline and appears hurt (395-6). Since the tri-coloured outlines symbolize the characters becoming "the expression of the expression," in other words, the representation of their expression, meaning the body is nothing more than a material outline of what it contains, it is clear that Daberlohn views people as frames that either contain something artistic, as in Paulinka's case, or are empty and transparent. This transparency could also mean that Daberlohn is oblivious to the outlined characters, for after

sending Charlotte off to her Grandparents, Daberlohn is shown next to Paulinka and another transparent figure in the same style of painting as the dinner party. This out-of-place gouache closes what would have been a very somber scene filled with dark coloured paintings, but as this last picture is a window into Daberlohn's perspective, it shows how the world is invisible to him when he is focused on Paulinka (720).

The empty shells or outlined bodies are reflective of the identities Salomon attributes to the characters at different points throughout her work. When they are transparent, they are indiscernible, empty, blank identities and can absorb the colours around them; they are impressionable. When they are coloured in, they are identifiable by their distinct shape and colour combination. This attention to colour distinctions and the absence of colour brings Salomon's colour choices into question. In the opening pages of the work, the text reads, "The tri-coloured play with music begins" (43). The play is also separated into three sections with the cast for the prelude written in blue paint, the cast for the Main Section written in red paint and the cast for the epilogue written in yellow. Research has shown that in all 1,325 pages of her work, only these three pigments can be found (Belinfante 32). Just as

interesting as Salomon's decision to only use three colours is her choice of colours. By using only three primary pigments, she was able to create a whole gamut of colours mixing different combinations and amounts. The act of mixing further denotes Salomon's effort to show how two (or more) seemingly different or contradictory substances can occupy the same space, and in this case, create an entirely new and beautiful substance. Each new colour she creates is not the sum of the two pigments that it contains but rather the creation, the product of the union of two pigments. The tri-colour motif emphasizes the theme that is everywhere present in the images, text and music combinations throughout the play: that Salomon and her work transgress the boundaries and the limits of imposed gender, genre and even colour categorizations. The blending of gender constructs and the new generic space containing a plurality of genres and voices extends to use of colour. Therefore, even on the technical side of her work, she continued to command authority over the creation of the various shades and hues with which she worked.

In addition to each new colour being made up of two or more primary colours, Salomon's life story is likewise made up of several inherited stories

within Life? or Theatre? The story of Charlotte's mother, for example, is told twice. The first version of the story may be seen as what Benveniste called *histoire* whereby the author/narrator begins the prelude with Franziska's story. The second version of the mother's story is a *discours*, whereby Mrs. Knarre, Charlotte's Grandmother is credited with recounting Franziska's life story (144-91). Paulinka's story is also told from a passed down memory (101). Similar to these family stories is Daberlohn's book, framed within Salomon's work. His Orpheus oder der Weg zu einer Maske, written between 1936 and 1938 has never been published (Timms 106). However, Salomon describes his theories and the content of his book in great detail (565-78). In fact, the book itself is the object of numerous gouaches and is painted with such attention to detail that the viewer/reader can read the pages of his book off the pages of hers (607-15). As Timms writes: "...the echoes of Wolfsohn's ideas in Life? Or Theatre? are so extensive—and at times so exact—that it is hard not to believe that Salomon was able to draw on a written source" (107).

The framing of stories and books within both the gouaches and the narrative of Salomon's work keep the reader/viewer aware of not only the fact that all stories and history are mediated and passed down, but also of the importance

of testimony and story-telling in the preservation of family history. The juxtaposition between Mrs. Knarre's oral story-telling and Daberlohn's written book also demonstrates the different voices with which the women and the men narrate their stories; the former is told in first person while the latter is told in third person. Mrs. Knarre's story is subjective and since it is told orally, it captures the vocal performativity and physicality that are unique to the Grandmother's personal re-living and memory work as depicted in the paintings. By contrast, Daberlohn's objective writing is only a sign of reference to his personal thoughts, and the body of text is demonstrated in the gouaches as inanimate and unillustrated (609-15).

Salomon demonstrates the passing down of family stories and the concept of the story within a story with various framings of texts, chapters, sequences and episodes by showing different perspectives to the reader/viewer through the pages of the gouaches. Sometimes the work points out a change in perspective: "At this point begins the story of Charlotte's unhappy love – seen not through her eyes, but through the eyes of a third party" (476). Many times, however, varying viewpoints are shown as though each frame of a painting is actually a camera lens. The line of numerous viewpoints are cast

behind the shoulder of a character, at once showing readers/viewers the perspective of the character while keeping the viewer aware of the character who shares his/her view (571, 620). This voyeurism allows the viewer to directly access Salomon's autobiographical perspective through that of her characters and through the performativity of each character telling their own personal story and bearing witness to their own personal tribulations. Demonstrating different viewpoints contributed to Salomon's new generic space and by employing cinematic devices as "artist-as-director" she allows readers/viewers to access her personal thoughts and emotions by empathizing with the trauma and episodes Charlotte goes through over the course of the autobiography.

Both Schmetterling and Pollock note the cinematic flashback device Salomon employed in her work: "The work we encounter is not only cinematic in its use of flashback, but hypertextual in its transitions." These "flashbacks" are laced into the text and provide performative first-person accounts of personal stories that end up not only weaving together to form a narrative, but also linking together to form a cyclical, recurring chain of events, especially in terms of the theme of suicides. "Every so often we hit an image that opens up

a passageway to the story of yet another woman, imagined, of course, and represented by the daughter, granddaughter, stepdaughter whose lineaments of being were being gleaned from the derelict remnants of these feminine m/Others" (Pollock 57).

Another cinematic device Salomon regularly employed is the close-up or zoom perspective. During the Main Section, the narrative is almost always accompanied by a sequence of images that illustrate events, as mentioned above with respect to the multiplication of heads. Though the pictures are inanimate, they reflect movement among the characters and the reader is often shown numerous perspectives of one scene in progression. For example, upon Daberlohn's introduction, the story follows Daberlohn as he approaches the Kann-Bimbam residence for the first time. Half of the painting shows Daberlohn at a distance reading from a small piece of paper (figure 8). The other half shows a zoom view of his hand and the reader can read what is written on the paper as though looking through Daberlohn's eyes (256). Thanks to the use of the close-up, Salomon's work is able to accomplish two major representative break-throughs. First, the viewer is able to relate to the character: "The spectator's ability to look through the eyes of the character

had, according to [Béla] Balázs, an identifying effect" (Kattenbelt 36). Second, the zoom image allows for the spectator to bridge the gap between viewer and object, meaning that he/she is both voyeur and subject while looking through the eyes of the character, for: "[Balázs] identified the close-up as being particularly effective in breaking through the distance between perceiver and object, and the closed totality of the work of art as a 'microcosm' on its own" (36).

These cinematic devices also denote the cyclical motion of film on a reel, which contrasts the linear format of a book encased in a front and back cover as its framing. Salomon made sure that Life? or Theatre? would never be a linear work with a start and a finish, but rather a cyclical, circular piece of art that continuously circulates and repeats itself. Not only does Salomon's cyclical theme manifest itself by way of her family's comments, stories and lectures that are transmogrified into repetitive rhyming lyrics, but it is made explicit by the closing gouache of the work. After the whole story has been told (performed), the text reads, "And from that came: Life or Theatre?" which is followed by a picture of a woman kneeling by the sea, painting on translucent paper (823-4). Then the story presumably starts all over again with

the viewer prompted to imagine the opening scene: "A person is sitting by the sea. She is painting..." (45). By beginning at the ending and ending at the beginning the cycle also bridges the real with the representation of the real, for the act of creating the work is made a part of the performance itself. It represents a never-ending sequence of painting oneself painting oneself and so on. Salomon's representation of self-representation is reminiscent of Magritte's "La Réproduction Interdite" which demonstrates the idea that "the imposition of the frame onto painting, mirror, and window, creates... absence, annihilates reality, replacing it with representation" (Allmer 126). This idea also applies to Salomon's desire to "replace" her "real" life with a singspiel.

The recurrence of different themes is sometimes reproduced in unpredictable ways. For example, the admonition that Buerkle associates with the women of the play: 'mach doch kein theater' is also one that Daberlohn faced from his close friends and especially from Paulinka. He was often the object of ridicule because of his extreme and dramatic opinions. Salomon represented both the point of view of the friends who laughed at Daberlohn, by demonstrating his theories with a sarcastic edge, but she also showed his point of view at

different times. The musical accompaniment to Chapter Ten is a repeated line of Daberlohn's: "Don't Laugh at Me, I Believe in the Dice" to the tune '*Roma divina città aeterna. Great is Michelangelo!*'" (568), and it frames the colourful scenes of Daberlohn writing pages of his book. Here Salomon shows how he, like her, is inspired to write and be creative in spite of the mockery he faces from his friends.

The cyclical theme is also apparent in the repetitious paintings, particularly those depicting characters in quasi-fetal positions and those in suicidal positions. The pictures wherein Charlotte is shown either painting or deeply engrossed in thought depict her in a nearly fetal position with her legs tucked tightly underneath her (481, 482, 537, 824). Even more interesting, the images of the Mother's and Grandmother's post-suicide bodies are almost identical (figures 9 and 10). Having both jumped out their bedroom windows, Salomon represented the cyclical nature of their deaths by painting mirror images of their corpses (72, 788). The cyclical theme of Charlotte's comfort in the fetal position and her Mother's and Grandmother's death scenes represents the cycle of life and death which is significant to the work. Salomon's exploration

into the worlds of the living and the dead will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Conclusion

Life? or Theatre? remains unclassified in terms of its genre. Although it fits into many genres, such as autobiography, performance art, singspiel and more, it cannot be contained by any one category. It is evident that no single genre was sufficient in representing Salomon's story, which caused her to construct a new generic space in which to "create her world anew" (822). By mixing tragedy with irony in various ways, she was able to infuse her authorial voice into the work while allowing her characters "to sing or speak in their own voices" (46). By blending fantastical paintings and ironic stage names with the nonfiction of her life story, she was able to illustrate something that may be truer (or at least more intimately genuine) than "reality" by removing the predetermined boundaries of the linguistic sign (name): her emotional trauma.

Furthermore, Salomon's borrowed cinematic and graphic novel devices aided her representation by allowing her readers/viewers greater and more

immediate access to her personal story, thoughts and feelings, as well as those of her characters. The various mirroring, cyclical and framing themes she employed permits her to represent several perspectives at once—such as that of the German society she deflected and that of her parents she reflected with irony—while also giving her viewers/readers new perspectives and the ability to empathize with individuals throughout the play. Salomon purposely had her work parallel the format of a film in order to break through representational constraints of the medium of writing. As Griselda Pollock notes:

> ...Its invocation of still new and developing cinematic visualities, the close up, the crane shot, montage, shot/reverse shot; the nonhierarchical and often parodic use of both high art and forms derived from popular culture, the magazine, the playbill, the street sign, all these make me think of Life? Or Theatre? as a work of overpowering urgency, struggling to contain all the vast possibilities that teemed in the artist's hyperactive mind as she worked in a period of terrible intensity and psychological danger. (54)

By employing devices from numerous representational formats, Salomon incorporated qualities of the novel, the comic book, cinema, theatre, opera and more. The plurality of her work's media and genres creates a new generic space in order to deliver its content and value to the reader/viewer. This

plurality not only points to each representational medium, but, by merging and blending them, also creates a new form of representing. This new space is similar to cultural theorist Homi Bhabha's description of hybridity: "The importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity...is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge..." Whether it was Salomon's goal to resist the "normatively male genre of autobiography and the categorical disciplines of art and history" as Watson suggests, or if she simply endeavoured to "create her world anew" and realized along the way that the work called for creating a new generic space in which to contain it, she indeed accomplished both and paved the way to a new time as well as a new space: "The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation" (qtd. in Schmetterling 147).

What, however, was at the root of Salomon's desire to "paint her life"? Why and how did the genesis of this particular work take place, especially considering all of the obstacles (her Grandparents, the Nazis) that stood in its—and Salomon's—way? In the following chapter, we will explore the

motivation behind Salomon's unlikely and courageous endeavour to create a "soul-penetrating" work such as Life? or Theatre? despite the danger and negativity she faced in the world around her.

Chapter III:

(Re)Inventing (a) Life

The question of authority in Salomon's role as author is an ambiguous one. As discussed in previous chapters, this author/narrator or author-as-director role is plural in both subjectivity and activity. On the one hand, Salomon describes her characters as singing or speaking "in their own voices" (46) and thus through her art. As an autobiographical work, Salomon is represented as the character Charlotte Kann, but she is also the narrator and the author who, because of her signature at the bottom of each page, Felstiner refers to as "CS." Furthermore, the real Charlotte Salomon upon whom the story is based was somewhat different from the Charlotte portrayed in the work and its author; the girl her family called "Lotte," was described by her friends as "nondescript," a "nonperson," a "shadow" ("Create" Felstiner 198). The gender of the author/narrator is also androgynous. On the other hand, Salomon's role not only included a plurality of voices, but was itself plural in nature. She was not just a writer, artist and creator; she was also a director of the play in that she suggested various interpretations of scenes for her readers/viewers.

This chapter will explore Life? or Theatre? as an artistic means for Salomon to work through the trauma she endured as a Jew in Nazi Germany, and, most importantly, as a young woman facing the truth of her family's history, especially the recurring cycle of suicides among women. The relationship between life, death and art is a theme in Daberlohn's work and by extension, an important factor in Salomon's working-through of trauma. The ambiguity of Salomon's role as author is evidence of the difficulty with which she narrated her story. In order to express her traumatic memories, she first had to establish a transformative relationship between drama and narrative, bridging the immediacy of performativity with the narrative quality of autobiography. She began the project by having her past reenact itself in the form of staged scenes in paintings. The work oscillates between performance and narrative, and ends with Salomon having succeeded in creating a communicative relationship with her reader/viewer and thereby transforming the fragments of her traumatic experiences into a narrative weave and healing the wounds of her past.

Reenactment and Revival

According to Ernst van Alphen's account of Pierre Janet's distinction between narrative memory and traumatic memory, the former is a conscious and controlled effort on the part of a witness or an autobiographer, whereas the latter is "failed experience, and this failure makes it impossible voluntarily to remember the event" ("Giving Voice" 115). Although Janet coined the term "traumatic memory," van Alphen argues that trauma is different from memory in that it is dissociated from the subject's consciousness. Whereas narrative memory involves an active and controlled telling of stories, trauma is failed experience—an episode that involves "an event that is outside the range of human experience" (Brown 100)—and therefore cannot be remembered consciously and in a controlled manner by the witness.

The word trauma comes from the Greek "wound" which originally referred to an injury or a rupture to the body ("Unclaimed" Caruth 3). According to Cathy Caruth, "...trauma seems to be much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not

otherwise available" (4). Therefore, the wounds of emotional trauma require a process of healing, which, according to van Alphen, includes recalling, or a return to the site of the traumatic event. Crucial to his account is the fact that this recalling is never narrated—like other forms of memories—but rather reenacted. "The reenactment of traumatic experiences takes the form of drama rather than narrative, and is thereby dependent on the time frame of the drama's scripted 'parts'" (Van Alphen 115).

In Life? or Theatre? however, the traumatic memories are both reenacted and narrated, thanks to the role the narrator assigns to the reader/viewer. Salomon's prompting of the reader/viewer to participate in or interact during her characters' performance, creating an immediacy with which her work is presented to each new reader/viewer, aided in her own healing process by way of communication, which in turn allowed for her work to be read as narrative:

> In terms of the narration and drama... Salomon's work can be seen or read not so much as controlled narration, but as an effort to master trauma by embedding the reenactment of death, of dead family members, into a controlled action of narration. Precisely, this embedding of dramatic text in narrative text is where, or when, the family trauma is mastered. It is by means of the narrative technique of embedding that the trauma is healed, is transformed into a memory which can be told and shown to others. (116)

Van Alphen further describes the importance of the role played by these "others" to whom the traumatic reenactment is shown, by emphasizing that in order for traumatic, failed experience to undergo the process of healing, it must involve communication with a listener. By presenting or recalling an event in the presence of a listener, the latter helps to put the witness' fragmented mental frames into a narrative form that flows. The numerous pieces of the witness' experience become a narrative whole. In this way the reliving or the performativity of a traumatic event can be thought of as its presentation, while the transformation of the reenactment into a narrative form can be thought of as its representation.

In order to reenact the deaths of her family members, most of which she could not actually remember herself since she was not there, she had to first bring them back to life: "the revival of the dead family members is for Salomon the goal of her artistic pursuit" (123). After the revival of her ancestors Salomon would be able to have their stories portrayed, allowing her family to work through the trauma of its untold history. To go back to the origin of her family trauma meant going to the site of each suicide that

preceded her. Creating a seamless connection between the past and the present required imagination and fantasy in weaving the individual stories of her family members into a cohesive narrative fabric. The concurrent performative and communicative aspects of her art allow for the creation of the narrative, and thus a healing of trauma: "Salomon follows this narrative procedure in order to create a continuity between death in the past and life in the present. That is why her work does not show trauma in the act, in its symptoms, but enacts or embodies the overcoming of it" (120). In order to understand the importance of the connection between life, death and art in the working through of trauma, it is necessary to discuss Daberlohn's Orphic obsession and his theories on art, which have a significant impact on Charlotte, and are therefore everywhere present in the work of Salomon.

Life, Death and Art

For Daberlohn, genesis takes place in the space between life and death. He repeatedly discusses the importance of having first experienced death in order to fully live and become a creator. Alfred Wolfsohn, upon whom the

character of Daberlohn is based, endured the trauma of having fought in WWI, and therefore considered it an experience of death: "I was a corpse...and as I began to study myself, and became aware that there are two sides to everything: day and night, sun and shadow, death and life. With one of those sides, with death, I was now familiar, because, you see, I had risen from the dead. There remained only for me to become familiar with the other side, with life, in order to be this perfect creature...whom you see before you'" (286-7). In this way, Daberlohn associates trauma with death. He affirms throughout the play that in order to live life to its fullest extent and become a true artist, one must have experienced death (trauma), but for Daberlohn, creativity is a gendered activity that requires a combined effort of man and woman.

Early in his counselling of Charlotte, he chooses one painting of her work as representative of the symbiotic roles they play in their relationship: "*Daberlohn* 'I'd like to have "Death and the Maiden," too. That's the two of us'" (486 [p. 21 print of printing]). This painting demonstrates the relationship that would soon become compromised by his love for Paulinka. For, in both Charlotte and her stepmother Daberlohn sees a means through which to

manifest his artistic theories, but, ironically, he sees *himself* as the artist-creator.

As discussed in Chapter I, Daberlohn projects the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice onto his relationship with Paulinka. According to Van Alphen, he sees first Paulinka, then Charlotte, as a means for reaching his highest creative potential. In the beginning, Daberlohn tries to seduce Paulinka, but it soon becomes apparent that she—his Eurydice—is only the pretext for his own artistic ambition. He sees her as the feminine key that will unlock the passageway to the creative space between life and death. In the myth, this space is the underworld, where Orpheus must impress the god with his magnificent artistry. As Van Alphen writes: "His ambition to create such art overrules his love for Eurydice; indeed, his love for her *supports* and *sustains* his creative pursuit. His art is no longer a means by which he can reach his goal—Eurydice. Rather, his love for Eurydice is the context, the precondition, for his homosocial competition in creativity with the god of the underworld" ("Autobiography" 70). Daberlohn therefore uses Paulinka as fuel, as transportation to take his mind to the creative space between life and death.

In order to materialize his experience with death, he has a Death Mask mold made out of wax in the image of his face, "... to discover the nature of what determines the transition from life to death" (469). This mask is an artificial embodiment of the "dead" Daberlohn, which will enable him to imaginatively traverse the boundaries between the living and the dead.

Salomon, like Daberlohn, was a creator, but instead of playing the role of Eurydice, by enabling Daberlohn to succeed, she rather resisted the predetermined roles prescribed to her by her family and Daberlohn. This resistance was an internal struggle that was met with an impulse almost equally as strong to take her life, for, after her Grandmother's death Charlotte says: "Dear God, please don't let me go mad" (795). The painted text bears further meaning, however. It reads: "Lieber Gott Lass mich NICHT Wahnsinnig werden" (qtd. in Pollock 59), but the word "NICHT" is printed in a different colour, indicating that it was added to the sentence later, after reflection. As Pollock suggests, it could refer to "a competing, an earlier unconscious wish to be allowed to follow the others to the place of feminine death beyond the open window" (59). Just as Daberlahn sees women as the

means or the transporter to the realm of creativity, Salomon shows the window as the communicative portal between the living and the dead.

For this reason, it is evident that Salomon is inspired by Daberlohn's theories, but for her, art is a means of overcoming trauma as well. In several scenes, Daberlohn, Paulinka and Charlotte are shown as talking heads, detached from their bodies. But in some cases, the heads are just faces, with no hair (332, 380). In one case, Paulinka's head goes through a transformation from a bust with a neck and hair, to an oval face with no hair or neck, that is, a mask (337). Then, during Charlotte's attempt to "rescue" her Grandmother from her own suicidal impulses, she becomes a mask version of herself as well. At once embodying Daberlohn's theory and becoming one with her Grandmother, and thus demonstrating Felstiner's "identification between women," Charlotte pleas with her to resist her impulse toward suicide: "...instead of taking your own life in such a horrible way, why don't you make use of the same powers to describe your life?" (762-3). Advising her Grandmother to write poetry about all that she's been through, Charlotte projects her own objective of healing by way of artistic expression through Mrs. Knarre. A few pages later she proclaims: "How beautiful life is. I believe in life! I will live for them all!"

which indicates that she will portray not only her own life, but also the lives of all the suicidal family members in her art. By reviving her dead ancestors and having them perform their life stories, she is able to communicate with her reader/viewer and thus achieve a narration of her own story, allowing her to work through her failed experience while exposing the truth of her family's past.

It is significant to explore Charlotte's love affairs with both Paulinka and Daberlohn and how the triangle relationship interfered with Charlotte's feelings for Daberlohn. During the Prelude, the narrator describes Paulinka's ascent to stardom in a gouache depicting a newspaper photo of her suspended above a crowd of Paulinkas, who gaze at it admiringly: "This portrait-within-a-portrait (109) depicts her as both a celebrity and an idealized image for the adolescent Charlotte, who had a crush on her as an early love" (Watson 360). Just as the window motif represents a portal of communication between the living and the dead, (Nanette Salomon 219), Paulinka is also a medium through which both Daberlohn and Charlotte—in addition to being in love with her—access their fantasies and creativity. "And Paulinka is literally a role model, enacting the role of Orpheus in Glück's opera, as she crosses gender

borders to play the hero who traces a fluid path between life and death" (Watson 360). But the love triangle between Daberlohn, Paulinka and Charlotte soon becomes too much for the young girl to bear and she is left watching them from a distance, her only means of viewing them being through the same passageway as that through which she communicates with her other (dead) partners in creativity: a window. Looking down on them Charlotte says: "There go my two loved ones, and no one cares about me" (620). Jealous that her two most passionate loves, Paulinka and Daberlohn, have abandoned her, she begins to harbour feelings of resentment for the latter, which manifest themselves as irony and subtle mockery throughout Life? or Theatre?

Salomon continued to apply many of Daberlohn's theories to her art, but since her feelings for him changed, her art is fused with mockery of his passion and eccentric ideas. She indeed hinted at this irony from the outset of the Prelude with a disclaimer signed by "The author, St. Jean, August 1940/42 Or between heaven and earth beyond our era in the year I of the new salvation" (46). This irony is also apparent in an inscription signed by Salomon herself as "CS":

> "What is man, that thou art mindful of him,
> that earthly worm, that thou should set thine heart upon him?"
> (44).

Here she rewrites the words of Psalm 144, used in the Yizkor service at which Paula Lindberg sang in 1929:

> "What is man that thou art mindful of him,
> mortal man that thou shouldst care for him?" (qtd. in Pollock 35).

She later mocks his theory of the death mask by showing how his mind is consumed by his infatuation with Paulinka, but instead of recognizing that he is lovesick, he chooses to believe his passion is the result of something more profound, something less ordinary ("Autobiography" Van Alphen 70). While depicting the images in his mind of Paulinka surrounded by colourful, Impressionist backgrounds, Salomon's text lets the reader in on his own perception of his feelings: "He is pervaded by a deep sense of satisfaction from his exhausting labours and feels that he has penetrated far into the mysterious depths of human existence" (475). Although he equates his feelings with something exhaustingly profound and unique, Salomon, by way of images, shows that he is really a victim of Paulinka's rejection and his feelings are therefore nothing more than symptomatic of a bruised ego.

Daberlohn's projection of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice and The Creation of Adam by God onto Paulinka and Charlotte shows that he became infatuated with these women only to nourish his own "artistic" endeavours. Once Charlotte becomes aware of this, she begins to view him through a more cynical lens; a perspective which manifests itself in the form of irony in the work's portrayal of both him and his theories. Furthermore, instead of Daberlohn using Charlotte as a medium through which his theory could be redeemed, Salomon ends up using Daberlohn's theory as a means for healing.

Even with the ironic tone of the work, over the course of Life? or Theatre? there is constant interplay between the living and the dead, indicating that Salomon still believed in the relationship between life, death and art, despite having resented Daberlohn. Indeed, the dead are characters who perform alongside the living. It is evident that, by the epilogue, Charlotte has forgiven Daberlohn and the work again incorporates a theme of "intersubjectivity among the dead and the living which is represented in word and image by the face" (Buerkle 85).

The theme of death and life becomes explicit in the many portraits of dead ancestors: "Throughout, the spectator's gaze is repeatedly returned with the fixed gaze of the dead or, alternatively, closed eyes, a refusal, death" (Buerkle 85). These images of the dead with closed eyes could also refer to sleeping and the role of dreams and the unconscious in Salomon's work. Pollock explores this idea by analyzing the painting of Charlotte's dead ancestors hovering above her, her Grandmother and her uncle's/father's heads (183); "an image which offers a more beneficent image of death as sleep" (59). This "dreaming aestheticization," as Pollock calls it, parallels Daberlohn's fantasies of the relationship between death and art, the unconscious and the imagination; an idea that this chapter will explore in more detail in the coming pages.

Though Charlotte's Grandmother's suicide is the catalyst for her creating Life? or Theatre? it is evident that the trauma she endures from finally witnessing the suicide of a family member with her own eyes—as opposed to receiving the second-hand memories of her relatives—represents the experience of death (trauma) Daberlohn so often spoke of. Now that she has experienced death, she can begin to live, and therefore, create. At this point in the play, it is clear that her feelings of love for Daberlohn and his

philosophies far outweigh any spell of jealousy she felt at the end of the Main Section. Shortly after Mrs. Knarre's suicide, the story reads "...she did not have to kill herself like her ancestors...And with dream-awakened eyes she saw all the beauty around her, saw the sea, felt the sun, and knew: she had to vanish for a while from the human plane and make every sacrifice in order to create her world anew out of the depths. And from that came: Life or Theatre???" (821-3). Here, "dream-awakened eyes" symbolize the passage to death and back. Death coincides with the image of sleeping ancestors, whose experience Charlotte has now shared and she can thus join them in dreaming, only she will dream in life and create Life? or Theatre? from the depths of her unconscious.

Sleep, as situated between life and death, is again represented as the site of Salomon's unconscious stream of creativity in the last pages of the work. Charlotte is painting in the sun when she falls asleep and wakes up to find a portrait; "And now something strange happened to our Charlotte. While busy painting, as she always was, she fell asleep in the midday sun, And when she awoke, the finished portrait of her once so ardently beloved Daberlohn lay before her" (820). The awake, conscious Charlotte then rips the portrait into

pieces and throws them into the wind, only to fall asleep again and wake up a second time to find another: "...the face of Amadeus, but this time in profile, turned toward a standing figure—Charlotte—and she sought for an explanation of this strange happening." She later identifies the painting as a copy of her previous work "Death and the Maiden" which represents Daberlohn and herself, "...and suddenly she knew...two things. First, that Daberlohn's eyes seemed to say 'Death and the Maiden, that's the two of us,' and second, that she still loved him as much as ever" (820-1). This scene shows how the unconscious triumphs over the conscious, as Charlotte only recognized the opportunity to create something "wildly eccentric" after painting in a dream-induced sleep. After the first "strange happening," her conscious self tried to gain control by obliterating the message from her unconscious, but in the end, her unconscious took over and she came to with "dream-awakened eyes."

Authority and Performativity

It is significant to show how invested Salomon was in the making of Life? or Theatre? In writing Salomon's biography and studying the original gouaches

of her work, Felstiner learned that she struggled against her own characters for authority over their representation. In order to "bring them to life" with her work, she mentally envisioned them performing while she painted them.

Like the significance of colour-blending that was discussed in the last chapter, the technical side of Salomon's work, including her careful editing, gives way to some of her motivations as an artist as well as some of the trauma she worked through in the process. The final shape of Salomon's work took the form of 760 paintings, 360 overlays, eight pages of text and six playbill pages, leaving out some two hundred unnumbered pages that Salomon decided to discard (To Paint Felstiner 147). She left out some scenes that conflicted with her desired portrayal of the characters. For example, she omitted some scenes of Paulinka as a soft, kind-hearted stepmother and caregiver, as well as some scenes demonstrating Charlotte's closeness with her Grandparents. "People turned into symbols once CS altered a journal of the past into a *pièce à thèse*, a thesis-play. The final version placed all the characters into her major theme: how the threat of self-destruction leads to self-discovery, and secrecy to truth-seeking" (148-9).

Interestingly, although Salomon could have thrown out the pictures that did not make it into the final version, she instead decided to paste hand-cut paper tape onto various scenes: "Mosaics of tape block out the features of her characters, as if she were vying with them for control" (149). In particular, she pasted tape on the faces of Daberlohn and Paulinka, but what is significant is *where* she placed the tape. On Paulinka's face she covered both her eyes and her mouth, as if to stop her from both speaking and seeing. On Daberlohn's face, she only blocked out his eyes, which, Felstiner suggests, indicates her effort to keep him from watching her.

There are at least two conclusions to be made from this editing and taping process that Salomon underwent. First, if Felstiner's suggestion is correct, then covering Daberlohn's eyes, and thus preventing him from "watching" her, means that covering Paulinka's eyes also prevented her from watching her. Therefore, she removed their capacity for viewing and they lost their position as subject. Likewise, by blocking out Paulinka's words and mouth, she lost her ability to be heard, and was therefore no longer an object either to the audiences that once listened to her perform and made her the object of their listening pleasure, or those close to her who listened to her as a mentor,

namely Charlotte. In this way, Salomon further demonstrated both the authority and control Daberlohn and Paulinka have over young Charlotte, as well as addressing the issue of gender and showing the roles Daberlohn and Paulinka played as subject and object.

Another possible reading of Salomon's taping over the features of her characters' faces is that even though she had put them aside from the final project of her play, she still saw them as performing, and thus had to put a physical barrier over their faces to stop them from interfering with her work. Therefore, Salomon indeed saw her characters as singing or speaking for themselves and even living through her art, which could be why she did not throw out or destroy the discarded pages—she did not want to kill her characters; instead she bound them.

This act of taping as a binding and silencing of her characters contributes to the violence of the work discussed briefly in the previous chapter. Salomon competed with her characters for control over their representation. One way she did this was through irony and sarcasm, which was how she, as author, harmonized with the voices of her characters in telling the story. "Salomon

cannot tell her life story without framing it within the ideology from within which Daberlohn speaks, judges, and loves. But while endorsing that framework as the only one available to her, she also resists it by means of irony, and she transgresses it by displaying its inner contradictions" (Van Alphen 123). In order to reclaim authority over the representation of her characters, Salomon reciprocated Daberlohn's utilization of her as a medium through which he could access a more profound creative mindset, and presented his theories through her own authorship.

Woman as Medium

Salomon not only reciprocated Daberlohn's theories, but also shared characteristics and feelings of Paulinka as well as experiences of her Grandmother, demonstrating Felstiner's "identification between women" mentioned above. Though Charlotte, as a young girl, is impressionable and the people in her life have an impact on her development, Salomon, as an author, is much more authoritative. Although she too was affected by Daberlohn, Paulinka and Mrs. Knarre, she reflected them off of her and their

example is rather cast in an ironic light. In this way, Salomon reclaimed the dominance over her characters that they have over Charlotte in the story.

Death is both literal and a metaphor for the suffocating of "natural instincts" in the chapter "The Birthday Present." By calling Mrs. Knarre the "murderess of her children" in a letter, Paulinka implies that Charlotte's Grandmother was too controlling and had impossible expectations for her children, which resulted in their suicides (135). Angry at Dr. Kann's mother-in-law after he confesses that his first wife's parents blamed him for her suicide, Paulinka writes a letter to Grandmother Knarre. In the heat of her rage she decides that she is:

> "the person who had stifled every natural impulse in her children by bringing them up to be stiff and formal, who had imposed the example of her own perfection on them in such a way that, in the certainty of their own imperfection and, on the other hand, impelled by strong natural instincts, they found themselves in such violent inner conflicts that their only escape was death." (134)

A few pages later, the work shows Grandma Knarre reading the letter from Paulinka (187). Since the words "murderess of your children" are the only ones legible on the letter the Grandmother reads, it is evident that Salomon wanted to emphasize this metaphor of her Grandmother "murdering" the

natural impulses of her children (Buerkle 84). After writing the letter, Paulinka sings a concert at which Salomon highlights certain lyrics: "And Paulinka sings 'Be thou with me, I go with joy to my dying and to my rest...To my dying and to my rest'" (139-40). Going "with joy" to her death is a spiteful remark toward the Grandmother; instead of choosing death out of despair, she will die happy.

This scene is reflective of Salomon's own judgment of her Grandmother in particular, and her family and society in general. By having to silence the inner voice of her being during her childhood and try to fit the gender constructs of her time, Salomon herself fell victim to "violent inner conflicts." But instead of choosing death as her escape, Salomon transferred the "violent inner conflicts" onto a work of art; a project that suited her "strong natural instincts" as an artist very well. The work she underwent to create Life? or Theatre? is thus a healing work that both freed her of the societal and familial shackles that constrained her identity and allowed her to practice the craft that was most natural for her: painting. Salomon worked through the imposed determinations she struggled against all her life, while at the same time creating new ones by way of format and genre.

For the most part, Salomon's perspective runs parallel to Paulinka's. However, when Paulinka spitefully sings of going with joy to her death, meaning that when she dies, it will be on her own terms, Salomon shows how even Paulinka's perception of joy is a reflection of the impressions made upon her by society. After singing her concert Dr. Sinsong and Dr. Kann both claim ownership over Paulinka; the former in terms of his jealousy toward her husband and the latter in terms of her talent: "And Dr. Singong is almost driven mad by our Kann husband, who sits there as if he had been the singer!" (141). Paulinka is shown silently seated, on the arm of Dr. Kann. To the two men, she is an object, a possession, and though they are proud of her singing, they project their pride back onto themselves by taking responsibility for her.

Salomon shows her criticism toward Paulinka for allowing herself to be objectified and for nourishing the men's formidable egos. Instead of singing for her own enjoyment, as an expression of her inner voice, Paulinka sings for the benefit of the men in her life, becoming what Laura Mulvey calls "a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions...by imposing them on the silent image of

woman still tied to her place as bearer, not maker, of meaning" (15). This role of women as a symbolic medium through which men are able to live out fantasies is similar to Daberlohn's theory of the artist, for although he says: "'...Singing is more closely bound up with life than anything else. That one can imbue the sound with an expression that reveals the innermost feelings churning up in the soul,'" which reiterates the emphasis Paulinka places on freeing one's "strong natural instincts," he quickly adds the following: "'However, I soon realized that most artists – singers, painters, or dancers – have either never possessed their own 'I' or forgotten it.... The artist no longer sings, paints or dances for his own satisfaction but for the public'" (291-2). Here, Daberlohn is referring to Paulinka who, since marrying Dr. Kann, had lost her ability to sing as well as she once did. Daberlohn and Salomon both perceive Paulinka as having forgotten her own "I" and begun performing for the satisfaction of others.

Although Salomon reclaimed authority over the representation of her characters with her ironic tone, she did so implicitly. In order to revive her characters and have them perform in Life? or Theatre? Salomon had to remove herself from the narrative framing, and go "behind the scenes": "the

external narrator disclaims any control over her narration. It is almost as if the characters about whom she tells speak through her...The narrator here seems to renounce her status as narrator" ("Giving" Van Alphen 116). This disclaiming of control is demonstrated by the author's passive voice: "In the following pictures a further attempt is made to depict...," *et cetera* (386). The narrator is also affected by the leitmotif that plays in the background, indicating that she is not conscious of all the art she is creating and is rather taken over by the power of the music: "which is only natural considering that this picture was created to the tune of: I love you as no one has ever, ever, loved before!" (585). Daberlohn's dominance over Charlotte is reflected also in Salomon's competition with him for control over the representation of her characters. It is evident that because during the creation of her work she thought of her characters as having their own voices, she sometimes struggled to gain authority over them: "Here the author cannot but abandon Daberlohn's soul and enter that of his partner" (533).

This passivity on the part of Salomon is evidence of Daberlohn's continued use of Charlotte—and her art—as a medium through which he manifests his own work. Daberlohn says to himself: "'But for myself I also have faith in—in

redemption through woman'" (294). He believes that through women, art can be projected as a representation of his "profound" theories. Furthermore, like Salomon's reflecting of Paulinka and Mrs. Knarre, Daberlohn sees his own reflection mirrored off Paulinka: "And when I look deep, deep into her eyes, all I see there is the reflection of my own face. Isn't that a sign to me that, whenever we believe we love each other, we are merely our own subject and object?" (314). Here, by making no secret of his exploitation of Paulinka as his medium-object, he shows that he is no different from Dr. Kann and Dr. Singsong whose pride is mirrored off Paulinka, as he says: "You are—it seems to me—an exceptional medium. Hence my work with your singing will be very successful'" (297). A few pages later, the reader/viewer can taste the disdain that drips from Salomon's narration: "She sings, so to speak, as 'his singer' (medium)" (303).

Salomon's sarcasm is a result of the resentment she felt towards Daberlohn, mentioned above. In addition to her jealousy of Daberlohn and Paulinka, she is also angry that he disposed of her so easily: "*Charlotte* 'It's two weeks now since I last spoke to him. Was I nothing but the object of his experiments?'" (618). As Julia Watson points out, Salomon's retrospective realization that her

love affair with Daberlohn was in fact due to his seductive, male domination and opportunistic manipulation of herself as a young girl, who, thirsty for his tutelage and infatuated by his confidence, consented to having sex ("Autobiography" 353-4). She referred to this seductive power in several scenes: "Charlotte is lying there as if it is not she who had brought about this fiery stream" (586). The images Salomon paints silently mock Daberlohn's persuasive "philosophies" about the importance of man and woman merging to form one person, which are often just a ploy to seduce women. The following sexual innuendo refers to an aspect of his "teaching" that he often calls the "migration of the soul": "And in many pictures of this chapter the migration of the soul continues which, incidentally, is one of Daberlohn's strong points" (543). The accompanying images depict intimate scenes of love-making between Charlotte and Daberlohn.

The Violence of Language

In Chapter II, the subject of violence in relation to Salomon's irony was discussed. Also of significance is the violence of the text, the role language

plays in the lives of the characters and in Salomon's work as a means of healing.

The violence in the art is implicit in Salomon's tone which is reflective of the violence she faced during her upbringing—a violence which was likewise implicit in the verbal persuasion of the prestigious people in her life, the stories they told, the council they gave. This violence is also demonstrated in the text itself, which "performs" and plays a role in the art just like the characters. Indeed, the text is an ever-present "actor" in the work, dancing, swirling and moving within each frame, embracing (314), enveloping (430-1, 459) and violently penetrating different characters, through whom it is spoken or sung. In some cases Daberlohn's words are inscribed on his body as he launches into long monologue, indicating he is speaking out of passion (443-448, 490-3). This passion translates into anger depending on the character and their mood. In one scene the Kann family maid's words are etched onto her body: "I can't stand the sight of him any more. How can Madame bear to have him sitting around here all the time?" (656). In another scene, which shows Daberlohn, Charlotte and Paulinka standing literally in a triangle filled with bright red paint, they get into a heated argument and the violent words

painted on their bodies read: "*Daberlohn* 'If you don't stop being cheeky to your mother, I'll smack you' *Charlotte* 'Aren't you being a bit too familiar?'" (668).

At the discovery of her Grandmother's dead body, Charlotte is horrified. All her efforts of saving Mrs. Knarre have failed and she cannot process this traumatic image before her. In one last plea, she withers with dismay while repeating the words she heard Daberlohn say and which she told her Grandmother shortly before her suicide: "'May you never forget that I believe in you'" (788). In this scene the words cover Charlotte's body, starting at her eyes and reaching all the way to her feet, masking and binding her. The words that were meant to be healing words have failed her. By having the words perform and take over characters at moments of passion, Salomon shows how words can be tools, capable of violent acts, which is a theme Felman also discusses in her analysis of Celan's *Todesfuge* ("Death Fugue"): "The entire poem is, indeed, not simply about violence but about the relation between violence and language, about the passage of the language through violence and the passage of violence through language" ("Education" Felman 36-7).

The irony of Salomon's artistic representation of her life extends to the fact that she so often depicted traumatic episodes of her life, as well as unconventional aspects of her adolescence—like bisexuality—through the lens of the culturally celebrated art form of theatre. The violence of inner conflicts Charlotte goes through are projected outward onto a comical stage, like in Celan's poetry, "the violence is all the more obscene by being thus etheticized and by estheticizing its own dehumanization, by transforming its own murderous perversity into the cultural sophistication and the cultivated trances of a hedonistic art performance" (36-7).

Like Celan, Salomon uses the relationship between visual and textual art forms to make a darkly humorous, deeply sarcastic portrayal of the trauma she endured: "But the poem works specifically and countrapuntally to dislocate this masquerade of cruelty as art, and to exhibit the obscenity of this aestheticization, by opposing the melodious ecstasy ..." ("Education" Felman 36-7). For, often the words and the music in Life? or Theatre?, when treated separately, have much different effects than when treated as symbiotic forms of expression. When the different formats—visual and textual—are blended

on the page to create one representation, they produce the side effect of irony.

Derrida and Representation

The violence of language is demonstrated once again on the last gouache of the work. In the scene Charlotte is shown painting by the sea. Inscribed on her back are the words "Leben oder Theater?" (824). Here, the words represent less another actor in the play or tools for control and violence, penetrating the character through which they are sung or spoken, and more the entire work: Life? or Theatre? Since the work is the creation of Charlotte's "life anew," its title, etched onto its creator's back, shows that it is a part of Charlotte, and she is a part of it. Salomon therefore follows Daberlohn's teaching: "'...singing or painting, dancing or writing, an image of the beloved object, and in creating one expresses oneself. One fragments oneself into the parts of one's creation" (367). In an effort to transform and create herself—a name for herself—by way of words, music and art, Salomon

fuses the words with her body in an attempt to erase the distance between the real and the represented.

For Daberlohn, who sees himself as the creator of Paulinka, the problem of representation lies in the imperfection of representational forms: "herein lies the whole tragedy of mankind that no human being is the image that the other has created for himself" (367). Disappointed that Paulinka does not embody the vision, the fantasy he had imagined for her, Daberlohn concludes that images are deceptive and representations—which for him are creations—never quite fulfill the expectations of the creator.

Salomon, learning from Daberlon's example, decided to create "something wildly eccentric" (817). This wildly eccentric creation had to be different from any other creation before it. She wanted to carve out her identity with her art, thus releasing her from the constraints of social code and allowing her to trudge out her own path, leaving behind the deeply foot-printed suicidal one that lay so persuasively marked out before her. As Astrid Schmettering suggests, this wildly different act—this difference—also refers to Derrida's

différance as her work is, "hovering between 'difference' and 'deferral'" (Schmetterling 144).

The final page of Life? or Theatre? shows that Salomon's creation is a part of her, but also, in Derrida's terms, it is "l'être-imprimé de l'empreinte" (Derrida "Grammatologie" 92). Furthermore, the imprinted words on her back symbolize—they name, entitle—the experiences that had been impressed upon her over the course of her life, and which she now is imprinting "anew." The circular motif of the work—its ending looping back to the beginning—is thus representative of the cycle of representation by way of writing (logos). Text plays a role in the play just as each character does, because *différance* applies to both language and people in that the identities of characters are "deferred" and "differed." The roles each character plays are defined by their relationship to other roles played by other characters and are therefore determined by an infinite web of relationships. The social network is circular as well in that roles are symbiotic and therefore meaningless without the presence of the Other. For example, Charlotte's role is daughter to Dr. Kann, whose role is father to Charlotte, whose role is daughter to Dr. Kann, and so on.

The representational format is cyclical in itself. The names, constructs and signifiers which were, at one time, representational symbols for the real, the signified, have now become the real. The representation becomes the represented or the signifier becomes the signified in that the subject's/object's identity is determined by a symbol or a construct. The cycle is evident. First there was the real. Then there was the signifier that was associated with the real. Then the signifier preceded the real and the real was left to try to fit the imprint already made for it.

Daberlohn confuses the Paulinka of his fantasies—the image he constructs of her—with the real Paulinka: "'Why aren't you the image in which I have created you?' – That explains why men at all times have fought each other, why even God is angry with His creatures" (368-369). Daberlohn struggles for control over the construction of Paulinka: "Let me shape you, let me form you. That's all I ask, all I ask" (383). As mentioned above, in her editing process Salomon likewise adopted his creationist tendency: "When CS edited her final version, she had hundreds of scenes of Paulinka to choose from. She didn't simply put aside a few; instead, she deleted scenes by pasting bits of

paper over Paulinka's eyes and mouth, as if finally gaining control of her—one motive for painting ("Create" Felstiner 198).

Whereas Daberlohn's Orphic obsession results in his conflicted construction of Paulinka and her failure to become the image he envisions for her, Salomon's motive for creating "her life anew" is to reclaim authority over her life, in order to heal the trauma she—and her ancestors—endured. This self-recreation by way of art included a deliberate undoing of the "real" past and representing it anew. Salomon had every intension of abandoning the familial and social constructs that were prescribed to her. Her revival of the dead and reenactment of the stories that had been kept secret for so long was a calculated endeavour. Furthermore, this abandonment of the past—as described by others—and recreation of her own, personally authored account of events resembles Rousseau's theory that writing is the enabler of forgetfulness; as well as Saussure's:

> L'écriture est la dissimulation de la présence naturelle et première et immédiate du sens à l'âme dans le logos. Sa violence ne survient pas à un langage innocent. Il y a une violence originaire de l'écriture parce que le langage est d'abord, en un sens qui se dévoilera progressivement, écriture. L'"usurpation" a toujours déjà commencé. Le sens du bon droit apparaît dans un

> effet mythologique de retour. (qtd. in "Grammatologie" Derrida 55)

As part of her healing process, Salomon needed to break through the constraints of predetermined gender constructs, including the prescription as told by her Grandfather of her foremothers' suicides. By recreating her life through art, she wanted her representation to both undo the lies that were told to her when she was younger, and bridge the gap between the real experience she had, and the artificiality of its representation. Life? or Theatre? incorporates elements of fantasy and imagination that allowed Salomon to mentally access the site of her ancestors' deaths in history, while also representing her own emotions in a relatable way with metaphor and fantastical imagery.

Imagination

As discussed in Chapter II, Salomon's autobiographical work can be considered as both fiction and nonfiction. By illustrating her story, giving her cast comical pseudonyms and exaggerating their features to the point of caricature, she let the story extend past the boundaries of a typical nonfiction

autobiography. To revive her characters and her own view of them in the performance space of her work, "Salomon makes the lack of information and explanation about the deaths in her family the site of an 'explanatory' fantasy of the suicides" (Buerkle 85). In order to rectify the lies told to her about her ancestors' deaths, she enabled them to reenact the "truth"—as she sees things—by way of unconscious fantasy: "In this claustrophobic world, the possibility of artistic work serves as a form of imago-scriptotherapy, a way of naming the family's self-destructive pattern but also provisionally exorcising it" (Watson 365).

Charlotte, as the main character in the play is locked inside the world that Salomon, as artist, endeavours to recreate, which "situate[s] Salomon's story of a fictive persona at the interface of an imagined 'real' biographical family history" (Watson 350). The performance is made an interactive, communicative piece by Salomon's revelation of all her family members' stories to her reading/viewing public, while Charlotte is kept uninformed until the end: "...within the family Charlotte is distanced from direct memory of the past, because it is kept from her; but she is tied to its trauma through what Marianne Hirsch terms 'postmemory,' an 'imaginative investment and

creation' of the past that connects her to others' stories that she cannot personally remember" (Watson 364). However, it is not necessarily a speech-act, not situating a past-presence next to a present presence, but rather a weaving of the past into a narrative by way of the characters' story-telling taking place in the present.

Furthermore, the fact that the images, music and text swing back and forth between what characters see and hear in the outside world and what they envision and fantasize about in their thoughts reflects Salomon's pendulous oscillation between Expressionism and Impressionism, themes that characterize her art. Daberlohn is especially prone to dream-like fantasies and he often blurs the line between what he imagines and what is real, as he says: "Sometimes nonsense is truth, and that which seems truth is only nonsense" (338).

The significance of sleep as the image of death mentioned above is also prevalent in Daberlohn's achieving of a greater understanding of his relationship to Paulinka. He falls asleep and dreams of Paulinka shortly after meeting her, and proclaims to continue the dream when he sees her the next

morning at their singing rehearsal (279-81). This scene shows how he wants his unconscious—his dream—to overshadow his consciousness—his daily life. His next dream is of an apple orchard in a meadow, which he immediately associates with Paulinka: "I must find out what this dream with the meadow and the apple tree means. It must have something to do with that woman" (312). When he later describes her as "my dream, my child, my singer!" (318), it is apparent that he links Paulinka to his unconscious, which he accesses by sleeping and dreaming. Here, he reaffirms Salomon's connection between sleep and death. Moreover, he demonstrates his projection of artistic medium onto Paulinka.

His fairytale or mythical image of women becomes an object of mockery for Salomon. For example, his pet name for his fiancée coincides with her earlier parodic portrayal of her art class' idolizing of the beautiful Barbara, whom Salomon called "Sleeping Beauty" (244). For when speaking of his fiancée to Paulinka, he says: "'She's a Sleeping Beauty that should not be awakened. But the way things are nowadays—Princes are allowed to starve and Sleeping Beauties have to work as typists'" (340-1). He continues to refer to her as "Sleeping Beauty" as though she were in a permanent state of listless

dreaming, untouched by the scathing and trivial realities of conscious life (351). He also fantasizes about Paulinka as a mythical creature and gives her the pet name Madonna: "'Lovliest Madonna, let me shape you, let me form you.' He mentally constructs his Madonna – his Mona Lisa. She smiles mysteriously" (372).

Although it appears as though Salomon could be mocking Daberlohn's obsession with myths and romance, she also employs elements of fantasy and myth in order to work through the unspoken history of her family. But instead of following Daberlohn's interpretation of the Orpheus and Eurydice story, she distances herself as author/narrator from his character and allows him to "author" his own analysis. Then, she contrasts his interpretation with her own, projecting the role of Orpheus onto Charlotte who then becomes the creator of her art thanks to her fictive representation of "Death and the Maiden." By defining her role as "Maiden" and Daberlohn's as "Death" by way of symbol, she is able to go to her own artistic space, but rather than it being an underworld between life and death, it is her own imagination which she accesses in her unconscious (sleep): "The Orpheus myth is a central motif in Life? or Theatre? But in Daberlohn's imagination it is transformed into a

gendered conception of creativity, and this is the version of myth, the theory of creation against which Charlotte has to tell her story and which she will resist and transgress, in order to make the myth work for her need: the overcoming of trauma" ("Giving" Van Alphen 121). By using her "Death and the Maiden" painting as a metaphor for Daberlohn's and her (renewed) roles, she realizes that in order to transform her fragmented traumatic memories into a flowing narrative, some "artistic values [will have] to be renounced" (46) and she will have to employ fictive elements and borrow devices of other genres and artistic formats.

Conclusion

The genesis of Life? or Theatre? coincided with the genesis of Salomon's life "anew." Her need to create this work of art came from her unconscious desire to work through the trauma of her past and by having her characters reenact the stories of their deaths, Salomon was able to write the story of her life. The work prompts readers/viewers to interact, which signifies the transformation of the play's performativity into a narrative autobiographical piece, which,

according to Van Alphen, is precisely the process that allowed Salomon to work through and heal her trauma.

But before she could access the traumatic memories in her unconscious, she had to overcome some of the imposed pressures she felt and custom design an artistic format to represent her story. Instead of acting as a medium for Daberlohn's gendered theories she took his teachings and modified them to fit her own agenda of revealing the truth behind the women's deaths in her family. By demoting Daberlohn from the dominant position he occupied in her life, she both reclaimed control over her identity, and transgressed the power of language and the Symbolic Order.

One of Daberlohn's theories, however, the theory on life, death and art, proved more useful to Salomon, as she used his lessons on accessing the creative space between life and death as a metaphor for accessing her (sleeping) unconscious, and thereby creating an interplay between the living and the dead. In order to tell her foremothers' untold stories, she developed what Hirsch calls a "postmemory" and imaginatively filled in the blanks of the fragmented, passed-down memories. By allowing her unconscious to explore

"the depths" of her traumatic memory which was made available to her only through "dream-awakened eyes," that is, metaphor, she at once worked through the trauma of her past and authored her life on her own terms.

Conclusion

Over the course of the last three chapters, this thesis has endeavoured to respond to the following question: in what ways did Salomon use an interface of genre, temporalities and voice in order to create a new generic space that allowed her to transgress societal and familial gender constructs and racist stereotypes while taking authority over the representation of her identity and life story? A close reading of Life? or Theatre? has shown that by having her characters simultaneously perform in her mind's eye as she created the gouaches and the text, Salomon was able to represent the traumatic memories that occupied space in her unconscious. Moreover, she was able to reveal the untold stories of her ancestors, and thus end the traumatic cycle of suicides that had wreaked havoc on the women who preceded her. However, in order to create this "soul-penetrating" work, in order to demonstrate this performativity, "many artistic values had to be renounced" (46). By this statement, Salomon meant that she had to go above and beyond the ontological limitations of the autobiographical genre to author her own life—and by extension, her family history—as art. Therefore, to represent her own

conception of what it meant to be a woman, she had to custom create a new generic space, and out of her work came the genesis of her life by way of image, music and text.

For Charlotte, the self-destructive cycle of her foremothers is more than just an influential trait—it is an inevitable rite of passage that marks her role as a woman. Salomon demonstrated her resistance to be constrained by predetermined gender constructs by depicting Charlotte's—and her own—bisexuality and androgyny. Though she focused her work on her family's cycle, it is evident that her story is representative of Jewish women as a group in 1930s Berlin. The obstacles she and her ancestors faced in resisting their fatal fate are similar to the obstacles faced by all Jewish women who struggled against the abandonment of their cultural identity in order to fit into the German image of the ideal woman. Only in Charlotte's case, she not only succeeds in overcoming the urge to commit suicide, she also reclaims her life and "creates her world anew" (822).

In the process of exploring gender, genre and self creation/reinvention in and of Charlotte Salomon's autobiographical chef d'oeuvre, this thesis has also

undergone an analysis of the intersubjectivities among Salomon, the author, the narrator and Charlotte Kann, among the women characters in the play and between the living and the (revived) dead. By demonstrating a plurality of voices among the characters, Salomon has had them reenact her family history while weaving episodes of the past into the present narrative framework. In addition to this employment of what could be called a cinematic flashback, she also fused elements of the comic book—such as onomatopoeia—into her work. This blurring of generic boundaries by her work is reflective of her desire to surpass the generic boundaries she felt imposed upon her as a woman and a Jew.

The subtle sarcasm with which the story is narrated allows for Salomon's voice to gain control over the representation of her characters. For example, the mocking tone the narrator uses to describe Daberlohn and his theories demotes him from the dominating position he assigns himself. But there is another motive behind Salomon's irony. By using the characters' own words against them, as a mocking force that transforms them into caricatures or parodies of themselves, the narrator also demonstrates how language can be used as a tool, depending on how it is used. Salomon reflects the violence of

the text both through the ironic tone of the narration and the incarnation of text as a body, as a character, moving and acting alongside the "real" cast within the painted gouaches. But her personification of the text as a script that is constantly moving and changing contrasts the static and rigid quality of language in Symbolic Order.

In each of the preceding chapters, this thesis reveals how Salomon's work is exemplary of her desire to overcome ontological boundaries in terms of either her conception of gender, the genre and format she used to represent this gender and in the genesis or re-creation of her (healed) identity according to this new conception of gender. In all three cases, the obstacles Charlotte faces in trying to resist suicidal tendencies, as well as the obstacles Salomon faced as an artist representing traumatic experience, were linked to the limits of language, that is, either in the form of names, titles and symbols that are meant to represent and determine one's identity, in the form of cyclical *différance,* that shows how writing can be both differed and deferred, and in the form of narrative. As discussed in Chapter I, in an effort to reject not only the prescribed gender constructs of her family and society, but also the Symbolic Order, the social structure that allowed for gender to be

perpetuated as a male-imposed construct, Salomon had Charlotte look beyond the artificiality of gender rules.

Although she has bisexual tendencies, her intimate feelings are not determined by her loved-one's gender, but rather by her feelings for them on a spiritual level. For Charlotte, the emotional, artistic connection is more important than the physical one, but even the latter develops as a result of the former. Her spiritual connection with another person thus eclipses any physical chemistry (or lack there of), as is evidenced by Salomon's numerous references to the "migration of the soul" and the "soul-penetration" of her work. For, unlike Daberlohn's manipulative teachings about the soul, which were often a ploy to seduce women, Charlotte understood the soul as a spiritual entity, as an intimate and personal space.

In Chapter II, this thesis shows how gender constructs, which can also be equated with the names and titles that have an impact one's identity in terms of class and race, are symbolic of the structure of nomenclature and naming in linguistics. By giving the characters pseudonyms, Salomon inversed the rule of nomenclature: instead of having her cast "live up to" the (Jewish) names they

were given at birth, she gave them comical stage names that, rather than reflecting their class, race or status in the family/society, reflect and are determined by their individual personalities. Moreover, her blending of irony and tragedy, fiction and nonfiction, high art and low art and visual, musical and literary arts, further proves her desire to transgress the limits of genre. Salomon's goal was to represent her story and all its complex emotions, perspectives and subject-object dichotomies as authentically as possible, which sometimes meant transporting the reader/viewer to a figurative, fictional space despite the nonfictional conventions of the autobiographical genre.

Chapter III sheds light on the connection between life, death and art, one of Daberlohn's theories that Salomon adapted to fit her own endeavour to work through what Van Alphen terms "failed experience." Instead of creating her art by accessing the space between the worlds of the living and the dead, Salomon worked through her trauma by creating her story "out of the depths" (822), meaning that she had to let her unconscious reenact her traumatic memories. She wrote, "with dream-awakened eyes," she would "create her world anew" (822). In order to represent her self and her life, she allowed the

performativity of her work to transform into narrative by way of interaction with her readers/viewers, following Daberlohn's philosophy that, "one must first go into oneself to be able to go out of oneself" (610). And in order to bring what is on the inside to the outside Salomon had to enter a sleep-induced dream state of mind. In order to translate the emotions interlaced with the trauma that existed as feelings illegible to her consciousness, feelings that could only be described by way of metaphor in relation to their direct connection to the body, Salomon had to go above and beyond the representational limits of the traditional autobiographical text. The result of her work is not only the creation of Life? or Theatre? but also the self-authored genesis of her identity.

As discussed above, Charlotte or "the artist" is depicted as painting by the sea on the last page of the work. On her back the words "Leben oder theater" are inscribed (824). The words become one with the body, at once representing a testimony to the violence of language as a device used for controlling and limiting interpretations of the self and the embodiment of Salomon through the work's title. Emotions and traumatic wounds that are imprinted on the unconscious become knowable only through metaphor or through

reenactment, and not through narrative, prose or the nomenclature of Symbolic Order. As Lacan writes: "Entre le signifiant énigmatique du trauma sexuel et le terme à quoi il vient se substituer dans une chaîne signifiante actuelle, passé l'étincelle, qui fixe dans un symptôme—métaphore ou la chair ou bien la fonction sont prises comme élément signifiant,--la signification inaccessible au sujet conscient ou il peut se résoudre" ("L'Instance" Lacan 277). However, once the trauma is reenacted, once it is performed, it can be processed by a reader/viewer/listener, who can then aid in communicating its significance by way of narrative. It is therefore only through the genesis of a new generic, performative space that Salomon was able to develop her own conception of gender, and emerge "anew."

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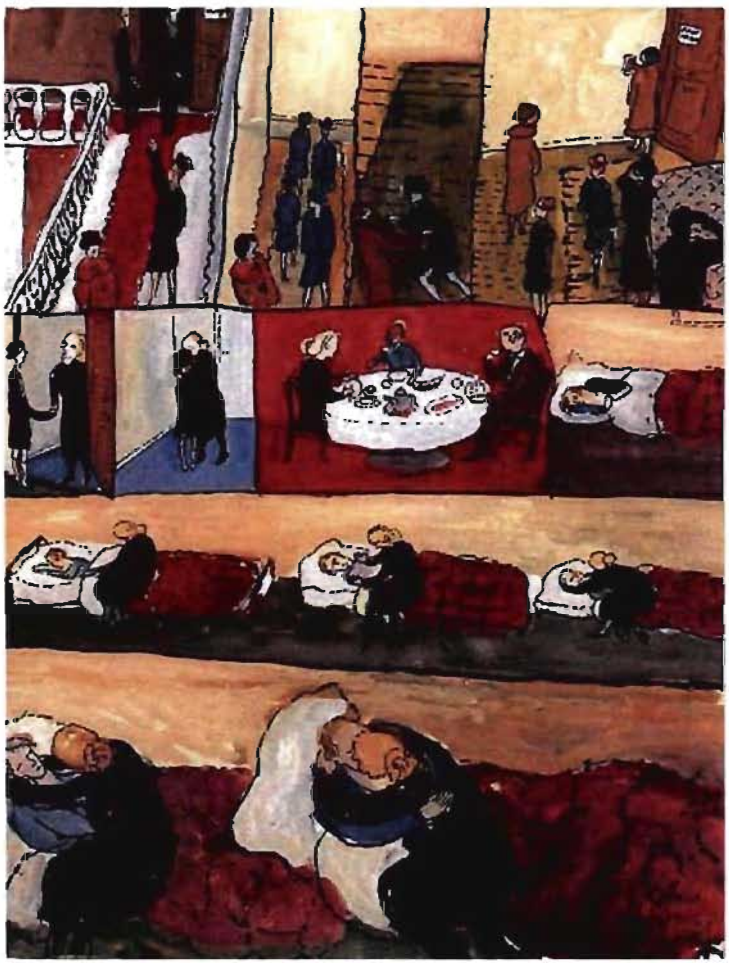
Figures



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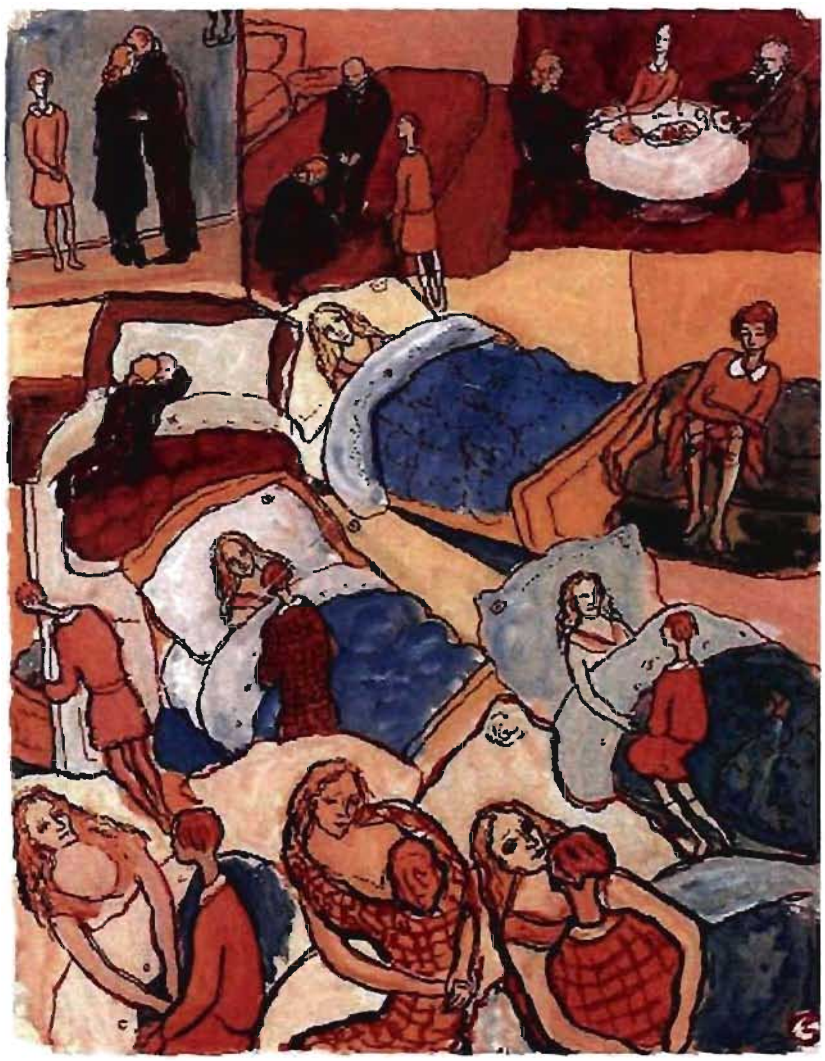

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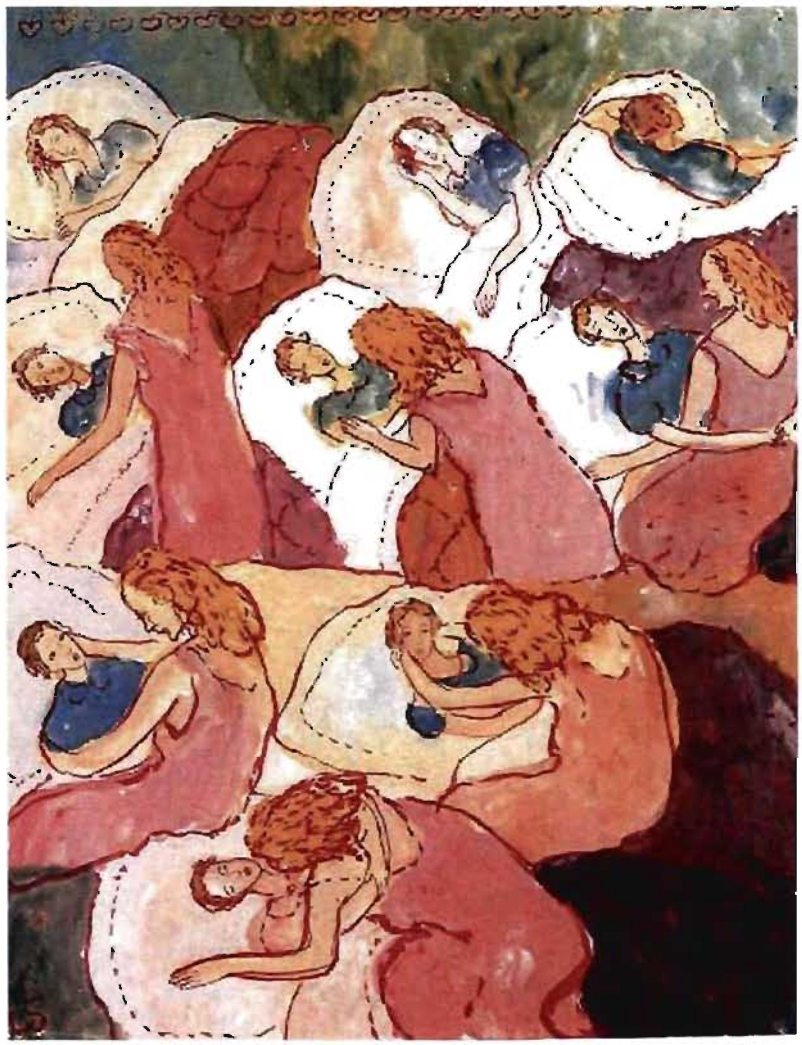

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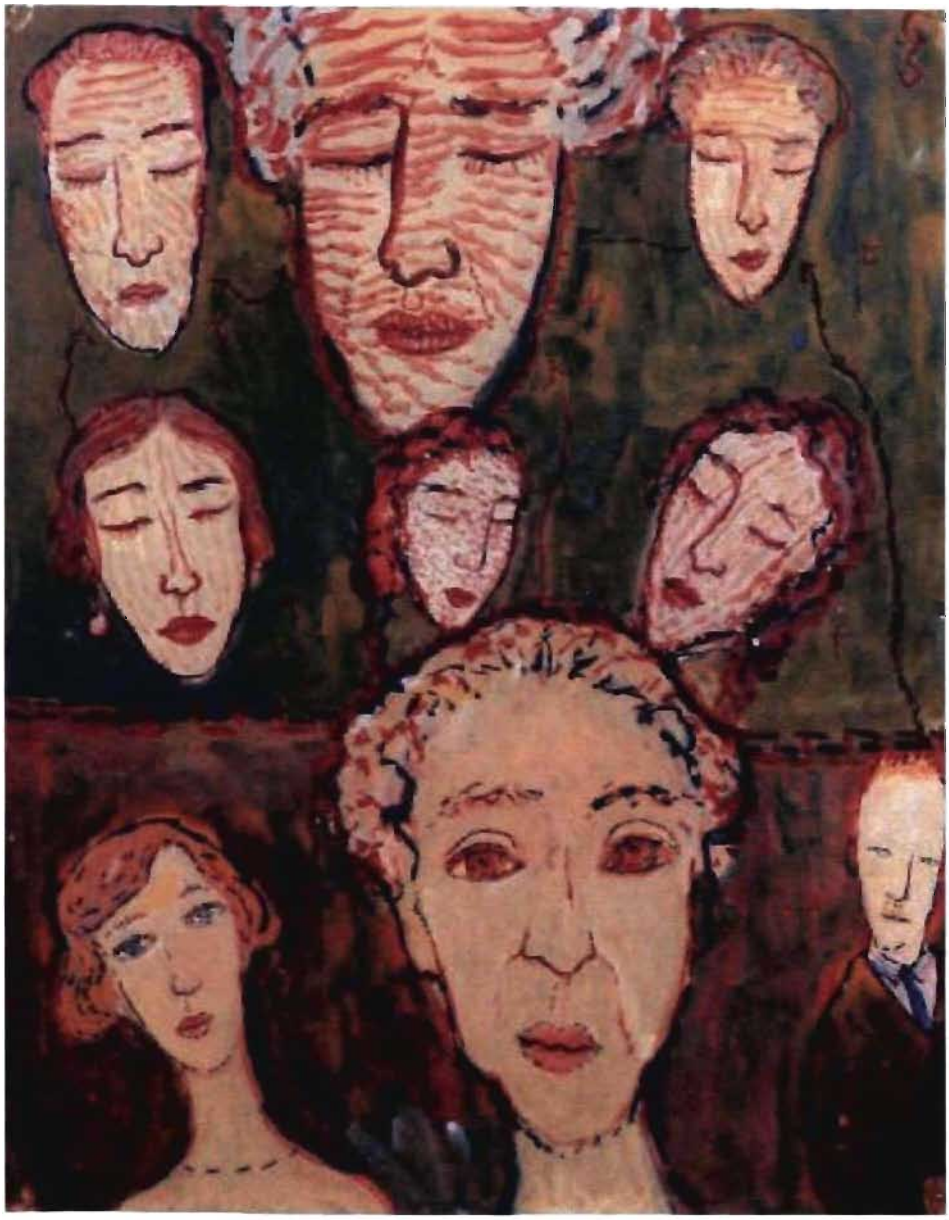

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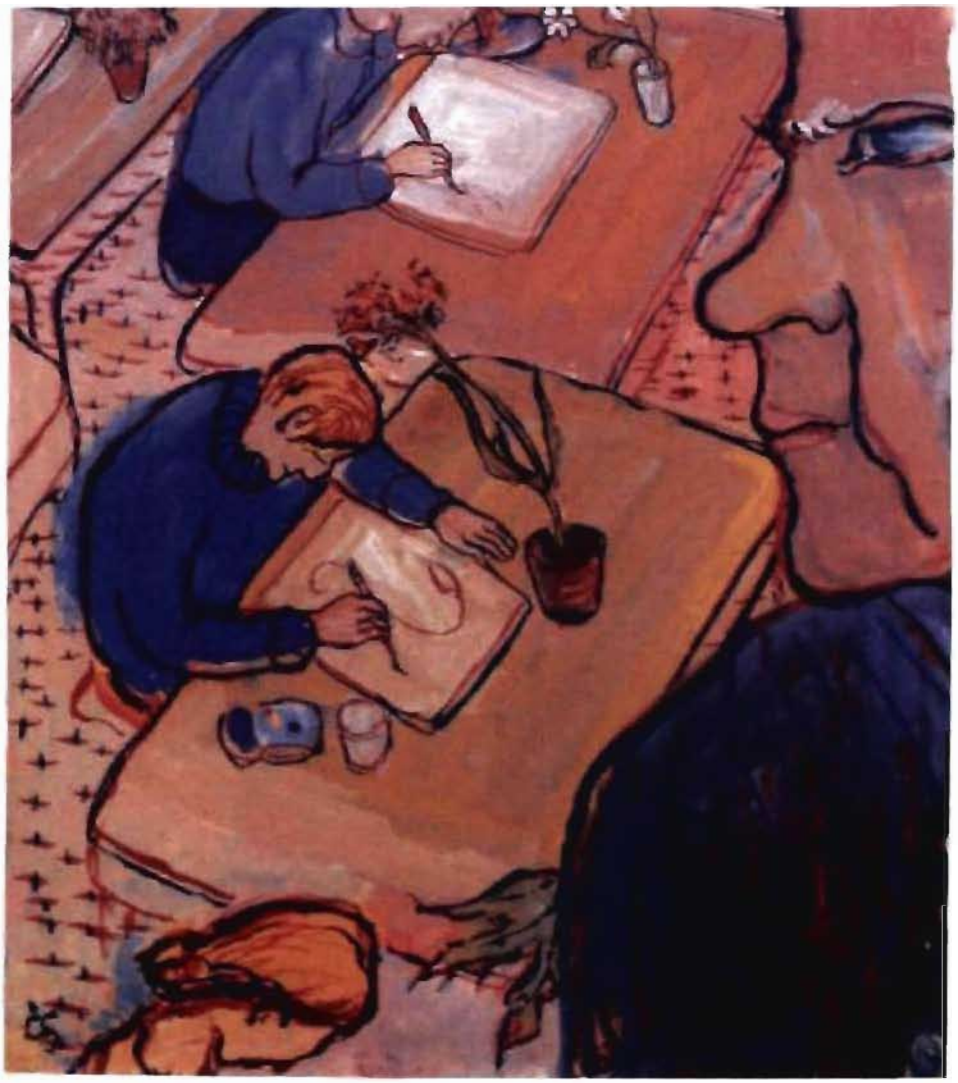

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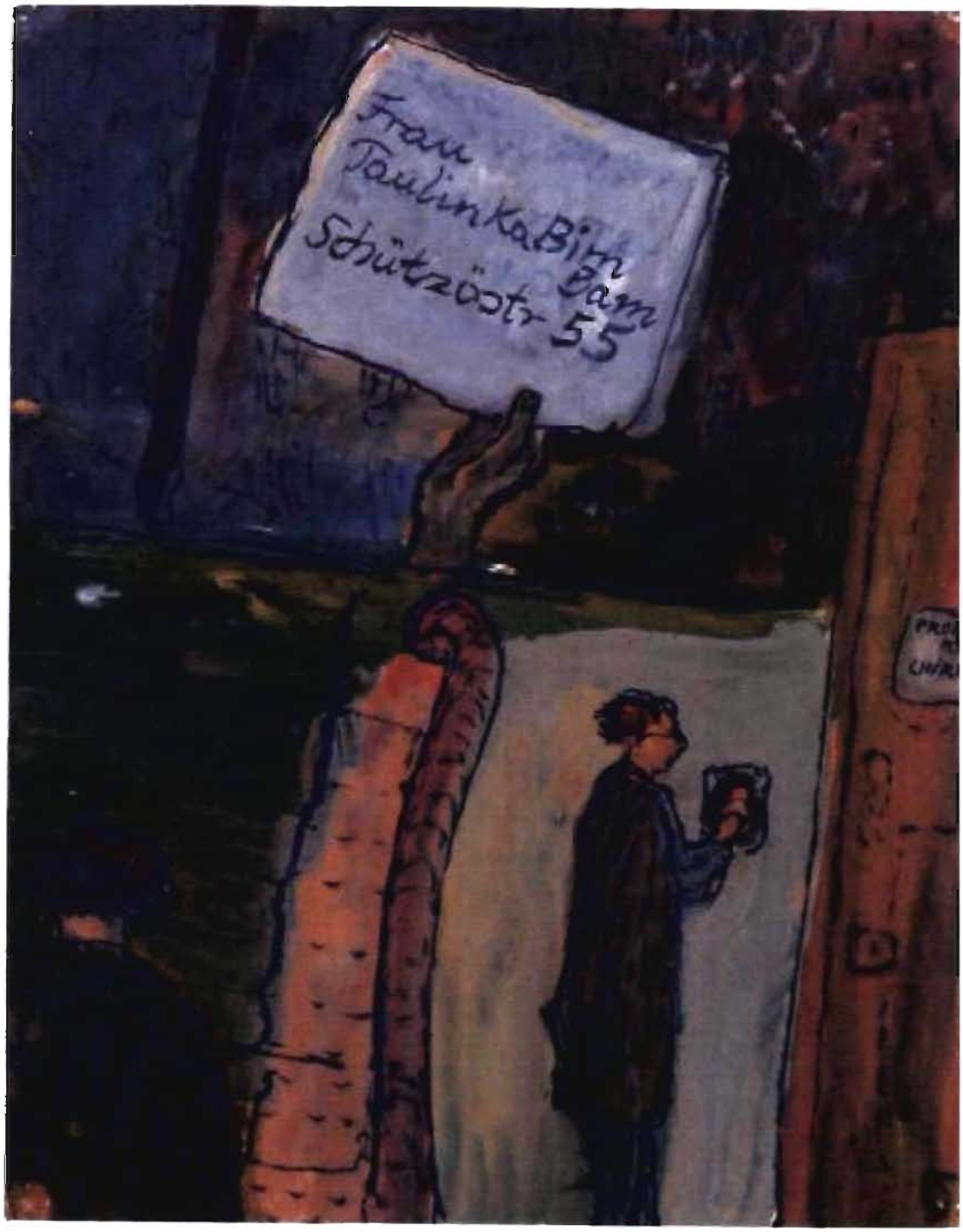

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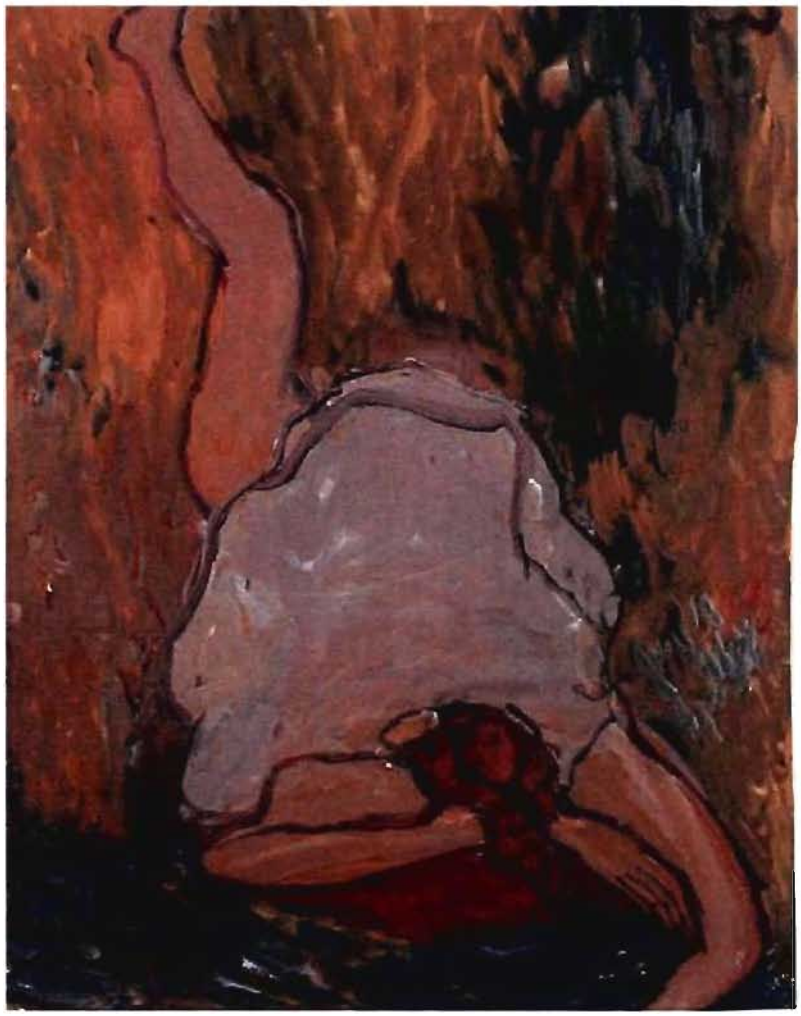

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