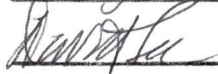


To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Gabriele Maria Arseneault entitled "The Depiction of Marital Problems in Martin Walser's Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in German.


Nancy A. Lauckner, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:


Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of The Graduate School

THE DEPICTION OF MARITAL PROBLEMS IN MARTIN WALSER'S
EIN FLIEHENDES PFERD AND BRANDUNG

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Gabriele Maria Arseneault

May 1997

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband,
Carl Joseph Arseneault,
who believed that I could meet my goals, trusted me, and provided his unlimited support.
Without his love and understanding, I would still be working.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The troubled marriage at the center of Martin Walser's Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung has not received the critical attention it merits. This thesis examines the depiction of marital problems as a central theme in Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung, two works in which Helmut and Sabine Halm are the main characters. Marital instability, seen especially from Helmut's perspective, governs both works and is reflected not only in the Halms' marriage, but also in the lives of the secondary characters.

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter One offers a brief introduction to Walser's works and the topic of the thesis, and reviews criticism on the two works being treated. Chapter Two provides a short characterization of Helmut and Sabine Halm as a necessary background for the analysis of Walser's depiction of marital disharmony. Chapter Three addresses communication problems evident in the relationship between Walser's protagonists. I analyze the Halms' verbal exchanges and their body language, as well as Helmut's inner monologues, in both works. Chapter Four covers the theme of flight as a reaction to marital problems and describes metaphors of flight and instances of physical and mental flight in the life of the protagonists. Chapter Five examines the relationships of two other married couples--one from each work--that mirror the disharmony present in the marriage of Helmut and Sabine. The final chapter contains conclusions about Walser's depiction of marital problems and suggests avenues for future research.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Born in 1927 in Wasserburg near Lake Constance, Martin Walser attended the Oberschule in Lindau, worked in a restaurant, and helped in his father's coal business. In school, he enjoyed writing, and his German teacher encouraged his talent. After serving in the military during the Second World War, Walser resumed his studies, attending the Theologisch-Philosophische Hochschule in Regensburg. At the University of Tübingen, he became involved in student theater and majored in literature, history, and philosophy. From 1949 to 1957, he worked at the Süddeutscher Rundfunk. His work required him to travel extensively throughout Europe. During that time, he also completed his first two works, Ein Flugzeug über dem Haus und andere Geschichten (1955) and Ehen in Philippsburg (1957). Walser received the "Gruppe 47" Prize for "Templones Ende" (1955) and the Hermann Hesse Prize for Ehen in Philippsburg (1957).

Over the next twenty years, Walser produced numerous works, including Halbzeit (1960); Der Abstecher (1961); Der schwarze Schwan (1961/1964); Eiche und Angora (1962), for which he received the Gerhart Hauptmann Prize; and Das Einhorn (1966). He also wrote Die Zimmerschlacht (1967), a drama for which he received the Bodensee-Literaturpreis from Überlingen (1967); Fiction (1970); Die Gallistl'sche Krankheit (1972); Der Sturz (1973); and Jenseits der Liebe (1976).

One of his first dramas, Die Zimmerschlacht, was first performed in Munich in the same year Walser published it. According to Anthony Wayne, the play provided fame and financial independence, allowing Walser to devote himself to his writing full time (22).

Since 1976 Walser has continued to write and often spends several months at a time in the United States for talks or lectures. His works have contributed extensively to the canon of twentieth-century German dramas and novels.

Walser's productivity seems fueled by his interest in human relations and communication. In early novels such as Ehen in Philippsburg and Jenseits der Liebe, marriage relationships and problems take center stage. His drama Die Zimmerschlacht reflects his interest in writing about marriage and communication. Marital problems, in particular, characterize the works Ein fliehendes Pferd (1978) and Brandung (1985).

In this thesis I analyze Walser's depiction of marital problems as a central theme in Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung, two works in which Helmut und Sabine Halm are the main characters. In both works, Walser writes about marital problems from a man's point of view, thus devoting his attention primarily to Helmut's situation.

While the theme of marital problems is only one of many in Walser's oeuvre, it is central to Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung, and it deserves more detailed exploration than it has thus far received in the critical literature. I will limit my analysis to the depiction of marital problems in Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung because the Halm marriage is at the heart of both works, instead of treating the theme in other Walser novels as well. The issue of marital instability that governs both works affects not only the Halms' marriage but also the lives of the secondary characters.

Those critics of Walser's work who have treated Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung have tended to focus on the characterization of Helmut or on an analysis of the themes of flight, societal pressure, and sexual disfunction. They offer interpretations of the endings of both works without examining Walser's depiction of marital problems. For example, much of the applicable criticism in Frank Pilipp's New Critical Perspectives on Martin Walser (1994) explores Walser's characterization of his protagonists in a

number of works and compares Helmut Halm in either Ein fliehendes Pferd or Brandung with other Walser protagonists and characters or with characters in the works of other authors. Other critics such as Jonathan Clark and Anthony Waine focus on the theme of flight, especially as a response to societal pressure to conform and the desire to escape from a perceived reality. Pilipp, in a number of essays, joins still other critics, such as Volker Bohn and Ulrike Hick, in interpreting the endings of one or both works. Few of Walser's critics have juxtaposed Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung in their investigations. For example, Jens Kruse in his "Wiederholte Spiegelungen: Walsers Brandung und Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften" analyzes the similarities of "poetische Technik und Motivik" within Wahlverwandtschaften and Brandung as well as the "Strukturanalogien" connecting Brandung and Ein fliehendes Pferd with Wahlverwandtschaften and "Die wunderlichen Nachbarskinder" (181), but he does not include marital problems in his exploration. Such criticism reflects a dearth of analysis of the marital situations that play an important part in the two works. In the following I offer a brief overview of the principal topics in the secondary literature.

In The Novels of Martin Walser (1991), Pilipp argues that the "lack of self-confidence and self-identity perceived by his [Walser's] characters is always the consequence of external, that is, societal, manipulative influences" (25). Walser's protagonists "are too preoccupied with maintaining their defense strategies to self-actualize" (117). Pilipp adds in his preface to New Critical Perspectives that "Walser consistently portrays his protagonists as malcontent, middle-class intellectuals who find themselves in a world ruled by unfairness and hypocrisy" (x); from Pilipp's viewpoint, Helmut serves as an excellent example of Walser's discontented intellectual. Pilipp's stance represents one of the most common explications of Walser's two works concerning Halm; his criticism often contains interpretations of Helmut's character couched in Marxist terms. Further, the criticism

directly connects the effects of societal pressure to conform to expected roles with issues of personal discontent.

In "Working Heroes in the Novels of Martin Walser," an essay in Pilipp's New Critical Perspectives, Keith Bullivant takes a position similar to Pilipp's. Bullivant points out that all of Walser's protagonists reveal Walser's "concern with modern pressures on the individual" in society (19). Bullivant notes that all the protagonists hold a job and that a competitive society forces them to choose the "inward path," a mental withdrawal from the stress of societal roles in order to survive (22). He suggests that Helmut copes with societal pressure by safeguarding his "true self" through "superficial conformism at school and withdrawal into an internalized existence in his private life" (22). The last half of Bullivant's suggestion is especially important to an understanding of the character of Helmut, whose withdrawal seriously affects his relationship with Sabine.

Volker Bohn partially agrees with Bullivant in "Ein genau geschlagener Zirkel über Ein fliehendes Pferd," an essay in Klaus Siblewski's Martin Walser (1981). Bohn argues that Helmut retreats from the external world and seeks serenity in his own inner world: "Das Grundmuster seines Denkens bildet ein Streben nach Endgültigkeit; man gewinnt den Eindruck, daß Helmut . . . nur noch von einem Motiv getrieben wird: seine Ruhe haben zu wollen" (152). This desire for peace spurs Helmut to take drastic steps away from external reality.

Another critic, Jonathan P. Clark, sides with Bohn but takes his claim further by offering an insight into how Helmut's "emotional distancing" affects his relationships. In "A Subjective Confrontation with the German Past in Martin Walser's Ein fliehendes Pferd," an essay in Jürgen E. Schlunk and Armand E. Singer's Martin Walser: International Perspectives (1987), Clark suggests that "Helmut's emotional distancing is a means of self-defense which betrays not so much a fear of confiding in others as it

does a fear of learning from others about himself" (49). Clark goes on to argue: "The many forms of escape into the 'private' realm--vacations, literature, sex--are perpetrated upon the individual by those seeking to control and manipulate" (51-52). While Clark offers a valid reason and motivation for Helmut's flight, he overlooks Helmut's dissatisfying relationship with Sabine. One can utilize the insights Bohn and Clark offer in order to fathom Helmut's behavior in marriage; the latter's retreat and "emotional distancing" contribute to his communication problems in the marital relationship.

In "Reading on the Edge: Martin Walser's California Novel Breakers," another essay in Pilipp's New Critical Perspectives, Bernd Fischer, one of the few critics to address the theme of marriage, rightly sees Helmut Halm as "more withdrawn than ever into his last bastion, the nuclear family" (48). He argues that "it is the institution of marriage that keeps him [Halm] going" (51) and that "as a sexual being, Halm is all but autistic" (51). Fischer notes that "sex is (with the exception of one pitiful marital scene) absent from the novel" (51). Fischer's identification of Helmut's problems with sex touches on one reason why Helmut and Sabine's marriage is not satisfying: Helmut is unwilling or unable to fulfill his conjugal responsibilities because of his emotional withdrawal.

In a chapter entitled "Sexuality and Death; or, The Dialectics of Domination: Brandung," Pilipp, suggesting that ". . . the plot centers upon the main character's personal problems" (Novels 71), argues that Helmut is "insecure" (Novels 75). Pilipp attributes Helmut's problems to "social origins" (Novels 72) and asserts correctly that his "personal problems" translate into challenges for the marriage. Helmut's insecurity contributes to the marital instability he experiences.

Pilipp compares the protagonists of Ein fliehendes Pferd in another chapter in Novels, "A Clash of Pretenses: Ein fliehendes Pferd," arguing that "Helmut Halm and

Klaus Buch, the protagonists, represent two fundamentally different patterns of human behavior and modes of reaction, by means of which both characters strive to achieve a sense of identity in a society governed by appearances and pretense" (63). In the same vein, Ulrike Hick in Martin Walsers Prosa (1983) describes the two men as "zwei alternde Intellektuelle, die nach gemeinsamer Vergangenheit in Schule und Studium in extrem gegensätzlicher Weise ihr Leben zu meistern suchen" (130). Even though both protagonists take different paths, Pilipp and Hick find that both seek to survive.

Pilipp suggests that Brandung "continues to develop the conflicting life styles of Halm and Buch. Buch's superficial existence of unquestioning conformism under capitalist conditions, however, is now projected onto the splendor of Halm's new surroundings" (Novels 71). While connecting Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung, Pilipp does not address the theme of marital problems. Later in "Martin Walser's Breakers and Walter Kempowski's Dog Days: Reflections of Two Unpolitical Men?" in New Critical Perspectives, Pilipp compares the Halm of Walser's Breakers with Sovtschick, the protagonist of Walter Kempowski's Dog Days, contending: "On a generally thematic level, both novels deal with the self-doubts of aging intellectuals and their attempts at compensating for or coping with a lack essentially sexual in nature; their growing certainty after almost thirty years of matrimony of having missed their (erotic) opportunities in life: a midlife crisis of sorts" (67). The juxtaposition of Breakers and Dog Days reveals a part of Helmut's character which affects his marital relations.

In Martin Walsers Prosa, Ulrike Hick also offers reasons for Helmut's flight in Ein fliehendes Pferd; she claims: "Für Helmut Halm stellt der Urlaub eine Flucht aus den von ihm als problematisch empfundenen Lebenszusammenhängen dar, über die der Leser jedoch nichts Konkretes erfährt" (131). Hick elaborates: "Vorgeführt werden zwei extrem entgegengesetzte Ausprägungen der Flucht vor den Anforderungen des

zeitgenössischen Lebens: Introversion und Extroversion" (144). In contrast, Pilipp interprets Helmut's desire to flee as the ardent wish to escape reality "[b]ecause he is acutely insecure and appears almost inept in everyday social intercourse" (Novels 64). Anthony Wayne, addressing Ein fliehendes Pferd in his book Martin Walser (1980), reinforces Pilipp's interpretation and expands on it: "Der Leser empfindet Helmut's Verhalten, vor allem in bezug auf seine Frau, der er seine wahren Gefühle und Gedanken vorenthält, als eine Flucht vor der Wirklichkeit" (117). Both Pilipp and Wayne allude to Helmut's attempt to escape the reality of his problematic relationship, although they do not discuss his marital problems further.

Pilipp points to the "escape strategies" that Helmut employs to improve his life, claiming that in both Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brändung, "Halm's escape strategies ultimately lead to accidents" (Novels 77). He refers, for example, to Klaus's accident while sailing with Helmut or Fran's injury while Helmut dances with her. This is true of all Helmut's "escape strategies" unless one understands the catharsis of confession at the end of both works as one of these. By using confession as one of his strategies, Helmut can emerge unscathed from his escapades of flight and continue his life with Sabine.

When critics discuss the endings of the two works, their remarks are often similar. Pilipp finds that "[t]he ending [of Ein fliehendes Pferd] indicates a new sense of self . . . if he [Helmut] is willing to discuss these insights [thoughts and feelings] with a communicative partner" (Novels 69). Clark expresses a similar view, declaring that the ending of Ein fliehendes Pferd leaves "the reader with the sense that Helmut has indeed broken through the emotional barriers previously shielding him from a sense of self. His narrative illustrates that he is dealing with his past, that he is discovering his own identity, and that he is ready to move on" (56). But Pilipp and Clark never talk about the couple's relationship, preferring to concentrate on Helmut.

By offering an analysis of Walser's technique and by referring to communication between the marriage partners in her analysis, Ulrike Hick interprets the ending differently from Pilipp and Clark. She states:

Gleichwohl markiert die Schlußszene einen Aufbruch. Ob er einem Neuanfang gleichkommen könnte, bleibt allerdings offen. Zumindest wird die Sprachlosigkeit zwischen dem Ehepaar Halm gebrochen. . . . Er setzt mit dem gleichen Satz ein, mit dem die Novelle selbst begann. Damit verleiht Walser dem Erzählten in seiner Struktur wieder Geschlossenheit. (148)

For Bohn, like Hick, the ending is significant for both couples in Ein fliehendes Pferd. He writes: "Die Novellenhandlung endet für Klaus und Helene mit einem Doppelpunkt; für Helmut und Sabine endet sie am Anfang" (165). Bohn leaves his interpretation open in accord with the open ending of Walser's novella.

Turning to the conclusion of Brandung, Pilipp notes that both Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung end similarly. He argues that:

. . . the beginning of Halm's narration [in Brandung as in Ein fliehendes Pferd] marks the end of an inner struggle, that is, a completed mental process that has reached the level of communicability. When Halm confides in his wife, he achieves precisely that solution he had earlier envisioned: a gain in unity and intimacy. (Novels 78)

Pilipp accurately captures Halm's motivation to confess in both works: Helmut must "gain in unity and intimacy" in order to maintain a life with Sabine. In Michael P. Olson's "Interview with Martin Walser," Walser suggests that the ending in Brandung

resembles the conclusion of Ein fliehendes Pferd because Helmut Halm is a person who needs an experience twice. He realizes that he cannot live distanced from his wife, and he must begin to tell her all the things that have happened to him. The novel tells the story of distancing (Olson 54). In saying that Helmut needs to communicate openly with Sabine in order to continue living with her, Walser basically agrees with Pilipp.

The authors of the main secondary literature available on Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung have never focused on the Halms' marital situation in both works. Thus, the body of secondary literature provides insight primarily into the character of Walser's protagonist, suggesting more than anything else that Helmut's desire to flee represents a reaction to societally imposed pressures. By concentrating on characterizing Helmut's motivations and disfunctional responses to his reality, most critics have missed the opportunity to analyze the pressures imposed by marriage as a social institution.

This thesis is divided into six chapters. In Chapter One, I have offered a brief introduction to Walser's works and the topic of my thesis, and reviewed criticism on the two works I am studying. Chapter Two provides a short characterization of Helmut and Sabine Halm as a necessary background for the analysis of Walser's depiction of the theme of marital problems in Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung. In Chapter Three, I address communication problems evident in the relationship between Walser's protagonists. I have chosen not to base my analysis on communications theory because of the limited dialogue that characterizes both works, which depend heavily on the stream-of-consciousness technique. Chapter Four covers the theme of flight as a reaction to marital problems. Most of Walser's critics have examined flight in connection with Helmut's role as an individual in society rather than as a response to marital instability. In Chapter Five, I examine the relationships of two other married couples, one in Ein fliehendes Pferd and one in Brandung, that mirror the disharmony present in the

marriage of Helmut and Sabine. Finally, in Chapter Six, I draw conclusions about Walser's depiction of marriage problems in the two works and suggest avenues for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

HELMUT AND SABINE: A CHARACTERIZATION

Because accurately assessing the central marital relationship in Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung requires understanding the characters Helmut and Sabine Halm, a short characterization of the spouses must precede the analysis. Walser avoids providing any extensive physical description of either character, preferring instead to let his readers imagine their appearance. What we learn of the two principal characters, we glean from Helmut's inner monologues, the direct speech of both husband and wife, and the narrator's comments. By concentrating on Helmut's story in Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung, Walser portrays Sabine through Helmut's eyes; hence, Helmut's views color most of our knowledge about the relationship. The character traits of both husband and wife are filtered through Helmut's perceptions as expressed most often in his inner monologues.

Helmut dominates both works. A complicated man full of dissatisfaction and insecurities, he keeps his true feelings concealed, rarely revealing any of those feelings to others. Pilipp and Bullivant suggest that Helmut's dissatisfaction stems primarily from his perception of his role in society (Pilipp, Novels 25; Bullivant 21). Bohn contends that Helmut is a "Verteidigungs- und Flucht-Experte" (155), a title he earns by fleeing on numerous occasions from the obligations in his marriage while seeming to conform to societal expectations. Walser often explores Helmut's dissatisfaction by depicting his comparison of himself with others, thus developing themes of vanity, aging, discontent, and flight.

Dissatisfied with his body, Helmut cannot identify with the strolling vacationers in the opening café scene of Ein fliehendes Pferd (9). He realizes that he does not measure up to the standard of beauty that they represent and for which he secretly yearns. His concern about his fading looks increases with the realization that he is no longer young, especially when he compares himself to Klaus Buch. According to Pilipp, "Buch's ostensible self-confidence, vigor, and success confirm Halm's age complex and weaken his already battered sense of identity even more" (Novels 65). Helmut's vanity is also evident in the opening chapter of Brandung. Here the narrator describes how Helmut performs his morning toilet and responds to his face with mixed feelings of pleasure and displeasure (7). Helmut's actions in front of the mirror reveal his inner struggle with the awareness that he is growing older. Like Blanche Dubois in A Streetcar Named Desire, he tries to avoid bright lights and mirrors (277) and anything else that might reveal the ravages of age to him. Unfortunately, such avoidance techniques hide his aging neither from others nor himself.

Helmut's dissatisfaction extends beyond his external appearance and age; he also lacks self-confidence. When he was young, fear paralyzed him, preventing him from looking inside a friend's house or even asking to see the place (Ein fliehendes Pferd 26); his behavior suggests a tremendous fear of rejection and disapproval. The mature Helmut still lacks self-confidence. In Ein fliehendes Pferd it becomes clear that, while teaching at a Gymnasium for many years, he enjoys putting on a front and being misunderstood (70). His unrelenting fear of revealing his true identity does not reflect self-esteem and self-confidence.

In Brandung fear and lack of self-confidence continue to prevent him from feeling comfortable around others; everyone intimidates him except Elrod, Carol's husband, who has no power over him (151). Helmut worries so much about what others think of him

that he is unable to act; fear of rejection clouds his decision-making. His fear is so pervasive that he mistrusts his own actions and undertakings.

The general dissatisfaction about his appearance and age coupled with his fear of rejection often results in strong feelings of envy. In Ein fliehendes Pferd, he secretly admires Klaus's ability to reminisce about the past (23, 24, 28, 30 et passim); in addition, he believes that Klaus has achieved his dreams while he himself has not. Helmut envies Klaus's accomplishments, especially his marriage to a young and beautiful woman.

In Brandung envy continues to mark Helmut's life. For example, he rarely receives telephone calls and is covertly jealous of those who do, perceiving them as more important than he (7). This kind of envy seems more trivial than that expressed in Ein fliehendes Pferd, yet another example of the emotion is much more disturbing. Attracted to Elissa, Rainer's wife, and desiring her, Helmut says: "Rainer, ich beneide dich" (Brandung 46). Helmut's active mind creates mixed feelings--infatuation and envy--yet he only feels comfortable in sharing those thoughts that he thinks would not destroy his relationship with Rainer. Confiding in his old friend that he envies him may either produce intimacy between them or perpetuate Helmut's insecurity.

Helmut's active mind, insecurity, and feelings of guilt further complicate his interactions with the people around him. When he returns without Klaus from their boating adventure in Ein fliehendes Pferd, his mind almost leads him to despair: "Plötzlich hatte er das Gefühl, daß von jetzt an von allen Seiten ununterbrochen Angriffe zu gewärtigen seien. Es gab keine unverfängliche Minute mehr. Plötzlich war alles unvorhersehbar" (128). Helmut fears that he has killed Klaus. To him Klaus's disappearance is not an accident, and he feels guilty about the incident.

In Brandung Helmut's active imagination causes trouble again when he is attracted to Fran and imagines that she is attracted to him. When he later learns that she already has

a boyfriend, he reflects: "Was er über dieses Mädchen gedacht oder sich eingebildet hatte, war jetzt wirklich zerstäubt, vernichtet. Es gab kein Problem mehr" (159). Although he has enjoyed fantasizing and continues to do so, he seems relieved when his fantasies, which he uses to retreat from reality temporarily, turn out to be in vain.

Pilipp, Bullivant, Bohn, Clark, and other critics have discussed Walser's protagonists in general and Halm in particular, and commented on Helmut's strategies for surviving in the world of reality (Pilipp, Novels 117; Bullivant 22; Bohn 152; and Clark 51-52). In "Rodeo auf dem Bodensee," Hans Bertram Bock defines Helmut as "trunksüchtig" and "weltflüchtig." Halm is a complicated introvert, reacting against societally imposed pressures that constantly threaten him. He fears discovery and envies those who appear to have adapted to the demands of society. He rarely talks with others about his marital problems, but his words and actions reveal the fibers of a strained relationship. Still, he needs Sabine's support to meet society's expectations.

The character of Sabine is more difficult to analyze because Walser effectively limits our knowledge about her by narrating both works from Helmut's point of view. Most of our information about her is filtered through his inner monologues; to a far lesser extent, we know her through her own direct speech. In the absence of much physical description, the mental picture of Sabine that Walser conjures up is one of a strong-willed, intelligent woman who wants her own way and dominates her husband and children mainly because of Helmut's weakness.

Throughout both works her strength of will is evident. From the opening pages of Ein fliehendes Pferd, she controls Helmut and is forced to fill the void created by his lack of self-confidence. In one of his earliest inner monologues, he reveals that he has had to follow her to the promenade every evening on their vacation: "Drei Tage waren sie hier, und drei Abende hatte er Sabine in die Stadt folgen müssen" (10). When she accepts an invitation to go sailing with Klaus and Helene, even though Helmut is not interested, he

compliantly joins the group (40). Although Sabine's claim that she has an appointment with her hairdresser excuses her from the fateful outing during which Klaus is swept overboard, she tells Helmut to go, and he obediently follows her instructions (102).

Her domination of him is even more apparent in Brandung. Shortly after their arrival in California, she demands that Helmut take the family to the beach. She forces him to agree, then orders him to persuade their daughter to accompany them (88). Further, she symbolically expresses that domination daily by driving her husband to work. Since he is afraid to drive in California, she takes over the task. She runs the household, telling Helmut what to eat, drink, and wear. Her desire to have everything her way reinforces Helmut's insecurity and lack of self-confidence. Because of his weakness, he constantly acquiesces to her wishes and pleases her even against his better judgment. Walser's portrayal of the dominance issue is, however, quite ambivalent. One can see Sabine's exercise of power in another way. By abandoning his responsibilities, Helmut necessitates her assumption of control over the house and him. In Chapter Six (60, 62) I discuss this issue of marital power further.

The combination of an aging, vain, and insecure husband and a wife forced to be strong-willed necessarily leads to marital problems. Their personal dissatisfactions spill over to the people around them and especially into their relationship, resulting in a marriage that is characterized by poor communication and destructive behavior.

CHAPTER THREE

COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS

Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften, Frisch's Stiller, and Walser's Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung share a common theme, the depiction of the principal marital relationships as troubled. Goethe's work describes a marriage filled with problems; the marriage partners seek fulfillment outside of their marital relationship. This couple lives through periods of physical and mental flight away from each other that result in extramarital intercourse, the birth of an illegitimate child, and ultimately death. Similarly, Frisch's Stiller explores the disturbed relationship of its principal characters, which involves his protagonist's attempt to find extramarital love. Walser's Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung portray a marriage in difficulty, undermined by poor communication and episodes of flight. While Walser's protagonist may experience the same intensity of flight as the protagonists in Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften or in Frisch's Stiller, Helmut's attempts to move beyond the boundaries of his marriage remain unconsummated fantasies.

Burkhardt Lindner argues, in "Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften und die Kritik der mythischen Verfassung der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft," that "die Wahlverwandtschaften [ist] ein Eheroman; der Zusammenstoß von Liebe und Ehe bestimmt ihren Konflikt" (26). He adds that:

Der . . . Widerspruch zwischen Liebe, sexuellem Begehren einerseits und Ehe als juristisch-kirchlicher Institution [andererseits] läßt sich in einer Matrix unterschiedlicher Konstellationen beschreiben . . . :

- Dreieckskonflikt zwischen Ehepaar und Unverheiratetem . . .
- die verbotene Liebe zwischen zwei Unverheirateten . . .
- die Verführung einer unverheirateten Person . . .
- das Zugrundegehen in einer Ehe . . .

Diese vier Versionen bilden Grundkonstellationen, aus denen sich komplexere Kombinationen herstellen. (27)

Lindner indicates that Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften involves a more complex system, "ein verdoppelter Dreieckskonflikt mit einem Ehepaar und zwei Unverheirateten" (28).

One of Lindner's categories, "das Zugrundegehen in einer Ehe" (27), is often a literary tool to describe a complex situation in which more than one couple are experiencing marital problems. In my view, Frisch's Stiller and Walser's Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung all use this category effectively.

Frisch's protagonist, Stiller, indulges in periods of physical and mental flight to avoid the problems within his marriage, but his behavior results in infidelity. In "Die Odysse zu sich selbst" in Manfred Jurgensen's Frisch: Kritik-Thesen-Analysen, Marlis Zeller-Cambon analyzes Stiller's plight by comparing him to the protagonist in Luigi Pirandello's Il Fu Mattia Pascal. She argues: "[S]o dürfte die Ehe als Problem, an dem man scheitern, das man aber auch bewältigen kann, eines der Kernthemen in Stiller sein" (86). Stiller's destructive behavior ultimately costs him his marriage and his freedom.

Unlike the principal married couple in Frisch's Stiller, Walser's Helmut and Sabine Halm remain together, maintaining the status quo of an unstable, problem-ridden marriage. The couple's direct and indirect verbal communication, body language, and Helmut's inner monologues reveal the extent and nature of the marital problems.

Within their verbal exchanges, Helmut tends not to share feelings and thoughts due to his fear of revealing his true self in the process. The body language of the Halms, though depicted by Walser to a limited extent, furnishes a further indication of marital instability, reflecting the distance that has grown up between them. Helmut's inner monologues provide insight into the kinds of issues he conceals from Sabine.

PROBLEMS IN EIN FLIEHENDES PFERD

Ein fliehendes Pferd follows Helmut and Sabine on vacation at Lake Constance. A vacation tends to reduce the stress level accrued in jobs or daily living, and it often provides the only long-term time without external demands that a married couple can spend together in an entire year. Sometimes such extended time together brings interpersonal issues to the surface that reflect pre-existing marital problems carried over from daily living to the vacation. This is true of Helmut and Sabine's marital difficulties in Ein fliehendes Pferd. The Halms plan to stay for a month, but their chance encounter with Klaus Buch, a childhood friend of Helmut, and with Buch's wife, Helene, leads to complications. Walser uses the outings of the two friends and their wives to highlight the fragility of Helmut's character and the instability of his relationship with Sabine.

Verbal Exchanges

The instability in the Halms' marital relationship stems, in great part, from Helmut's fear. He seems apprehensive about sharing his inner feelings and thoughts with others, including Sabine. He even dreams about the negative consequences of

revealing his true self. In the following passage from Chapter Five of Ein fliehendes Pferd, he realizes how afraid he is of being understood as the person he really is:

Er träumte, er drehe sich in seinem Sarg um und habe trotz der vollkommenen Dunkelheit den Eindruck, daß eine Sargwand fehle. . . . Aber jetzt war klar, daß er sich in einer Halle befand, aus der man hinauskommen konnte. Daran war er interessiert. Er wußte, daß er zurückkommen würde ans Tageslicht, zu den Leuten. Und er wußte, es gab nur eine Bedingung: wenn dich ein einziger erkennt, ist es aus, für immer. (73-74)

If Helmut did share his dream candidly with Sabine, revealing his true self including his fears, they might discover the extent to which they have grown apart over the years.

When partners do not share their thoughts and feelings straightforwardly, they often express themselves indirectly. Sabine frequently voices negative feelings and thoughts she harbors about Helmut when she speaks with others. For example, she does not tell him directly that she feels he works too hard; she waits until others are present and mentions her concern to them in such a way that he will overhear: "Sabine sagte, daß Helmut ununterbrochen arbeite. Allerdings auf eine nicht jedem gleich begreifliche Weise. Er lese eben immerzu. Es sehe aus wie Studieren. Sie halte es aber eher für Leben" (95). Sabine would never say those same words when she is alone with Helmut, because she does not know how he would receive her criticism. Further, she may not want to compromise the frustrating but comfortable status quo. Especially when her thoughts about Helmut are derogatory, she is unable to communicate them directly to him.

Since she is afraid to reveal her thoughts openly, Sabine makes Helmut indirectly privy to the problems she perceives in their marriage by broadcasting those problems

to other people. When the Halms spend time with Klaus und Helene, Klaus provides Sabine with a means of discussing her relationship with Helmut. Instead of complaining to Helmut about their laziness and inactivity on vacation, she implicitly addresses herself to Klaus: "Hel und Klaus segeln viel. Sabine und Helmut liegen lieber faul am Wasser, dann sitzen sie herum. Es klang als beklage sie sich bei Klaus Buch über Helmut" (22). On another outing with Klaus and Helene, she reports that Helmut does not care about her feelings, because he reads intensely without discussing his reading with her, or reads so fast that she falls behind. Sabine feels as if they are in a contest: "Sie empfinde, sagte Sabine unbeirrt, sein Tempo schon manchmal als rücksichtslos. Es mache den Eindruck, als sei es ihm schon egal, ob sie noch mitkomme oder nicht" (96). In describing her perception of the situation, Sabine vents some of her frustration, embarrasses Helmut, and tries to make him feel as bad as she does about their relationship, while indirectly attempting to close the distance between them.

In addition to providing Sabine with the opportunity to broadcast her feelings, the company of others relieves both spouses of the necessity of communicating directly on a significant level. The Buchs bring variety and novelty to the Halms' boring, stale relationship, and the conversation flows when the couples are together. Yet after another outing with Klaus and Helene, the Halms find they have nothing to say to each other. "Sobald sie von diesen Buchs weg sind, wird's Werktag, wird's finster, ist der Ofen aus" (57).

Not only does little meaningful conversation take place between Helmut and Sabine themselves, but they have also gradually drifted apart in their interests, thus undermining their unity as a couple and reducing the time they spend together. In the sidewalk café scene early in Ein fliehendes Pferd, Sabine has not asked Helmut whether he would like to join her in the café; she simply expects him to accompany her (9). She wants to observe the people, an activity he finds boring. He even questions her about the

activity in the following exchange: "Findest du das gut hier, sagte er. Ich könnte ewig Leute anschauen, sagte sie" (18). With his question, Helmut tries to point out that he does not enjoy this pastime, but due to their existing communication problems, Sabine may not realize that he would like to end the activity. Further, he seems unwilling to reveal his real reason for wanting to leave--his envy of the strollers and dissatisfaction with his own aging appearance. Helmut likes to be inactive, prefers distance from people, and does not like to talk, whereas Sabine wants to be active, enjoys people, and loves to speak.

The problems the Halms perceive in their marriage drive them to criticize each other during verbal exchanges instead of attempting to resolve their real difficulties. For example, Sabine censures Helmut's terminology when speaking about Klaus: "Sie hatte ihm vorgeworfen, er sage immer *dieser Klaus Buch*. Wie sie es, bitte, gern hätte, hatte er gefragt. Der sei doch sein Freund. Gewesen, sagte Helmut" (35). When Sabine finds fault with Helmut's choice of words, her reprimand reflects, in part, her dissatisfaction with her marriage.

Another exchange serves to further confirm her unhappiness with her husband. Helmut wants to take Otto, their dog, on an outing with Klaus and Helene, but Sabine tries to accomodate Klaus and his fear of dogs. She accuses Helmut of being inflexible and averse to new ways when he insists that Otto go with them. "Jetzt komm doch, das tut dir gut, hatte Sabine gesagt. Was? hatte er zurückgefragt. Daß du einmal herausgerissen wirst. Wo herausgerissen? Aus deinem Trott" (39). Sabine is more concerned with pleasing Klaus than acceding to Helmut's wishes. Her criticism suggests a lack of tolerance for Helmut's ideas, habits, and idiosyncrasies.

These habits come into question once again while the Halms wait for Klaus and Helene to pick them up for an outing. Sabine chastises Helmut for hurrying her out of the house just because he wants to protect his privacy: "Du mit deiner Hetzerei, sagte Sabine.

Jetzt stehen wir da wie bestellt und nicht abgeholt" (58). Essentially she accuses him of hurrying her, criticizing her, and not being patient with her. He fails to respond, although he admits to himself that he did not want the Buchs to enter the Halms' vacation home, a reaction he cannot even explain to himself (58). The fact that Sabine criticizes him about trivial matters suggests that more deep-seated marital problems exist between them which she cannot discuss.

Body Language

Problems are not only evident in Helmut and Sabine's verbal communication, but also in their body language. Textual glimpses of their body language provide further evidence of their marital instability, implying that they do not enjoy being close to one another. There is indirect evidence in the text that they take hikes together; for example, on an outing with Klaus and Helene, Helmut attempts to find the place to which he had hiked earlier with Sabine (76). Yet he is loath to walk home with Sabine after a get-together with the Buchs, and even suggests that they take the bus instead (34). Although he does dislike physical exertion, if the marriage were healthy he would enjoy the time spent walking home with his wife.

Walking together often provides couples the opportunity to talk as well as to demonstrate affection, but Helmut seeks to avoid such intimacy. When the Halms walk together, they seem isolated from each other: "Helmut und Sabine trotteten zu ihrer Wohnung" (57). On another occasion, Helmut's body language reveals his displeasure: "Mißmutig trottete Helmut neben der munteren Sabine nach Nußdorf hinaus" (34). The use of the verb "trotten" and the adjective "mißmutig" suggests that Helmut does not like to spend time alone with Sabine; probably he would prefer to be reading, as

repeated textual allusions suggest. Indeed, Clark has pointed out that "[i]t is through his reading that he finds most privacy and greatest emotional detachment" (53).

When Sabine and Helmut do spend time together, their body language reflects their disharmony. He often displays his discontent with her actions in this way. His tendency to avoid decisions usually forces her to resolve things for the couple, but as soon as she plans something, his body language reveals his unhappiness. For example, when Klaus asks the Halms to go sailing, Sabine enthusiastically agrees, only to be greeted with Helmut's look of disapproval: "Helmut schaute Sabine an, als wolle er sagen: Das hast du jetzt davon" (40). He finally accepts the plan, but his face again betrays that he does not like the idea: "Helmut . . . machte dabei ein Gesicht, in dem er Verzweiflung triumphieren ließ" (40). By his disapproving look he hopes to show Sabine what he thinks about the plan and at the same time condemns her actions.

Helmut's Inner Monologues

Helmut has mixed feelings about Sabine which are revealed through his inner monologues. By keeping these negative feelings and thoughts about her in the monologues, Walser underscores the lack of communication that characterizes the couple's relationship. When the Halms sit together in the café at the start of Ein fliehendes Pferd, Helmut would rather be in their vacation home reading Kierkegaard's diaries (10-11). He wonders whether he has the same look on his face that Sabine wears: "Wahrscheinlich hast du, ohne es zu bemerken, in diesem Augenblick ganz genau das gleiche abschüssige Lächeln im Gesicht. Wer euch so sieht, muß euch für Zwillinge halten" (17-18). Sabine reads his mind and verbalizes his thoughts, prompting him to think negatively about her: "Halt's Maul, dachte er und genierte sich gleich stürmisch dafür, daß er in Gedanken so wüst mit Sabine umging" (17). By suppressing such

feelings and thoughts when they arise, he strives to conceal from himself as well as Sabine how dissatisfying their marriage really is.

Helmut's dissatisfaction with the relationship can also be seen in the extent to which he disguises his true self from Sabine. Ultimately, his goal seems to be to prevent her from knowing the real Helmut. He actually rejoices at times that she does not really know him, thinking "daß es vielleicht eine Art Laster sei, aber das süßeste aller Gefühle sei es doch zu erleben, daß auch die eigene Frau keine Ahnung hat von einem" (43-44). Masking his thoughts and his true self also enables him to retain a semblance of control over his marriage. Helmut needs to believe that he is the master of this relationship since he perceives a lack of control in his work outside the home.

PROBLEMS IN BRANDUNG

The instability of Helmut and Sabine's marriage continues in Walser's Brandung. In "Beim Reden Gedanken verfertigen. Religion--Literatur, handfeste Modelle," Edwin Hartl states that Helmut and Sabine "können ohne einander nicht leben, miteinander freilich noch weniger." The novel takes the couple to Oakland, California, where Helmut has accepted a teaching job offered by his friend, Rainer Mersjohann. The position provides Helmut with the opportunity to start afresh, leaving his job in Germany behind for the interim, but the fresh start comes complete with its own set of temptations. His interactions with Rainer and Elissa, Rainer's wife, as well as other associates in California, make his life with Sabine more difficult.

In Brandung the Halms continue their habit of not communicating with each other about important matters, while additional external pressures complicate their relationship. Their adult daughter, Lena, hoping to escape her problems, accompanies them to America, and ultimately adds to the challenges the couple faces. The death of

Sabine's mother just before they leave for California increases the stress involved in moving to a new country. Once the Halms are in California, the external demands on them escalate. Sabine has to return to Germany due to her father's illness, leaving Helmut alone for several months. After she leaves, their communication is limited to periodic long-distance telephone conversations. The difficulty of maintaining their relationship when they are geographically separated exacerbates the problems in their marriage.

Verbal Exchanges

In Brandung the Halms do not talk about their relationship nor share feelings or thoughts pertaining to their marriage; instead, they concentrate on other matters, particularly their children. On several occasions, one finds them discussing their daughters. Two examples will illustrate the nature of Helmut and Sabine's discourse about Lena and Juliane.

The first example concerns their younger daughter, Lena:

Seine [Helmut's] erste Frage: Lena? Sie will nicht angesprochen werden, sagte Sabine. . . . Du mußt mit Lena sprechen, sagte Sabine. Sie kann doch nicht dreieinhalb Monate im Zimmer hocken, eine Teetasse in der Hand, auf die Wand starren und mit diesem Traugott abrechnen. Und dann ist sie wütend, wenn man hineinkommt. Sie will nicht, daß man sie erwischt, wie sie da hockt und starrt. Halm sagte: Sitzt und starrt. Sabine sagte: Sie muß mit auf diese Party, heute. Wenn sie nicht mitgeht, geh ich auch nicht mit. (71)

Here Helmut and Sabine act as concerned parents. They are afraid that their daughter, disfigured in an accident and divorced, will become isolated unless she interacts with others; thus, they force her to go out, attending parties such as the one held by Rainer and Elissa. Even though it is quite normal to be concerned about one's child, they sometimes use Lena's situation as an excuse to avoid discussing the state of their own relationship.

During the second exchange, the Halms converse about the plans of their elder daughter, Juliane, who has recently ended a relationship with a married man and has decided to move to Brazil. "Sabine sagte: Und Juliane will nach Brasilien! Halm sagte: Weißt du etwas Besseres? Das war doch ein Überfall, sagte Sabine" (175). Although Lena lives with them for a short time in California, Sabine is unhappy that Lena and Juliane prefer not to live at home. If either daughter were to remain at home, she would provide her parents with a continuing diversion, enabling them to avoid doing something about their own problems. Since Helmut and Sabine do not want to discuss their relationship, the presence of their children would facilitate easy conversation and prevent the unwanted topic from arising.

When the Halms do not talk about their children, their conversation turns to trivial matters. Two exchanges reflect the inconsequential nature of their verbal communication. At the beginning of the novel, Sabine visits her ailing mother in the hospital and later summarizes the gist of their conversation for Helmut:

Die Mutter habe gesagt: Endlich hast du einmal ein schönes Kleid an. Und ich, sagte Sabine, hatte Bedenken, ob dieses quergestreifte Durcheinander aus Gold und Grün nicht zuviel sei fürs Krankenhaus. Aber die Mutter sei immer wieder auf das Kleid zurückgekommen. Sie habe gefragt, was das Kleid gekostet habe, sie wolle dieses Kleid bezahlen, weil sie so froh sei, daß Sabine endlich einmal ein

schönes Kleid an habe. Halm sagte: Da kommt das Gutöhrlein-Blut durch. Eine Gutöhrlein kann nie glauben, daß ein Lehrer eine Frau kleiden und nähren kann.

(10)

This verbal exchange reveals two things: first, Sabine is concerned about her mother, but expresses her anxiety by recounting a trivial conversation and not her true feelings; secondly, Helmut initially listens, but soon responds defensively, effectively derailing Sabine's story and failing to realize the real reason for the account. Instead of focusing on her need, Helmut reacts to his reawakened memories of the lack of respect he received from Sabine's parents over the years.

The second exchange concerns a small, stray cat that Sabine has been petting and feeding outside. After one of these sessions, Helmut greets her at the top of the staircase:

Halm rannte rasch zu der schmalen steilen Treppe, öffnete die Tür zum Treppenschacht und gratulierte der Heraufkommenden zu ihrer Eroberung. Ach Sabine, sagte er, du kannst es. Sabine sagte: Hast du das gehört, die faucht, wenn sie miauen will, so irritiert ist die. Die will wirklich miauen und schnurren, und dann kommt zuerst ein Fauchen heraus. So jung und so verstört. (63-64)

By complimenting Sabine on her ability to make friends with the cat, Helmut is saying something that seems quite mundane, but which, given his character, could actually be an overture toward more meaningful conversation, yet she ignores the compliment. She proceeds to chat further about the cat without responding to his comment. Thus, when Helmut and Sabine attempt to engage each other in even trivial conversation, they often fail miserably. In the first example, his attitude toward her parents sabotages a fledgling conversation. In the second, Sabine defeats Helmut's attempt by ignoring his

comments and limiting their talk to superficialities. In each case, one spouse initially tries to bridge the communication gap but meets resistance from the other party.

The gap between them becomes wider when Helmut and Sabine talk past each other, like parallel lines never intersecting. When she shares a thought, his response often changes the direction of the conversation. The two basically do not talk to each other, but rather at one another without actively listening. Several incidents illustrate this phenomenon of parallel speech. Only four pages into the novel, Helmut is preoccupied with deciding whether to accept Rainer's offer of a teaching position in California, while Sabine is thinking about her father, who has not yet realized that his wife could die:

"Halm sagte: Im August nach Kalifornien. Sabine sagte, ihr Vater habe offenbar überhaupt nicht damit gerechnet. Deshalb habe sie sofort gesagt, man dürfe nichts unversucht lassen" (10). Helmut and Sabine fail to listen for potentially significant topics that, when shared, might allow them to grow closer together. Instead of listening to each other, they move on to other topics, cutting each other off.

On a second occasion, Helmut, Sabine, and Lena, now in California, have decided to spend the day at the beach: "Als sie im Sand lagen, sagte Halm: Sabine, hier könnte ich sein. Sabine sagte, man sollte Zürns eine Karte schreiben. Halm sagte: Im Augenblick reden wir aneinander vorbei" (90). Helmut recognizes that they are talking past each other, yet his wife either does not hear his comment or simply ignores it and moves on to a different topic.

A third example reveals that Sabine and Helmut do not bother to discuss each other's comments, even when those comments can easily be misinterpreted or misunderstood. In the following example, Helmut examines the comment, yet chooses not to tell her what he thinks. Often when comments are not revisited and clarified by one or both partners, misinterpretations happen, as seems to be the case in this exchange: "Als sie ins Schlafzimmer hinunterkamen, sagte er: Droben merk ich den Geruch nicht mehr, aber

hier. Schrecklich, sagte Sabine. Halm tat, als glaube er, Sabine meine damit den Geruch des anderen Ehepaars. Es war aber klar, daß Sabine viel mehr gemeint hatte. Vielleicht hatte sie sogar ihn gemeint" (101). Helmut interprets Sabine's comment negatively and does not discuss his interpretation with her because of the implicit criticism that he perceives.

Meaningful communication between the Halms can never take place when one hides pertinent information from the other. In Brandung there is an escalation of communication problems since Helmut resorts to concealing important facts. For example, he has not informed Sabine that his Nietzsche manuscript has been rejected for publication. When she returns to Germany to care for her father, Helmut fears that she will find the rejection letter that he left there: "Die Vorstellung, daß Sabine den Brief entdeckte, mit dem sein Nietzschebuch abgelehnt worden war, konnte er nur mit dem Wunsch nach einer möglichst universalen Katastrophe beantworten" (177). By refusing to reveal such information, Helmut runs the risk of embarrassing discoveries, potentially damaging to his self-image as well as to Sabine's opinion of him. Concealment most likely represents his attempt to exert some control over her and his relationship with her. By not telling her about the manuscript, he manipulates her perception of him as long as he can prevent her from discovering his secret. Helmut believes that if he does not tell her, he can ensure her belief that he is capable of success in his work; thus he can count on her continued respect. He does not want to lose face with her.

Later Helmut demonstrates his lack of trust in Sabine by concealing information once again. Attracted to Fran, one of the students in his conversation class, he changes his habits in the hope of winning Fran's approval. He is loath to tell anyone, and especially Sabine, about his new lifestyle. Since she has just returned to Germany, she does not know that he no longer drinks and has started jogging every day: "Auch Sabine hatte er am Telefon nichts gesagt von seinem neuen Lebensstil" (198). He keeps this

information secret so that he does not have to reveal his thoughts and feelings about Fran. Walser uses Helmut's concealment of his attraction to Fran as well as of the less significant matter of his changed habits as another illustration of the Halms' unsatisfactory verbal communication and of the instability of their marriage.

Body Language

Physical distance in Sabine's body language provides further evidence of this instability. In Brandung Helmut's body language tends to be more positive, revealing an effort to forge connections with Sabine rather than break them, but she often uses her body language to reject connection. The physical distance that she seeks finds expression, for example, in her pulling away her hands, turning away, or leaving. When Helmut and Sabine return home from their first party at Rainer and Elissa's, the thrill of the evening lingers with them. Helmut expresses his excitement through his body language: "Halm ergriff Sabines Hand und drückte sie und zog Sabine eng an sich. Aber das wollte Sabine überhaupt nicht" (52). Even though the party seems to have lifted her spirits as much as his, she is unable to enjoy his attempt to make her feel loved. In spite of the distance that has grown up between them, Helmut tries to reconnect with her through body language, but she rejects his advances, perhaps because of their marital problems.

Two examples clearly demonstrate Sabine's inability to receive and enjoy Helmut's attempts at intimacy. On their first Saturday in California, she wants to go to the beach with Helmut and Lena, who oppose the idea. To preserve peace, Helmut decides to comply with Sabine's wish, but Lena resists, pleading a headache. Dismayed by her daughter's recalcitrance, Sabine becomes silent and stares at the tabletop. In an effort to defuse the situation, Helmut approaches Sabine to provide support by using body language: "Er

schob seine Hand unter ihre Haare und knetete ein bißchen an ihrem Nacken herum. Komm, Sabine, wir fahren ans Meer. . . . Sabine sagte: Laß mich! Sprang auf und verschwand im Treppenschacht nach unten" (87). More upset with Lena than with Helmut, Sabine rejects his conciliatory gesture, preferring to withdraw into herself, and answers verbally at first, only to proceed to display physical distancing by leaving.

During the same incident, Helmut tries again a little later: "Sie [Lena] kommt, brüllte er, raste den steilen Treppenschacht hinab, bog unten rechts ins Schlafzimmer, legte seine Arme um Sabine. Sabine entzog sich seiner Umarmung, bückte sich und stellte die Pantöffelchen, die von ihrer Mutter übriggeblieben waren, unter das Bett" (88). Sabine's body language reveals the need for physical distance from Helmut even though she is angry with Lena instead of him. She cannot feel good about his embrace because of her anger at what she perceives as her family's lack of cooperation. Her physical manipulation of her mother's slippers signals to him that she wants to be left alone, and he interprets her action as seeking refuge from him and solace from her mother.

Helmut's Inner Monologues

Both partners seek distance in one form or another. While Sabine's body language reflects physical distancing, Helmut's inner monologues demonstrate that he engages in mental distancing. Although his verbal statements and body language often invite her to communicate, he is unable to really share his thoughts. His behavior remains inconsistent, sending Sabine mixed signals that drive the couple further apart. For example, he verbalizes positive sentiments, yet dwells inwardly on negative thoughts after another party at Rainer and Elissa's: "Wahnsinnig, sagte Halm, wie schnell eine Cocktailparty vorbei ist. Dann sagte er: Ein Tag kann nicht schöner sein. Und, dachte er,

man traut sich kaum, es zu sagen, nicht schwerer. Man hörte nichts als Zikaden" (84). Actually, he has a guilty conscience since he is attracted to Elissa. Because he cannot share his true feelings about the party, he instead claims that he really enjoyed the day. By deceiving Sabine in this way, Helmut puts greater distance between them.

A second example of inner monologue further underscores Helmut's need to distance himself from his wife. While he makes overtures that seem to indicate an honest desire for more intimacy, his monologues often suggest the opposite.

Ach, Sabine, sagte er. Ja-jaa, sagte sie. Er hätte Sabine gern hineingezogen in seinen inneren Dialog. Er fühlte sich überhaupt nicht von ihr getrennt. Aber beteiligen konnte er sie nicht. Es wäre die Lösung. Sobald er Sabine hineinziehen würde, wäre das Schlimmste vorbei. Von da an wüchsen sie wieder zusammen zur alten Einigkeit, Festigkeit. Wenn er also Sabine nicht sofort alles erzählte, gab er zu, daß er keine Lösung wollte. Das Dilemma wollte er. Die Katastrophe. Und wie schön wäre es, jetzt sofort alles vor Sabine auszubreiten. (122-23)

Within his monologue are thoughts and valuable information which could, if expressed, contribute to a more satisfying relationship with Sabine. Concealing that information results instead in mental distancing.

Even though Helmut and Sabine experience communication problems and practice distancing from each other, he tells her of his fantasies about other women and of his fears at the end of both works. Walser indicates this by beginning and ending Ein fliehendes Pferd with the same lines and by employing a similar device at the beginning and end of Brandung. This technique suggests that hope may exist for the couple's troubled marriage because of Helmut's acts of confession. The pernicious effects of distancing and concealment are broken by these confessions at the end of each work.

Pilipp's assessment of the ending of Brandung expresses the situation well: "No longer suppressing his desire to confess and no longer convinced of having to fight his battle furtively, Halm once again rediscovers the comforting presence of his wife. His final confession to her will be a retelling of the novel" (Novels 77-78).

Helmut confesses in order to maintain the status quo of a relationship which, though riddled with communication problems, still provides him the comfortable haven that he needs to survive. Ironically, while Sabine can guarantee his survival, she also represents the greatest threat to it, as Helmut's thought implies: "Sabine war die Stelle, an der er verletzbar war" (Ein fliehendes Pferd 67). The fear that she might no longer wish to tolerate and support him forces him to communicate past fantasies, feelings, thoughts, and fears. Amazingly, she does not reject him, but listens to his explanations and disclosures even though he has a selfish reason for making them. Clark argues that these confessions suggest "that Helmut has indeed broken through the emotional barrier previously shielding him from a sense of self" and show that he "is ready to move on" (56). However, one could also argue that Helmut's cycle of "sinning" and confessing will be repeated again and again, because he has already followed this procedure once in Ein fliehendes Pferd, only to repeat it in Brandung. Thus, Walser's technique of bringing each novel full circle is a hopeful sign, but it does not guarantee the survival of Helmut and Sabine's marriage.

CHAPTER FOUR

FLIGHT

A number of Walser's critics have noted that flight--attempts to transcend the everyday ennui and oppression of conforming to modern society's expectations--plays a key role in many of his works. Pilipp has extensively discussed Helmut's desire "to escape reality" (Novels 64). Clark has identified Halm's need for flight as a movement "away from the need to be socially or politically engaged" (53). In his analysis of Ein fliehendes Pferd, Clark explains "that Helmut hopes for fulfillment of his flight through Kierkegaard's diaries" (53), perhaps implying that Helmut has a need for closeness, but sublimates that desire intellectually through his reading rather than seeking genuine intimacy with people. The effort to seem to conform to the perceived demands of society serves to mask Helmut's dependency, insecurity, and fear, while promoting his intellectual need for identity with a society he no longer comprehends. The world to which the projected outer image of Helmut conforms lacks the depth and quality of his inner fantasy world. Although he knows that his ability to control the expectations of the outer world is limited, he exercises complete, god-like control over his inner world, creating and manipulating images that obscure his real identity. Commanding his inner world allows him not only to escape from societal demands temporarily, but also from problems in his marriage.

In Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung one finds clear metaphors for flight which represent the state of Helmut's disharmony with societal expectations, including the pressures from his marital relationship, yet Walser does not limit his depiction of flight to images of runaway horses or breakers. The idea of flight has received critical

attention that has not extended to the examination of the marital relationships in these works. In both works flight seems the only option that Helmut recognizes as a means of finding relief from his problems until he reaches the catharsis of confession. Since either terminating or improving his relationship with Sabine seems impossible to him, he resorts to periods of physical and mental flight in order to retreat from his wife and his surroundings. Combined with the metaphors of the runaway horse and the breakers, the numerous instances of both physical and mental flight in the two works present clues that assist the reader in understanding the complexity of Helmut's marital situation.

METAPHORS OF FLIGHT IN EIN FLIEHENDES PFERD AND BRANDUNG

The runaway horse in the title of Ein fliehendes Pferd points directly to the theme of flight, since the fleeing horse symbolizes Helmut's own attempts to run away from his problems. When Helmut, Sabine, Klaus, and Helene encounter the horse on their hike, Helmut, fearful as usual, remains on the sidelines. Klaus succeeds in subduing the animal, thus becoming the hero of the day and revealing his ability to make quick decisions and follow through on them. The entire scene serves to establish the active, decisive Klaus as a foil to the passive, indecisive Helmut, who waits timidly, unwilling or unable to act. The horse represents both Helmut's desire to flee from his societal identity and his inability to escape. Klaus wants to run away as well; his dream of moving to the Bahamas reveals his own dissatisfaction with living up to the expectations of society. Both men try to flee once or twice a year when they go on vacation. Like the runaway horse, they try to escape their surroundings and the roles imposed on them by society, but the pressure to conform always compels them to return to the status quo without realizing their dreams of escape. Pilipp notes that the efforts of Walser's characters to achieve self-actualization "have been paralyzed and are relegated to the

status of daydreams, granting them only the most fleeting of escapes from stifling social expectations" (Novels 117).

Walser also applies the metaphor of the breakers in Brandung to the theme of flight. Here Helmut no longer just thinks about fleeing; he actually acts upon his desire by taking a position in California, yearning to literally throw himself into the waves of change initiated by a completely different lifestyle, set of surroundings, and new job. His motivation for actually jumping into the ocean on one of the family outings to the beach is not clear, but his work-related challenges in Germany and the couple's marital problems contribute to his resolve to escape. He thirsts for independence from societal and sexual obligations and believes that beyond the breakers he will find the smooth sailing he desires.

Unfortunately, moving beyond the breakers does not bring him the escape he seeks. On the family's first visit to the beach in California, he hopes to flee by breaking through the psychological constraints imposed on him by himself and society. The following passage illustrates his inability to succeed:

Halm wollte weiter. Er mußte. Jenseits der Brandung konnte man schwimmen. Aber wie durch die anstürmende Glaswand durchkommen? So weit hinaus, daß du bei der Welle bist, kurz bevor sie bricht, dann durch sie durch, dann bist du im ruhigsten Pazifik, wo die Wellen noch keine scharfen Schaumkronen haben, sondern große Rücken. Es war ihm nicht ganz wohl bei dieser Überlegung. Aber er war jetzt so viele tausend Kilometer gereist bis zu diesem Ozean, jetzt durfte er sich nicht abschrecken lassen. Die Brandung ist das Fest. . . . Er kam nicht durch. Vielleicht fehlte es ihm an Entschlossenheit. (91-92)

Although he wants to move beyond society's restrictions placed upon him--for example, the teachers' dress code at the Gymnasium or the standard that dictates the frequency of intercourse with one's wife--he never completely believes in his own ability to succeed. He simply exchanges one set of problems for another, while further complicating his relationship with Sabine. The attempt to pass through the actual breakers injures him, forcing him to become more dependent upon her. Independence remains a mere dream, an illusion that he will never realize. His failure in the breakers reflects his inability to make changes in his life and in his marriage.

Unlike the runaway horse in Ein fliehendes Pferd which can be captured and subdued, the waves in Brandung are beyond human control. Helmut's effort to move beyond the breakers is doomed from the start, and it symbolizes his failure to transcend his societal role as a teacher and husband. His attempts at physical and mental flight, which will be treated next, end with him still bound to his socially imposed role, his established life with Sabine, and his well-ingrained thoughts and feelings.

PHYSICAL FLIGHT IN EIN FLIEHENDES PFERD

Physical flight in Ein fliehendes Pferd exists mainly in two forms. The first and most prominent one entails leaving a well-known place for the purpose of getting away; the second involves using substances and a ploy to retreat from company or situations that Helmut dreads. Walser uses the setting of his novella to underscore the stresses on Helmut from within and without, and Halm often reacts to these stresses by taking physical flight.

The action in Ein fliehendes Pferd takes place as Helmut and Sabine vacation; in effect, they attempt to get away from the stresses imposed by daily life. Most people go on vacation to relax, read a good book, visit relatives, and see new and exciting things,

but for Helmut going on vacation means going some place where no one knows him:

“Jedesmal, wenn ihm das Erkannt- und Durchschautsein in Schule oder Nachbarschaft demonstriert wurde, die Vertrautheit mit Eigenschaften, die er nie zugegeben hatte, dann wollte er fliehen” (12). He likes to be where he can develop new behaviors and practice new facial expressions, all in an effort to hide his true self from other people:

Und je mehr die ihn zu nehmen wußten, desto größer wurde seine Sehnsucht, wieder unerkannt zu sein. Wenn jemand von ihm noch nichts wußte, war noch alles möglich. Leider hatte er das nicht immer so genau gewußt. Deshalb hatte er jene Vertrautheiten nicht verhindert. Jetzt blieb ihm nur noch die Flucht. Ein-, zweimal im Jahr. Der Urlaub eben. Im Urlaub probierte er Gesichter und Benehmensweisen aus, die ihm geeignet zu sein schienen, seine wirkliche Person in Sicherheit zu bringen vor den Augen der Welt. Unerreichbar zu sein, das wurde sein Traum. (13)

Uncomfortable with the roles imposed upon him, Helmut flees by vacationing. Thus, he adds to the masks that hide his real identity from people who know him and tries to change his behavior and attitudes in order to gain control over his life. As previous examples have shown, he even attempts to conceal his true self from Sabine.

He strains his marital relationship further when he drinks excessively. While consuming wine sometimes contributes to more honest communication between marital partners, drinking immoderately constitutes physical flight. One can find brief solace in drinking heavily, but the return to sobriety involves re-encountering the very reality that one has tried to drink away. In his drinking, Helmut attempts to escape from people or situations that make him uncomfortable.

The following examples illustrate his need to drink to escape. One evening when Helmut and Sabine go out with Klaus and Helene, Helmut directs them to a restaurant that serves wine. "Es gelang Helmut, den Promenadenbummel schon bald in eine Weinstube zu lenken. Er gestand, daß er nie etwas anderes vorgehabt hatte. Der Gedanke, einen Abend ohne Wein verbringen zu müssen, lähme ihn" (59). He cannot spend an evening in Klaus and Helene's company without wine, because alcohol allows him to face a past that he shares with Klaus. His compulsive drinking habits lead to his getting drunk on another outing with Klaus und Helene. "Er merkte, daß ihm Tränen aus den Augen traten. Er tat so, als sei es ihm peinlich. Er trat rasch hinaus. Tatsächlich war ihm zum Heulen zumute. . . . Er war betrunken" (101). Helmut indulges in physical flight with alcohol because it permits him to retreat from reality. Should he be forced to spend an evening without wine, he at least thinks about the pleasures wine consumption brings, noting to himself: "Welch eine wunderbare Leere. . . . Jetzt trinken und versinken" (95). His inner turmoil and strained relationship with Sabine make it difficult for him to spend evenings in her company and that of others without wine, and therefore without physical flight.

Even the Halms' sex life frequently involves such flight. When one offers sex to the other, the partner often rejects the advance. During the opening scene in the café, Sabine asks Helmut if he is hungry. The exchange that follows contains a sexual proposition that Sabine rejects: "Hunger, sagte er auf eine ernsthaft romantische Art. Sollen wir gehen, fragte sie. In die Wohnung, sagte er. Nein, zum Essen, sagte sie" (16-17). Even though he has an ulterior motive for going home, he acts as if he seeks a sexual encounter with Sabine. In a later incident, as they lie in bed, Sabine places her hand on Helmut's shoulder to suggest that she would be interested in making love, but he brushes off her sexual overture: "Sie hörte nicht auf. Und wenn er nichts sagte, dann stellte sie sich auf Fortschritt ein. Und wenn sie Erwartungen wachsen ließ, würde er

zu bezahlen haben. Vielleicht mußte man das fällige Gespräch führen. Was soll jetzt das, Sabine, sagte er ruhig" (72). He wants to put an end to their sex life, but has not yet discussed it with her, and he deliberately behaves in ways that amount to declining her offer. The Halms use sex as a means of control. By rejecting each other's lead, they can assert some control by denying the other pleasure. Engaging in physical flight by rebuffing such advances serves to drive them further apart as a couple and increases the likelihood of their seeking sexual satisfaction elsewhere.

PHYSICAL FLIGHT IN BRANDUNG

In Brandung Helmut's escape to California is the overarching instance of physical flight. Rainer Mersjohann does not realize how much he is doing for Helmut when he invites him to teach for a term at his university. The offer gives Helmut a credible reason to leave his old life behind for a while, since he is dissatisfied with his job and feels his colleagues know him too well. Even though the position is only for four months, he gladly accepts it without consulting Sabine, because he perceives that she is too preoccupied with her mother's condition and might veto the idea if she were asked for her opinion. He particularly welcomes the offer since he did not realize until Rainer called that he could no longer bear the stress of his life in Germany:

Bevor Mersjohann hier angerufen hatte, hatte Halm nicht gewußt, wie nötig es war, daß er von hier wegkam. Er hatte es sich nicht eingestehen dürfen, weil er keine Aussicht gehabt hatte wegzukommen. Jetzt, da es möglich war, war es nicht mehr wegzudenken. Wie eine Glut, die Zug bekommt, plötzlich hochbrennt, brannte es in ihm jetzt. Er mußte weg hier. (14-15)

Acceptance of Rainer's offer makes physical escape possible; Helmut can start anew in California. Before his departure, disagreements in the family make it clear to him that he has made the correct decision. Thinking "Nichts als nach Kalifornien" (25), he seems to be fleeing to California in order to retain his sanity. On the plane he excitedly remarks: "Sabine, wir sind entronnen! Schaut nicht zurück!" (27), and continues: ". . . laßt ihn [Rainer] spüren, daß wir ihn für unseren Retter halten. Er ist es. Vier Monate lang dem steilen Nordhang in Sillenbuch entronnen zu sein . . ." (28). For Helmut the new job is a means of escaping the drudgery of his work and his associates in Germany, but when he accepts the California position, he does not know that it will also necessitate a separation from Sabine when her father becomes ill.

Sabine's return to Germany leaves Helmut free to enjoy the charms of other women. Even though he is attracted to Fran, a student in his conversation class, from the first day on, long before Sabine goes, he seems to be more open to meeting her after his wife's departure. By seeking his help with her essays, Fran makes it easy for him to flee to her. Although his behavior basically constitutes mental flight, it produces physical manifestations which must be treated here. She agrees when he suggests that they should talk about her project in his office, but when he cannot open the door, "[er] schlug vor, in eines der Studenten Union-Cafés zu gehen. Hoffentlich glaubte sie nicht, er traue sich nicht zu, mit ihr allein in diesem abgeschiedenen Büro zu sein, und inszeniere deshalb dieses Schlüsselvesagen. Dort, in der Mittagssonne, saßen sie auch allein. Alle anderen zogen das schattige Innere vor" (57). Meetings with Fran distract him from his preoccupation with his age--a preoccupation that first manifests itself in Ein fliehendes Pferd according to Pilipp (Novels 65)--and his general dissatisfaction with his life. He enjoys being alone with her and welcomes the chance to work with her even though they are separated by an age difference of thirty-three years.

When he and Fran work together, an inner struggle often develops in Helmut, but he always manages to compose himself and find something appropriate to say to her. One such conversation takes place in the student union café: "Gib zu, daß dies ein toller Tag ist, sagte er zu sich. Ich gebe es zu, sagte das angesprochene Ich zu dem, der es angesprochen hatte. Zu dem Mädchen sagte er ohne jeden Nachdruck: Eine schöne Beschäftigung, mit Ihnen in dieser Sonne dieses Gedicht zu übersetzen" (58). Sitting with Fran in the café gives Helmut a sense of adventure he has not experienced in years. The overpowering nature of his feelings and his attempts to understand them make him almost physically ill:

Fran war nicht Nicole. Aber es war ihm jetzt doch nicht mehr so elend wie vorher. Er schaute auf die Uhr. Seit dem Augenblick, als das Mädchen sich umgedreht hatte und so weggegangen war, daß er glaubte, das sei nicht zu ertragen, waren jetzt fünf Stunden vergangen. Er war ziemlich genau fünf Minuten mit ihr allein gewesen. Pro Minute Mädchen, eine Stunde Regeneration. Solang sie nur fünf Minuten in der Nähe war. Wahrscheinlich würde er für eine sechste Mädchen-Minute eine Stunde und zehn, und für eine siebte Mädchen-Minute eine Stunde und zwanzig brauchen zur Regeneration. Ebenso aufgeregt wie erschöpft blieb er zurück, wenn sie weg war. Unbrauchbar für alles.
(123-24)

Five minutes with Fran disturb Helmut's whole being; he knows it is wrong to want more, yet he feeds his growing infatuation by continuing their meetings.

Part of the above quotation--the reference to Nicole--is significant because it alludes to an earlier incident in Helmut's life that provided another opportunity for an affair. He associates Fran with Nicole, the daughter of his supervisor in Germany.

Several years before the episode with Fran, Helmut's physical flight from Sabine had reached its apex. He was strongly infatuated with Nicole at the time and permitted his feelings for her to govern his life. For two weeks he believed that he could not live without her (252). She accompanied him to a hotel and engaged in foreplay, only to reject sexual intercourse, thereby humiliating him. Eventually, he confessed everything to Sabine, who forgave him for this dalliance.

After working with Fran a second time, Helmut first enjoys the encounter and then begins to feel guilty about it: "Sie war draußen, er saß wieder. . . . Sie war also tatsächlich gegangen. Gott sei Dank. Er hatte mit den Wörtern zu tun, die sie zurückgelassen hatte" (159). The ambiguity in the words of her essay and in the words she speaks during the meeting leave him sexually excited and physically drained. It has been a long time since Helmut has experienced the kind of sexual arousal Fran produces in him. He does not feel the same excitement with Sabine.

His excitement peaks when he attends an opera with Fran. By accepting the invitation to go to the opera, he essentially flees toward her. When he discovers that Fran has brought her boyfriend along, however, he takes flight again, beating a hasty retreat away from her: "Tot war er nicht. Bewegungsfähig war er. Und wie! Er mußte ja nicht alles anschauen. Er gehörte nicht zur Opernklasse. Federleicht war er. Lautlos hob es ihn hinweg. Ohne zu rennen oder zu trampeln oder zu keuchen, war er draußen. Im Freien sogar. Also ihn konnte niemand bemerkt haben" (267). Thus, Helmut's physical flight to Fran results in disillusionment. He cannot fulfill the fantasy he has constructed based upon her invitation to the opera.

In both Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung Helmut becomes attracted to women whom he cannot hope to attain. The pattern suggests that he relishes the excitement of flight which permits him to escape temporarily from the reality of his boring life with Sabine. Yet the very fact that he chooses women who are beyond his grasp enables him to stay

sexually faithful to his wife, and this unintentional sexual fidelity saves the marriage he needs in order to survive.

MENTAL FLIGHT IN EIN FLIEHENDES PFERD

If Helmut's efforts at physical flight ultimately fail, his indulgence in mental flight is all the more successful. His mental flight in Ein fliehendes Pferd brings him directly to Helene, Klaus Buch's wife. Numerous episodes of mental escape reveal his secret passion for her. Early in the novella, the narrator reports an incident during an outing of the two couples: "Helmut hätte am liebsten nur noch Hel angeschaut. Er mußte vorsichtig an ihr vorbeischaun, weil die anderen sonst gesehen hätten, wie wenig er sich an diesem Mädchen sattsehen konnte. Aber in diesem Vorbeischaun war er ja Experte" (47). The narration of the same outing also notes: "Mit Hilfe seines professionellen Blicks sah Helmut ihre Brüste im Vorbeischaun an" (49). Drawn by Helene's open sexuality, as she kisses Klaus in front of Helmut and Sabine or as she sunbathes topless, Helmut must hide his attraction because he does not want Sabine to sense what he thinks or feels.

He limits himself to admiring Helene at every opportunity. On a stroll with the Buchs one evening, he "schaute Hel zu lange an" (59). At a mountain restaurant, he is enamored with Helene's features and reflects: "Also so eine Nase. So etwas von einem Näschen" (83). Her nose mesmerizes him, and he gazes at her during the meal, although he tries to conceal his attraction with lighthearted banter when Klaus and Helene behave like children: "Helmut probierte in einem ganz und gar scherzhaften Ton zu sagen: Kinder benehmt euch. Hel sah ihn mit einem Wonneblick an und sagte: Ja, Papa. Helmut versuchte, den Ton fortzusetzen mit: Sonst gibt's. Dabei sah er sie ein bißchen länger an als es für den kurzen Satz nötig gewesen wäre" (84).

As he becomes more obsessed with Helene, he has trouble keeping his hands, feelings, and especially his mind, under control. He begins to associate elements of his environment with Helene's sexual charms. Walser uses an ironic image when, on the way home from the mountain restaurant, Helmut finds that feeding pigs reminds him of her body: "Helmut hatte angefangen mit dieser Fütterung. Die Schweine drängten einander gegen die geladene Umzäunung. . . . Dabei kriegten immer die vordersten die elektrische Ladung auf die rosigen Wülste ihrer kleinen Mäuler. Die rosigen Wülste erinnerten Helmut an Helenes Brustspitzen" (87). This obsession with Helene's body fuels his mental flight away from Sabine and their relationship.

He carries his mental escapades so far that he notices the names Helmut and Helene fit very well together, a circumstance which could suggest that bearers of those names are destined to be united: "Helmut ging zwischen Hel und Sabine. Hel und Helmut, diese Namen kamen ihm plötzlich vor wie zwei Werkstücke, die dafür gemacht sind, zusammengekuppelt zu werden. Er würde sie Helene nennen, wenn er etwas zu sagen hätte" (91). He is sexually stimulated by Helene's name, prefers Helene over Hel for the sake of romanticism, and likes to draw upon his literary knowledge for names with which to embellish his mental flights.

Helmut questions his own feelings about her. "Sollte er sich eingestehen, daß er diese Hel liebe? Was hätte er davon? Und war es denn so? War sie ihm nicht völlig gleichgültig?" (99). Initially Helene's appearance attracts him, but soon a fascination with her body, which he may interpret as love for her, leads him to examine his feelings and become preoccupied. At the same time, he successfully hides his inner turmoil from Sabine, Klaus, and Helene, separating himself, at least mentally, from the others and adding to the barrier between himself and Sabine. His episodes of mental flight during his vacation in Ein fliehendes Pferd lead him to no woman but Helene, and they serve to confirm that Sabine does not satisfy his sexual fantasies.

MENTAL FLIGHT IN BRANDUNG

In Ein fliehendes Pferd Helmut wants to bring his sex life with Sabine to an end, since he considers himself too old to fulfill societal expectations regarding conjugal duties (67). Thus it is quite ironic that his mental adventures in Brandung require more than one woman to satisfy his sexual imagination. His fantasies focus on Elissa, Rainer's wife, as well as on Fran, although he is drawn to other women as well.

Three examples will illustrate how Elissa captivates Helmut. They meet at Rainer's first party, and Elissa's physical appearance attracts him:

Und diese Frau wollte er gewinnen. Diese Goldgräbernachkommin. Ihre kurz geschnittenen Haare erinnerten ihn an J. F. Kennedy, ihr Kinn an venezianische Gondeln, es schwang schön aus. Darüber wachte eine feine Nase. Und kühne Augen. Oder kühle? Oder spöttische? Zum Spott bereite? Er war froh, daß Rainer eine Frau hatte, die ihn anzog. (47)

His thoughts suggest that the attraction at this stage is based only on Elissa's physical appearance.

A second example reflects Helmut's fascination with Elissa. Her attire leads him to muse about her body: "Helmut dachte: Dieser gänzlich bequeme Körper in dunkelgrüner Seide . . ." (49). Here he lusts after her body.

The third example finds Helmut and Sabine lying in bed, yet Helmut's thoughts are with Elissa. Here he no longer desires her sexually, but instead he has compassion and pity for her: "Als sie [Helmut and Sabine] im Bett unter dem Messingtor lagen, dachte er an Elissa. Diesen Leidensspuren in ihrem Gesicht ging er nach. Wie nach einem nicht ganz durchgedrungenen Erdbeben, dachte er. Alles ist um ein wenig verschoben.

Nichts ist zerstört, aber heil ist auch nichts mehr" (174). Helmut suppresses his fantasies about Elissa's body when he senses the heartaches she faces and her dissatisfaction with her life. He can sympathize with her because of his own unsatisfactory marriage, which he maintains largely because of his insecurity and dependence upon Sabine.

Helmut's unsatisfactory marital relationship leads him not only to Elissa but also to Fran. His episodes of mental flight to Fran are more satisfying than his physical flights to her, because he does not have to go through quite the same emotional upheaval. He can stop the mental flights more easily, whereas he feels a physical drain when in Fran's presence; thus, he does not need the same amount of recuperation time from a mental encounter.

Differences also exist between the mental flights to Elissa and those to Fran. Helmut flees to Elissa to enjoy her body from afar and sympathizes with her and her misfortunes. Although he enjoys Fran's appearance, he feels no pity for her, and his fantasies about her awaken in him pleasurable feelings about life and sex. He notices Elissa's body and apparel, but yearns for Fran to belong to him. When he thinks about himself and Fran, he compares the couple with Carol Elrod, the department's secretary, and her older husband, Kirk. "Der ist bestimmt fünfundsiebzig; sie, knapp vierzig. Dreißig Jahre. . . . Wie bei ihm und dem Mädchen. Wahrscheinlich ist die zweiundzwanzig. . . . Dreißig Jahre. Carol und Kirk, zu denen gehört er. Bei denen will er sich einreihen" (104). Although Helmut fantasizes about enjoying a similar relationship to that of the Elrods, he also perceives the foolishness of it.

Intellectual that he is, Helmut must always reason things out, so he attempts to find a niche for Fran and himself. Later when Carol tricks him into following her, he believes that he loves Fran: "Carol hatte ihm durch einen wunderbaren Anschlag an diesem wunderbaren Oktoberabend in diesem wunderbaren Land auf das wunderbarste bewiesen,

daß er jenes Mädchen Fran wahrscheinlich, ja, wie sollte er das sagen, daß er die wohl doch liebte" (215).

Sabine remains unaware of his thoughts and feelings about Fran until he shares them with her. His past history in both Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung have shown that he abandons his mental flights and even opts for confession to Sabine when he deems it necessary. The nature of his mental flights to other women is underscored late in the novel when one finds Helmut thinking about both Elissa and Fran, instead of Fran alone.

Jetzt mußte er noch das Licht ausmachen. Das fiel ihm schwer. Als er es endlich geschafft hatte und im Dunkel lag, dachte er an Fran Webb. Eine Art kitschiger Vision schäumte in ihm hoch: Fran als Operschwan in einer Pariser Dekoration der Belle Epoque. Aber er dachte auch an Elissa, die Blasse, Schwerbrüstige, Kurzhaarige. Jetzt Witwe. Daran dachte er. Ja, daran dachte er. Elissa allein in der Tarantelkirche. Er, allein, hier. (290)

Yet, weak and dependent upon Sabine, Helmut is not prepared to choose either Elissa or Fran. His mental escapades would become threatening for Sabine and their marriage only if he focused them on just one woman and did not need a Playboy magazine to inspire those thoughts (290). Assured of Sabine's tolerance and support, he feels free to fantasize about other women, remembering that she took him back after the Nicole episode.

Another instance of mental flight occurs when the Halms come home after their first party at Rainer and Elissa's house, and this coincides with a round of their game of feigning sleep. "Als sie dann nebeneinander im Dunkel lagen, sagte Sabine: Das ist ein Paar. Halm sagte: Und ein Haus. Das auch, sagte Sabine. Halm dachte: Das war also der erste Tag. Sabine schien schon zu schlafen" (52). Helmut has the tendency to slip into

his inner monologue and pretend to be asleep, ultimately preserving mental flight and widening the chasm between them.

Because of Sabine's return to Germany, he necessarily stops playing the game. If they had been together in California during Helmut's entire stay, the game probably would have continued, judging from the fact that it resumes upon his return to Germany. At the end of the novel, Sabine tries to prevent the start of the feigning game at bedtime by initiating a conversation about one of their daughters:

Dann sagte sie: Aber Bochum! Warum Bochum? Halm gab einen Laut, aus dem Sabine hören sollte, Halm sei gerade am Einschlafen oder sei schon eingeschlafen. Falls Sabine noch länger zu kämpfen hatte, konnte er ja wieder den Erwachenden spielen und sich beteiligen am Hin- und Herwenden des Elterntextes. Aber er hoffte, er werde vorher einschlafen. Der kleine warme Dunkelraum seines Bettes schützte ihn. (314)

Helmut seems to enjoy the game because it frees him from inconsequential chatter and any conjugal duties and enables him to indulge in mental flight. Thus, the game shields him from exchanges with his wife that he prefers to avoid.

One might think that Sabine does not mind the feigning game since she initiates it herself when it suits her purposes, but the narrator reports otherwise: "Er [Helmut] hörte, daß Sabine, anstatt abzuebben, immer unruhiger wurde. Dieses Aufschnaufen und Umdrehen und Stöhnen drückte aus, daß sie wußte, er höre ihr zu. Sie demonstrierte. Er antwortete mit den regelmäßigen Atemzügen des Schlafenden. Mal sehen, ob er sie nicht überzeugen konnte" (315). Helmut, however, does not succeed in sabotaging her efforts to connect with him this time: "Weil er sich nicht gerührt hat. . . . Sabine schleuderte die Decke weg und sprang auf und rannte aus dem Zimmer. Er rannte ihr

nach. Sie saß schon unten, im Sessel. Sie war ganz starr. Er kniete neben ihr, vor ihr auf dem Boden, sie drehte sich immer weg" (316). Disturbed by her outburst, he realizes that he has lost the game and that if he does not make the correct move now, he may lose something far more important to him: Sabine herself.

The titles of Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung alert the reader to the existence and significance of the theme of flight in these works. At best, flight lets one avoid dealing with problems immediately by putting them off for later action; at worst, it exacerbates them over time until solutions can no longer be found. Helmut's flights, both physical and mental, can never heal his strained relationship with Sabine, but neither do they break it. As much as he may desire change, he remains trapped within his societal role and his marriage, unable to flee successfully.

CHAPTER FIVE

WALSER'S USE OF THE MIRRORING TECHNIQUE

In "Die Reise nach Philippsburg," Paul F. Reitze notes the parallels in Walser's technique in Ehen in Philippsburg (1957) and Ein fliehendes Pferd (1978): "Gewissermaßen sind Walsersche Kunstprinzipien, die sich in der Neigung zu Spiegelungen verdichteten, zum Entwicklungsprinzip geworden: In der Halbzeit des Schaffens . . . wird der Anfang in einem sehr wörtlichen Sinn reflektiert." Reitze argues that Walser's mirroring technique, developed over a period of many years, is evident when one compares Ehen in Philippsburg and Ein fliehendes Pferd. This mirroring technique also appears in Walser's depiction of the marital problems in Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung; other couples experience marital difficulties which reflect the problems in Helmut and Sabine's marriage even though the details differ. The marriages of Klaus and Helene in Ein fliehendes Pferd and of Rainer and Elissa in Brandung help to further elucidate the nature of the Halms' relationship. While other couples in Brandung also have marital problems which are used for mirroring purposes, I have chosen to focus on one secondary couple per work to illustrate my points in this chapter. The verbal exchanges of the secondary couples provide evidence of strained relationships, but in their cases body language and inner monologues are not used for further confirmation. In addition, one often observes instances of flight as well as talk of escape in the depictions of these other couples.

KLAUS AND HELENE

In Ein fliehendes Pferd some of Klaus and Helene's problems mirror those inherent in Helmut and Sabine's marriage. Just as Sabine reprimands Helmut publicly, both Klaus and Helene criticize each other in front of the Halms. Similarly, after the fateful sailing accident, Helene, like Sabine, broadcasts specific marital problems, making the Halms privy to the Buchs' marital difficulties.

Helmut and Sabine witness Klaus and Helene criticizing each other. Klaus shows his insecurity about being married to a woman eighteen years his junior (98), while Helene reacts to her husband's behavior by projecting her disenchantment with him. When Klaus recognizes that she disapproves of his behavior, he usually questions her love and fidelity with his ritualistic plaint, "Du magst mich nicht mehr, gell?" (46 et passim), which he verbalizes in different tones that reflect his fear of losing her love, and she must kiss him to prove him wrong.

Klaus's insecurity and Helene's disapproval surface at different times when the Buchs visit with the Halms. For example, on a sailing trip, Klaus questions the authenticity of "Pfahlbauten" along Lake Constance (45). He believes that they are just a ruse to bring in money, and he fumes that he would like to produce some such fraud that would make him rich (46). Following his declaration, Helene proceeds to ridicule him:

Das hast du doch geschafft, sagte, lachend, Hel. Die fünfundsiebzigtausend Leute, die nach deinen Büchern essen, sind doch ziemlich real. Er schaute Hel einen Augenblick lang entsetzt an . . . dann lachte er lauter als Hel gelacht hatte. . . . Dann sagte er, das komme davon, daß man so ein rohes junges Ding heirate. . . . Herta [his first wife] machte viele Fehler, aber den nicht. . . . Dann sagte er

in einem furchtbar ernsten, geradezu hoffnungslosen Ton zu Hel: Du magst mich nicht mehr, gell? (46)

On another occasion, Helene calls Klaus "ein spinnerter Hammel" (64) when he criticizes her Swabian dialect, and the episode of disharmony ends temporarily with the leitmotif and the kiss. In both examples, she hurts his feelings, mocks him, and reveals her disrespect, even though she tries to conceal it by laughing during one of her allegations. Following her verbal attacks, he usually attempts to repair their carefully projected facade of a happy marriage by explaining and excusing her behavior.

When she does not condone his impolite behavior, Helene's actions do not fit Klaus's desired image of a perfect relationship. When Klaus becomes irate because Otto, Helmut and Sabine's dog, touches him with his cold snout (60), or when he objects to having Otto in the car (75), Helene responds by showing displeasure with Klaus. In both instances, she sides not with Klaus, but with Otto, expressing her discontent with her husband and their relationship. Although Helmut registers the Buchs' habit of criticizing each other (61), there is no indication whether he views their conduct as atypical for a married couple or draws conclusions about his own marriage from the problems he witnesses. Shortly after these incidents, the ritualistic plaint results in the obligatory kiss which ends the disharmony and temporarily assuages Klaus's insecurity.

Only once can one find the plaint employed in a playful way and that occurs shortly after Klaus becomes the hero of the day by stopping the runaway horse. The horse is the central symbol of flight in the novella; it represents both Klaus and Helmut, who express a need for flight or engage in flight. Klaus has already captured a runaway horse once before, even though Helene had tried to stop him (90). Therefore he does not mind taking the risk again when he has the opportunity to show Helmut and Sabine what he is

capable of achieving. Sabine recognizes his accomplishment and praises him for it: "Klaus, du hast uns gerettet. Klaus sagte zu Hel--diesmal fröhlich, übermütig, parodistisch--: Du magst mich nicht mehr, gel!" (91). The scene with the runaway horse is the only time that Klaus actually is a confident man in charge of himself and events instead of simply conveying this impression as he does throughout the work.

Since Klaus cannot remain in control of his daily life, the Buchs feel a need to escape. During the sailing trip with the Halms, Klaus relates that he and Helene want to leave Germany: "Hel und er warteten nur auf den Tag, an dem sie dieses Kleinbürgerland endgültig verlassen könnten. . . . Kurs Bahamas. Das werde doch nicht besser mit den Deutschen" (48). He creates a colorful picture of their marriage and life together which, toward the end of the novella, turns dismal and dark in Helene's rendition of their situation. In voicing the reasons for her need to flee her marriage (140), Helene reveals the truth about it. Until her confession after Klaus's assumed death, the Buchs have projected to Helmut and Sabine a false front of united decision-making within their marriage and portrayed a relationship that is basically happy.

At the end of the novella, Helene broadcasts to the Halms her dissatisfaction with her marriage, discrediting Klaus in the process and making any further social contact between the two couples impossible for him. She tells the Halms that her husband could not work successfully with his publisher because Klaus does not deal with people in authority well. She states: "Es war nicht ganz leicht mit ihm, das kann ich euch sagen. Wegen seiner Empfindlichkeit" (139), and claims that Klaus felt increasingly unappreciated in his work and that his insecurity level rose as a result. She even reveals the hidden subtext of his ritualistic question:

Seitdem [since his employer let him know that he was dispensable] hat er angefangen, hundertmal am Tag, ich schwör' es, einhundertmal am Tag hat er

gefragt, ob ich ihn noch möge. Er ist sich immer mehr vorgekommen wie der letzte Dreck. Und ich mußte ihm andauernd beweisen, daß er nicht der letzte Dreck ist, sondern der Allerallertollste. Und zwar glaubhaft. Aber ja. (139)

Klaus depends on Helene to give him the self-confidence he has lost, and this imposed responsibility has made living with Klaus and remaining married to him problematic.

Toward the end of the novella, Helene reports to the Halms that she and Klaus have communication problems and that he does not allow her to live (140). For her, living means using her musical talents, but since Klaus detests being controlled by others in his work life, he apparently has to control someone else in order to survive. Two examples illustrate his need to dominate. First, when the Halm-Buch hiking party arrives at the restaurant at the "Höchsten," Helene takes advantage of the opportunity to play the Wanderer-Fantasie on the piano. As soon as Klaus hears the music and sees her at the piano, he runs out of the restaurant, and his action forces Helene to stop playing and seek him out when she hears about his behavior (81). Secondly, while Klaus is exceedingly proud of her writing and publishing under his direction, he completely disregards her resistance to the tasks (44). Thus, he dominates her life by first forcing her to give up her music because he fears this rival for her affections, and then by dictating the journalistic projects she must pursue against her will (101). Helene confesses to the Halms that she might not be able to continue her marriage much longer; not only has she had to abandon her own aspirations, but propping up Klaus's psyche is draining her strength.

RAINER AND ELISSA

In Brandung Rainer and Elissa Mersjohann are the secondary couple whose problematic relationship most closely mirrors the instability of the Halms' marriage. Rainer and Elissa each confide in Helmut and Sabine how they feel about each other and what they think of their marriage. Although Elissa criticizes Rainer in front of others, such criticism is limited, since they do not spend much time together with others or alone in each other's company because of their dissatisfaction with one another. They each broadcast their marital difficulties and indulge in flight, instead of talking about these problems with the partner.

During the first party at the Mersjohanns' house, Elissa criticizes Rainer publicly. In Rainer's presence she informs Helmut that she and her husband continually fight about his smoking, remarking that Rainer will take guests downstairs several times during the evening so that he can smoke:

Rainer werde ihnen im Lauf des Abends immer noch etwas und noch etwas zeigen da drunten, um sich Gelegenheit für weitere Zigaretten zu verschaffen. Er sei dabei, sich umzubringen. Jetzt lächelte sie rein dekorativ. Rainer stand vorgebeugt, seine legendären Hände auf dem Rücken; die weghängende Unterlippe war innen naß. (48)

When Elissa confesses that she no longer sleeps with her husband, Helmut responds by noting that differences, not unity, keep marriages together (47), a comment as significant for his own marriage as for theirs. Elissa tries to provoke Rainer in the hope that he will quarrel with her openly, yet he does not want to fight. Good-natured and tolerant, he loves her in spite of her attempts to goad him.

Elissa broadcasts their specific problems, even mentioning some of his offensive behaviors in his presence. On the other hand, when Rainer discusses his marital problems, he speaks in generalities and only when his wife is absent. He remarks to Sabine that women can do anything, and no one stops them. When she notices and remarks on his sad tone, he admits it and compliments her on her fine hearing (83). While Sabine detects his morose disposition, she does not discuss it with Helmut at a later time, nor does she make connections or draw conclusions about her own marriage.

On another occasion, when Rainer entertains Helmut and Sabine with stories of his early days in California, he talks about many families who helped him along the way. He is proud about having returned money he may have borrowed from them; nevertheless he believes that he is still indebted to Elissa (99). It is not clear what he owes his wife, yet his guilty conscience results not in some positive conduct on his part, but in his subjecting her to his demands and vile behavior. During another visit with the Halms, Rainer reports that he seldom sees Elissa except when they have guests (129). He no longer feels connected with her physically.

Elissa seems to reflect the same kind of disconnectedness when she remarks openly to Helmut and Rainer that she would like to escape the chains of her life, just as her pet tarantula left its first shell: "Das müßte man können, sagt sie, so aussteigen aus einem Lebensgehäuse, das nicht mehr paßt. Du kannst, sagte Rainer" (49). Although Rainer encourages Elissa to abandon her life with him, she seems unable to take this step, because she fears she would not see her sons again if she were to leave (99).

Rainer, on the other hand, tells the Halms that he has thought about divorce, only to abandon his own idea when Elissa talks about his killing himself (130). At this stage in the novel, Rainer has already realized that he must release Elissa from their marriage eventually; however, her comments spur him to inactivity rather than activity, and he chooses to prolong his own agony and hers. While he recognizes that any meaningful

marriage has long since ended, he cannot let her go since he still loves her. Even though her extramarital affairs upset him, as long as she informs him about them, he can forgive her (258). Early in their marriage, after a short period of happiness and two children, Elissa realized she did not love Rainer and therefore could not thrive on his love for her. She summarizes her feelings by saying: "Wenn man selber nicht liebt, hat man nichts davon geliebt zu werden" (288), suggesting that she may never have loved him and that she basically used him to rouse the passion of a man who had rejected her earlier (287). It seems that she and Rainer are no longer really living together, but rather beside each other, each waiting for the other to initiate a divorce.

In one sense, they have unofficially divorced each other already, because they physically flee from each other. Elissa's method of escape takes her away for almost six months at a time: ". . . von Thanksgiving an ist ihre Schule zu. Da fährt sie los, sagt Rainer, Jamey suchen. Bis April" (52). Although Elissa's reason for leaving Rainer for an extended time is a legitimate one--she is trying to find her son--it is, nevertheless, an excuse. It permits her to escape from him for a long period without actually breaking with him completely. He, on the other hand, decides to relinquish both Elissa and his life by committing suicide (282), thus enabling her, as a widow, to enjoy the lifestyle she wants.

Lena, Helmut and Sabine's daughter, becomes part of Elissa's lifestyle before Rainer's suicide. Having recently gone through her own divorce and knowing what marriage problems are like, Lena is an astute observer and a good barometer of marital difficulties. She alone is privileged to witness the couple's interactions, and she alerts her parents to the seriousness of the marital problems the Mersjohanns face, pointing out that Rainer and Elissa have adopted roles within their marriage: "Elissa hat, kraß gesagt, den andauernden Feindseligkeitstext; Rainer hat die unendliche Toleranzrolle . . ." (94). It seems that the Mersjohanns have staked out positions to enable them to

survive in the marriage and later without it. When Lena warns that Rainer and Elissa must be separated before war breaks out between them, her parents do not take her seriously (95). In fact, Sabine perceives that Rainer becomes sad when he talks about women in general (83), but she does not connect his sadness with marital problems. Even though she and Helmut witness Elissa's criticism of Rainer and hear Elissa and Rainer broadcasting their difficulties, the Halms do not realize that they share some of the same problems. Instead, Helmut defends Elissa, and Sabine excuses Rainer for venting his derogatory feelings about his wife (100).

By casting several couples with similar marital problems, Walser uses his mirroring technique effectively to further illuminate Helmut and Sabine's relationship. For example, Sabine, Helene and Elissa criticize their husbands openly, and broadcast their dissatisfaction about their marriages to others. While the women talk about their problems, the men adopt different strategies. Helmut retreats into himself and finds refuge in his inner world; Klaus tries to repair his image of a happy marriage after Helene sabotages it with her comments; and Rainer takes the stance of tolerance, which he maintains with the help of alcohol. The marital problems depicted in these two works are common to many couples; consequently Walser's theme is quite universal. Even though the three couples experience marital problems, they will presumably choose to continue with the status quo, except for Rainer and Elissa because of his suicide.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

My analysis of Walser's portrayal of the marital problems in Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung leads to several general conclusions. Walser presents a picture of an unstable relationship. By concentrating on Helmut's point of view, he limits the reader's knowledge of the Halms' married life, since he explores Helmut's side extensively, almost to the exclusion of Sabine's feelings. Despite Helmut's fantasies about seeking fulfillment elsewhere, he always returns to Sabine, using the catharsis of confession to re-establish their tenuous relationship, since he cannot survive without her. If Walser is thus advocating the retention of marriage as a social institution, the marriage he is using as an example is a very flawed one.

The Halms' troubled marriage continues because of the roles the partners have embraced and the habits they have developed, roles and habits which keep them together, or as Helmut puts it: "Differenz hält Ehen zusammen" (Brandung 47). Although Walser seems to cast Helmut as the passive husband whose wife controls him and the house, a closer look suggests that he forces her into this activity, thus dominating her. The habit of not communicating about issues central to their relationship and the periods of flight on Helmut's part characterize this marriage. Since they have been together for over twenty-five years and have two children, Helmut may continue his life with Sabine merely out of habit, yet his frequent endearment, "Ach du. Einziger Mensch. Sabine." (Ein fliehendes Pferd 87, 149), implies that he needs her in order to survive and maintain his identity within a society he rejects.

Interestingly, Helmut's verbal exchanges, body language, and inner monologues in Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung suggest that he is not often aware of this need. In fact, in Ein fliehendes Pferd Helmut creates marital problems when he refuses to share his feelings or pastimes, does not enjoy being close to Sabine, and strives to conceal his innermost thoughts. Over the years, he does not improve or change his behavior with respect to their marital relationship, so it is not surprising that Sabine's tolerance is wearing thin, as, for example, when she criticizes him in front of others and broadcasts their problems. Since the same kinds of problems surface in Brandung in more intensified form, Helmut has apparently learned little from his experience in Ein fliehendes Pferd. The Halms reveal their marital difficulties in various ways: both talk past each other, Helmut fails to communicate important matters to his wife or uses mental distancing, and Sabine employs physical distancing from her husband. Such actions reveal a lack of consideration and trust and exacerbate the problems which exist in a marriage that has been strained over time. Walser portrays a Helmut not dissatisfied enough to initiate a divorce and a Sabine content enough to endure his noncommunication and mental distancing. Both tolerate the status quo in their relationship and equally embrace the catharsis of confession at the end of both works: Helmut as the confessing "sinner" and Sabine as the pardoning listener.

Walser's titles for Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung are felicitous choices since these flight metaphors underscore the theme of flight present throughout both works. Both metaphors symbolize Helmut's attempts to run away from his marital problems as well as from societal expectations of him. As I have shown, Walser undergirds these metaphors with the numerous episodes of physical and mental flight in which Helmut indulges to escape the chains of an unhappy marriage temporarily. Halm takes physical flight by going on vacation, drinking excessively, moving to California, and relishing the excitement of time spent with Fran. His episodes of mental flight include fleeing to

Helene, Elissa, and Fran, but his behavior produces inner turmoil and stresses his relationship with Sabine. His insecurity and dependence on Sabine becomes clear when he is not prepared to choose any of the women about whom he fantasizes. Ultimately, Helmut's attempts at flight in both works end in confession, acceptance, and another start in his marriage with Sabine, yet there is no indication that this pattern will change.

Another means which Walser uses to depict the Halms' marital problems in Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung is the mirroring technique. This enables him to illuminate their strained relationship by incorporating similar marital difficulties into the lives of various secondary characters. For example, the husbands exert power over their wives in many ways: Helmut refuses to have sex with Sabine, Klaus demands that Helene give up her music, and Rainer forces Elissa to tell him about all her acts of adultery. These actions contribute to marital problems, especially when the women perceive that the men dominate them. The wives, however, accede to the subservience expected of them, since they comply with their husbands' wishes. Throughout the two works Walser's mirroring technique both illuminates the Halms' problems and universalizes them.

This thesis and my examination of secondary literature on Walser suggest several possible directions for future research. First, one could profitably focus greater attention on the depiction of marriage in Walser's entire body of works. It would be interesting to determine if communication problems exist in the marriages of the main couples in all of Walser's works, if we receive a limited picture of all these relationships because the author concentrates on the man's story, and if physical and mental flight occur in other Walser works. Such a study would shed further light on Walser's literary technique as it relates to his depiction of marriage problems.

Secondly, a study of Walser's portrayal of his female characters is in order. In Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung we have little direct knowledge of Sabine since our information about her is filtered through Helmut's views. Waine makes a brief start at this type of study when he compares Sabine with Trude of Walser's Zimmerschlacht, and describes them as "mütterliche, tolerante und, wie ihre Namen . . . bezeugen, nicht ungewöhnliche Frauen" (112). Although Waine does not include Helene in his comparison, she would fit into this group because she uses her mothering instinct on Klaus when he falls asleep in the Halms' presence due to physical overexertion (Ein fliehendes Pferd 62). A thorough examination of the female characters throughout Walser's oeuvre might provide a better understanding of his character development in regard to gender roles. It could investigate such matters as whether Walser prefers to depict men and whether he has found means to adequately portray modern emancipated women. A study like this might give insight into his views on gender issues; for example, it might reveal whether he limits his female characters to traditional roles and pairs them with patriarchal, dominant men.

Thirdly, much of the story that unfolds in Ein fliehendes Pferd and Brandung depends upon the content of Helmut's inner monologues. One could employ linguistic methodologies to analyze Walser's use of inner monologue and limited dialogue to tell a compelling story about one human being's attempt to survive in the modern world. While many critics have demonstrated the social nature of Helmut's plight, there is no indication that reviewers have dissected Walser's narrative technique or use of limited dialogue.

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