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thesis entitled

FEMINITY AND THE EMERGING SUBJECT IN ELSE LASKER-SCHULER'S DER MALIK

presented by

CHERYL LYNN RYE

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

MASTER'S degree in GERMAN

Major professor

Date 8/1/96

DATE DUE	DATE DUE	DATE DUE

FEMININITY AND THE EMERGING SUBJECT IN ELSE LASKER-SCHÜLER'S DER MALIK: EINE KAISERGESCHICHTE

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A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic,
Asian and African Languages

1996

ABSTRACT

FEMININITY AND THE EMERGING SUBJECT IN ELSE LASKER-SCHÜLER'S DER MALIK: EINE KAISERGESCHICHTE

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Else Lasker-Schüler's work, Der Malik, is an intriguing account of one character's growth from an author's persona into an independent subject situated in his own fantastic realm. I am informed by Bakhtin's notions on subjectivity and the creative process when I speak of Jussuf as an independent subject, as well as Kristeva's understanding of the fluid feminine self. Lasker-Schüler strongly identified with her character Jussuf. Jussuf's visions of the speaking poetess and his dead mother enclosed within the other, omniscient narrator's account, presents the reader with a splintered, artistic self . Each of these characters, Jussuf, the poetess, the omniscient narrator and even Jussuf's mother are arguably representations of Else Lasker-Schüler, and each of these are representations of herself to herself. The self presented in the text is not truly integrated or complete. This self is also its other: the male, powerful Jussuf is the other to the first person narrator, an impoverished young mother. Yet, these are both points of identity for Else Lasker-Schüler.

Dedicated to David Tanner for his patience, with the assurance that I really will get around to picking up all the books and articles off of the floor.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Elizabeth Mittman, Dr. George Peters and Dr. Karin Wurst. Their guidance, encouragement and support has been invaluable. The honest critiques, suggestions and encouragement that Dr. Karin Wurst, my chair, has given me has been of inestimable assistance in bringing about this project. Her time and consideration, as well as her advice and support, through this and other endeavors of mine, is greatly appreciated.

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I. Introduction

About Der Malik

Else Lasker-Schüler's work, Der Malik, first published in parts between 1913 and 1917, and later published in full in 1919, is an intriguing account of one character's growth from an author's persona into an independent subject situated in his own fantastic realm. Jussuf begins as a second, idealistic self posited by the first person narrator, who is herself an author. As the work progresses, he slowly gains autonomy from his creator, and his world grows in detail, until the narrative shifts into the third person. At this point, he has come into his own as a subject. I am informed by Bakhtin's notions on subjectivity and the creative process when I speak of Jussuf as a subject, as well as Kristeva's understanding of the fluid feminine self. The work ends with a retrospective moment, in which he encounters his feminine origins through the persons of another character, his mother, and his fictional author. In moments such as these, the feminine is celebrated as creative, powerful and beautiful.

If one considers that Lasker-Schüler strongly identified with her character Jussuf, another interpretation emerges. Jussuf's visions of the speaking poetess and his dead mother enclosed within the other, omniscient narrator's account, presents the reader with an artistic self in the process of disintegrating. Each of these characters, Jussuf, the poetess, the omniscient narrator and even Jussuf's mother are each arguably representations of Else Lasker-Schüler, and each of these are representations of herself to herself. In this scene, the author describes

herself (Jussuf) envisioning herself (the poetess, the mother) in a distanced account which she (the omniscient narrator) tells to the reader. The self that Lasker-Schüler illustrates with Der Malik is as varied and multifaceted as her description of the Middle Eastern peoples. Perhaps this is why love cannot succeed in both reconciling the differences between the self and the other while at the same time preserving the integrity of the self: the self is not truly integrated or complete, and the encounter with the other in love reveals this unsettling truth. The love of the other, and the acknowledgment of the other as other entails the recognition, as well, that the self is also an other to itself.

About the Name "Malik"

The first clue a reader has that the world in which he or she will enter through Der Malik will be otherworldly is its title. What does the word "Malik" mean? From reading Lasker-Schüler's work, it is clear that this word is a title for a king or perhaps sultan in the author's fantasy-Egyptian realm, Thebes. The term "Malik" in her work is similar to the term "Abigail," except that "Abigail" was passed from father to son in one particular lineage, Jussuf's, while the term "Malik" appears to be more general, referring to each ruler in Thebes, regardless of parentage.

Sigrid Bauschinger, in her discussion of Lasker-Schüler's search for an original Asiatic language, suggests that the poet, in many of her longer, apparently nonsense phrases (Bauschinger uses "Châ machâ lâaaooooo!!!!" as an example) simply fabricates interesting sounds:

> Auf den Klang kam es ihr dabei auch nur an. Die pseudoarabischen Zitate in den "Nächten Tino von Bagdads," "Der Prinz von Theben," und "Der Malik" sind allesamt unverständliche, aus arabischen Sprachpartikeln zuzammengesetzte Wortreihen. Es scheint, als habe die Dichterin nach dem Gehör vorgesprochenes Arabisch aufgeschrieben und die Wörter,

> deren Klang ihr besonderes bedeutungsvoll erschien, dann in die Geschichten aufgenommen. (Bauschinger 105)

I considered the possibility that "Malik" was one such word. Its sound is close to the Yiddish term "Melekh," which also means king. In Das Buch der drei Abigails, Lasker-Schüler uses the German version of this term in relation to Jussuf: "Der ehemalige Zebaothknabe Jussuf, der Sohn des verstorbenen Oberpriesters und seiner schönen Mutter Singa, war jetzt in Theben Melech" (Prinz von Theben 69). The semantic and acoustic similarities between these two terms tempted me to end my search. However, an internet search revealed that "Malik" is common as both a first and a last name in Pakistan and Egypt, as well as the name of at east one historical person and one legal body. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, Hisham ibn 'Abd al-Malik was the tenth caliph in Damascus in 724. He successfully sought to keep peace between the colliding northern and southern sections of his Islamic empire, and his reign was on the whole prosperous and peaceful. He constructed many palaces and castles in Syria, and he was orthodox in religious matters. "Madhhab Malik," according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, refers to one of the four Sunni schools of law in Islam, originally a school of Medina. This school was founded in the eighth century on the teachings of imam Malik ibn Anas, who stressed Medinese community practice, traditional opinions and analogical reasoning to strictly relying on the traditions about the Prophet's life and words, or Hadith. This school of thought is currently influential in western Africa, the Sudan and some Persian Gulf states.[1]

Although these findings were certainly interesting leads, the most compelling explanation of Lasker-Schüler's choice of title was a simple one: in Arabic, the noun "Malek" is a royal title meaning king. "'Malik,'" Dr. Malik Balla writes, "is an active participle of the verb 'malak,' which means to own, so

'Malik' means the owner."[2] He notes as well that "Malek" is also derived from the verb "malak." Else Lasker-Schüler, then, may have heard "Malek" and transliterated it as "Malik," or she may have known that "Malik" was a proper name in Arabic, which is related to a word meaning "king." This would be an interesting reversal of her usual habit of giving friends grand names and titles; if this is the case, she simply took a proper first name, possibly of someone she knew or a name she had heard or had read about, and turned it into a royal title. She may have chosen "Malik" simply because it means owner, since, as author and persona Jussuf, she both owns and rules her fantasy realm Thebes.

An Arabic Name for a Jewish Ruler

Lasker-Schüler's choice of title reflects some knowledge of Arabic. Her fascination with Arabic and Islamic culture is not only a feature of her writing: in a number of her paintings and illustrations, a crescent moon with a star within its curvature appears repeatedly. This symbol may be seen now on Pakistan's flag, and it is an icon of Islam. Her interest in Islam and the Middle East is intimately bound with her connection to her own heritage. In fact, in the last story in Prinz von Theben, which is told from Tino's point of view, the Jews are included in a list of Middle Eastern peoples:

> Die frommen Muselmänner aus Mekka und Medina, die Leute aus Yemen, aus Tyrus, Beduinen, die Bewohner von Ninive und den anderen Eufratländern, die Egypter, die Philister, die Edomiter, Amoniter, Hethiter, die Stämme der Juden: Chaldäer, Saduccäer, Judäer, die Urenkel Davids, die Söhne der Leviten und ihre Väter, die hohen Jehovapriester, Talmudgelehrte aus Damaskus stehen auf mit mir wider das Christentum. (Prinz von Theben 95)

This list suggests tremendous variety among these peoples, including variety within the Jewish people, but they are all arrayed as one against the crusading Christians. The real site of difference lies between European Christians and the

Middle Eastern populace, that is, West and East. This view is somewhat ironic today, given the present tensions between Israelis (as representatives of the West) and the Arabic peoples. Sonja M. Hedgepeth, however, points out that Lasker-Schüler's numerous differences from the Weimar mainstream, her status as a woman writer and as a single mother, her Jewishness, and her Bohemian lifestyle, and argues that Lasker-Schüler was a kind of exile within her own homeland. Keeping these facts in mind, the poet's situating of herself within a fanciful "oriental" homeland which is strikingly alien to middle class Christian Europe is understandable.

However, Lasker-Schüler did not simply practice escapism: she desired to reconcile the differences between herself and the others, while at the same time appreciating and preserving their perspective differences. The love of the enemy, such as Tino's admiration of the blue eyed and blonde crusaders and their beautiful "sisters," or Jussuf's love for the Nibelungen knight Giselheer, is a common theme in her writing. Love normally does not succeed in reconciling or annihilating differences: Tino brutally defeats the crusaders, and Jussuf's love for Giselheer later competes with his hatred. Love, then, is identical to an impossible desire: the desire to melt with the other and at the same time maintain the integrity of the self. Why is this longing never fulfilled? What lies at the root of this problem?

Der Malik and Autobiography

Most critics who deal with Der Malik treat primarily its autobiographical aspects. Some do not separate the woman from her prose writings as a matter of principle. Hedgepeth, for one, writes: "Den Stoff ihrer Erzählungen kann wiederum nur der verstehen, der sich bereit erklärt, Lasker-Schüler selbst als

Mittelpunkt ihres Schaffens zu akzeptieren" (Hedgepeth 105). Although Lasker-Schüler relies upon personal material in the construction of this work, I do not treat it as primarily autobiographical. The work is clearly fictional, since the "letters" contained therein were never sent to Franz Marc, unless one considers their publication as a kind of personal correspondence, and because the fanciful realm of Thebes appears as an alternate, utopian reality in the work itself. Lasker-Schüler, moreover, did not distinguish between the real and the fanciful for philosophical reasons, and this work is clearly neither a straightforward autobiography nor pure fiction. As Sigrid Bauschinger points out, the poet carefully selects certain life-events to narrate, enhance and experience again in writing out of a wide variety of experiences (Bauschinger 132). Her choices are part the of the fictional utopia she constructs.

However, for Lasker-Schüler, the fictional realm is just as material and as "real" as the non-fictional realm; she therefore sees no contradiction in blending personal biographical material with equally personal fantasy material. Her work may more easily fit into the primarily feminine genre of "life writing," as defined by Marlene Kadar.[3] I will deal with this concept in greater detail when I consider the genre of Der Malik and the persona of Jussuf. Many feminist critics have also suggested that Lasker-Schüler's choice of the masculine persona Jussuf, in this work and others, entails a rejection of the feminine. While references to Kadar's ideas may suggest that Lasker-Schüler chose a feminine form, a closer examination of Der Malik, however, will show how the author venerates in her subject matter a femininity which is unabashedly positive.

Brief Biography of Else Lasker-Schüler

Else Lasker-Schüler was born on February 11, 1869 in Elberfeld to a relatively well-to-do Jewish family. Her father, Aron Schüler, was a banker, and

her mother, Jeanette (Kissing) Schüler, was an educated, sensitive woman who loved reading Goethe. During part of her early schooling, she was tutored at home after falling ill. This was perhaps a relief, since the other children teased her about her appearance and her heritage. Death first robbed her in 1880 of her beloved brother Paul, after whom she later named her son. By the turn of the century, she had lost both parents, had married Dr. Jonathan Berthold Barnett Lasker and had moved to Berlin. There she worked in her own studio, studied painting under Simon Goldberg, bore a son, Paul, had poems published for the first time in "Die Gesellschaft," and met her much loved and respected mentor, Peter Hille. In 1903 she divorced her first husband and later married Georg Levin, who she named Herwarth Walden. This marriage ended also, in 1910. She continued to draw and to have poems, prose and plays published. She made frequent appearances in the stylish coffeehouses of Berlin, and she was known in these for both her beautiful poetry and creative dress. During the first World War, she worked with Franz Werfel, Theodor Däubler, George Grosz and others on pacifist material. By 1927 she had moved in with a friend in Switzerland to care for her dying son, who passed away in December of that year. In 1931 her drawings were displayed in Berlin's Nationalgalerie, and in 1932 she was awarded the Kleist Prize for literature. In 1933 she immigrated to Zurich and then Ascona, Switzerland. She traveled much, visiting Alexandria and Palestine. She was formally exiled in 1938 when her name appeared on a list of persons stripped of their German citizenship in the "Reichsanzeiger." In 1939 she again visited Palestine, but the Second World War prevented her from returning to Switzerland. She published her last collection of poetry, Mein blaues Klavier, in Jerusalem, and died there two years later from a heart attack. She had moved in the circles of many famous writers and artists, notably Gottfried Benn, Franz Marc, Georg Trakl, Paul Zech and others.[4]

Else Lasker-Schüler is normally grouped with the Expressionists, although a number of scholars treat her outside of such classification. Anne Overlack, for instance, compares her uniqueness to that of Hugo von Hofmannsthal:

> ...Else Lasker-Schüler [blickt]weder nach vorn noch nach hinten, sondern fast schon autistisch um sich selbst und ihre "Gesichte" kreist und eigentlich keiner literarischen Strömung zweifelsfrei zugeordnet werden kann. Ihrer Singularität in der literarischen Landschaft der Zeit korrespondiert - auf einer anderen Ebene- Hofmannsthals Überlebtheit, so daß beide auf je spezifische Art zu Außenseitern werden. (Overlack 20)

Jean M. Chick, on the other hand, defines the "unifying element" in the Expressionist movement as "the poets' approach to form, as manifested predominantly in their lyrical works," as well as their emphasis on form, and their development of highly individualized structures, "suited solely for self-expression" (Chick 1). This critic places Lasker-Schüler firmly within this tradition. Angelika Koch, however, believes that Lasker-Schüler's use of play, an element central to mannerism, marks this poet as belonging to both Mannerism and Expressionism (Koch 2).

Much recent criticism on this author begins with the litany of difficulties that face scholars in separating the fact from the fiction within her life, and many comment on what a colorful life she lead. Erika Klüsener writes, "Alle Biographen, die sich mit Leben und Werk Else Lasker-Schülers auseinandergesetzt haben, sind auf die gleichen Schwierigkeiten gestoßen: Dichtung und Leben sind bei dieser phantasiebegabten Frau so sehr ineinander verwoben, daß die Dichtung ihr Leben schien und ihr Leben zur Dichtung geriet" (Klüsener 7). In book after book and article after article I encountered such statements, as well as almost cliché descriptions of her interesting dress and behavior. In fact, one description of her by Gottfried Benn which described her modest eating habits, outlandish clothing and costume jewelry, was repeated time and again. Many critics noted that the poet occasionally gave out false

personal information to various persons; some faulted her for this while others saw a relationship between such statements and her vivid fantasy world. She was in her lifetime and remains to this day a contested figure. I see much humor and play in her many costumes, writings and lies. Her sense of humor often has an absurd quality about it which reminds one of the Dadaists. As an example of this, I would like to cite her now famous self-characterization that she wrote for the 1919 anthology Menschheitsdämmerung, published by Kurt Pinthus: "Ich bin in Theben (Ägypten) geboren, wenn ich auch in Elberfeld zur Welt kam im Rheinland. Ich ging bis 11 Jahre zur Schule, wurde Robinson, lebte fünf Jahre im Morgenlande, und seitdem vegetiere ich." Many visual artists who were Dadaists played with perspective. For example, some would turn common objects, like toilets, upside down in order to show that these everyday objects can be interesting if viewed differently. Many liked to shock their audiences into new ways of perceiving. Some Dadaists proclaimed themselves as "anti-art;" they were interested in disrupting the relationship between "art" and "not-art." Lasker-Schüler's conscious refusal to differentiate between life and art is also overturns these categories. Like the Dadaists, she too sought to present her many acquaintances and friends with an altered perspective when she made statements as the one cited above. She certainly shocked some when she introduced herself as "Prinz Jussuf von Theben" or "Joseph von Ägypten." Many persons in her time were accustomed to the idea that the personal found expression in the artistic. Goethe is perhaps the most famous writer who emphasized the relationship between the personal and the artistic in his writings. However, many persons were not prepared to encounter Lasker-Schüler's unique incorporation of the artistic into her personal life. Characters in books speaking for authors was quite normal, but an author who spoke as her character in cafés and on the streets certainly gave those she encountered a new

perspective on the relationship between art and life.[5] Much recent criticism and popular interest surrounding the author has focused on her unusual life and the relationship between her life and writings.

Recent Interest in and Criticism on Lasker-Schüler

The collection, Lasker-Schüler, ein Buch zum 100. Geburtstag der Dichterin, edited by Michael Schmid, is exemplary of such recent biographical criticism and popular interest. It begins with a short biography of the author, contains numerous anecdotes about her by contemporaries, interpretations of various works, and closes with poetry inspired by her, by both her contemporaries and more recent writers. This book reflects another phenomenon surrounding the author: not only is she shrouded in the myths she created, but our views of her are also colored by the myth making of her contemporaries and earlier literary critics. Today many critics are concerned with debunking some of the myths about her: Sonja M. Hedgepeth challenges Kurt Pinthus' suggestion that Lasker-Schüler was mentally ill, while Ruth Schwertfeger contextualizes the author's imaginative works within her personal, tragic experiences during and after the National Socialists' rise to power. Schwertfeger's apologetics are primarily defenses of the author against earlier negative stereotypes in criticism, such as the view that she was mentally ill, an escapist or narcissistically self-absorbed. Schwertfeger reminds the reader of Lasker-Schüler's struggles to care for her dying son and her flight from a viscous national regime which condemned her Jewish person as well as her pacifist works. Though many seek to challenge both Lasker-Schüler's myths of herself and the myth of her created by criticism, the process of mystifying this author, now in celebration of her, continues. She appears as a character in Berlin, Jerusalem, and the Moon, which opened in New York in 1987. Motti Lerner's play, Else, which opened in 1990 in

Tel Aviv, is based on its namesake. Just recently I found a false account of her death over the internet: she was supposedly murdered by the Nazis while she was a young, aspiring poet. Lasker-Schüler would probably be delighted and disturbed to learn that her legend continues to metamorphose.

Why have so many scholars and modern fans concerned themselves with the intersection of her life and work? The special attention scholars pay to the ties between Lasker-Schüler's life and work is due to the fact that Lasker-Schüler, herself, blurred the boundaries between her art and her everyday life. As a young woman working in Berlin, she frequented coffee houses dressed as her characters. One of the best known photographs of Lasker-Schüler shows her as Prinz Jussuf: she stands playing flute in flowing pants tucked into boots, a matching long jacket with a wide, elaborately decorated belt. In her correspondence to friends, she often addresses them as their assigned characters, relates fanciful events from her fiction to them and closes with the name of a persona. In her works, she stylizes her own family history as well as her personal life and then she embeds real personal and historical events in her narratives. Judith Kuckart writes about her:

> Tinnef, Trödel, Tand, sie schenkt sich einen Schatz, ersteht sich eine Idee von sich selbst, sucht zärtliche Möglichkeiten, sich darzustellen, auszustatten, mit kleinen Teilen, die ein Ganzes bilden sollen, das ihr und anderen, welche sie ansehen, das Bild vermittelt, in dem sie gern gesehen werden will. Sie ist zu gleichen Teilen die, die schafft, und ihr eigenes Produkt; ein Ritual vielleicht für eine keusche Exhibitionistin.(Kuckart 24)

Clearly, she deliberately subverts distinctions between the actual and the artistic, the self and the mask. Scholars, therefore, have devoted much time to sorting the fact from the fiction concerning her life, and deciphering the biographical facts within the fiction.

The poet's blurring of the distinction between life and art is deliberate and consistent with her views on art. According to the philosophical outlook held by

Lasker-Schüler and a number of her contemporaries on art and life, one should not distinguish between the two. In a letter to Martin Buber, Lasker-Schüler wrote: "Daß ich nur von mir spreche, geschieht aus übergroßer Gerechtigkeit, aus Gewissenhaftigkeit, nicht nur aus Selbstschätzung. Nämlich, weil ich mich nur kenne und von mir Auskunft geben kann" (Hedgepeth 105).[6] Notably, the poet's mentor, Peter Hille, shared this perspective, and neither believed that their writings should be separate from themselves. Sigrid Bauschinger states: "Nicht nur als Wegbereiter für ihre eigenen Dichtungen wurde ihr Hille maßgebend, sondern, übereinstimmend mit der Ansicht, daß es zwischen Kunst und Wirklichkeit keinen Unterschied gebe, wurde ihr Hille auch ein Vorbild im Leben" (Bauschinger 58). Her art should be one with her life, and for this reason, she brought her art into her everyday life through her behavior and dress and in turn lived some of these experiences again in her writing.

Although Else Lasker-Schüler viewed her work as primarily personal, she also envisioned herself as a kind of prophet, a person from whom others could benefit. Klaus Weissenberger, in his discussion of Hille's influence on Lasker-Schüler and her eventual break with the *Neue Gesellschaft*, writes, "Doch die letzte und umfassendste Dimension des Erhebungsgedankens ist für Else Lasker-Schüler in ihrem künstlerischen Selbstverständnis zu sehen, das ihr Künstlertum durch die Simultaneität von göttlicher Bezogenheit und irdischer Liebeserfülltheit und -bereitschaft auf eine Stufe der messianischen Berufung erhebt" (206). He places this within the context of Lasker-Schüler's view of herself as exceptional, as a Jew, pariah and primarily as a poet. Like Joseph, the visionary after whom she patterned her persona Jussuf, she believed her life and art, dreams and words, in poems or personal letters, could and would change the lives of others for the better.

Her choice of Jussuf as hero in Der Malik is based in a lifetime fascination with the biblical Joseph. As a child, she played with colored buttons, and she named her favorite and most beautiful button Joseph of Egypt. In Das Hebräerland, she explains that she always retold Joseph's story during religion hour, and once, a girl in her class exclaimed that Else herself was Joseph. After this event, all the children believed that she was Joseph, and she no longer wanted to fit in with the others. Mary-Elizabeth O'Brien elaborates:

> The appeal which Joseph held for the poetess should not be underestimated. As the son of the aged Jacob and his wife Rachel, Joseph was blessed with the gift of prophecy (Gen. 37-50). He was a visionary who could see into the souls of men and understand the symbolic language of dreams. He was also singled out by his father; of the twelve brothers, only Joseph was given the miraculous coat of many colors. (O'Brien 2)

Joseph was the first son of Rachel, Jacob's beloved, while his older ten brothers belonged to Leah or servants. His brothers bitterly resented both his gifts and his father's special attention. Likewise, Lasker-Schüler's view of herself as a poet and Jew marked her as different from classmates, and later, as different from the Weimar bourgeoisie. O'Brien points out a number of striking similarities between Joseph's tale and Lasker-Schüler's tales of her childhood: she was highly influenced by her father, and she wore masculine clothing to please him (O'Brien 3). This clothing, like Joseph's coat of many colors, was both a symbol of her father's love (O'Brien 3) and of her own difference from the rest of her gender.[7] O'Brien also points out that Lasker-Schüler was singled out by her (primarily male) playmates[8] in "Meine Kinderzeit" because of her gender (O'Brien 3). Lasker-Schüler, as a child, was unique among both boys and girls because of her identification with a gender not her own. Just as Joseph was the favored other in his own family as well as the Hebrew other in Egypt, Lasker-Schüler was other as a woman among women, as the woman among men, as poet in the populous, and woman poet among predominately men poets.

Her status as other was a source of her creative energy and self confidence. Through such self-mythologizing, she could justify her break with the appropriate behavior expected of a Jewish woman and her devotion to writing and art. O'Brien writes, "The power to create originates in difference, which separates the self from others" (O'Brien 5). However, this difference, the source of her creativity and her creativity as difference, as Hedgepeth would point out, exiles her from the community of others. Her writings were frequently criticized by the popular press of her day because of her arcane subject matter and unique style. Lasker-Schüler was not concerned, however, with being accessible to a large audience: Overlack summarizes her position towards her audience as follows: "Ihr Werk verstehe, wer kann, Volksbildung jedenfalls ist ihre Sache nicht..." (Overlack 21). While Lasker-Schüler's exclusivity is striking, it is important to keep in mind that acceptance and accessibility is a two-way street. From early childhood on, Lasker-Schüler felt isolated and excluded; the exclusiveness of her own writing arises out of a desire to firmly establish and defend her sense of self as an artist against and in spite of those who ostracize her. Her exclusiveness results from the moves she has made to take her position as outsider and turn it into something positive: she understands her status as outsider to be analogous to that of Joseph, whose very gifts and merits set him apart from his brothers and turned him into an object of contempt. Likewise, Kuckart points out that Lasker-Schüler's distancing of herself from women in particular was a maneuver to avoid being kept out of a community of primarily male artists (Kuckart 96). The body of Lasker-Schüler's writings, though, is full of alienation, laments against loneliness and against those who will not understand her. Her sense of uniqueness, then, is a source of creative energy, self-confidence, but it is the locus of self-justification and pain, too.

Else Lasker-Schüler is best known for her lyric poetry, although her plays are gaining in recognition. In 1979, her play Ichundich opened in Düsseldorf. The Westdeutschen Rundfunk aired Arthur Aronymus und seine Väter on television in 1988 during the "Woche der Brüderlichkeit." Popular interest in this author has grown, and many of her plays are used today to encourage openness and understanding between different cultures and religions. Critical interest in her prose works, however, is lagging behind that in both her poetry and plays. According to Sonja M. Hedgepeth, this lack of critical interest has resulted in an accepted yet premature judgment of her prose as inferior to her other works. As a result, her prose has remained largely unfamiliar (Hedgepeth 104). Else Lasker-Schüler's prolific collection of prose has attracted only peripheral interest from scholars.

II. Examination of Der Malik

History and Place of Der Malik in Lasker-Schüler's Prose

The prose work, Der Malik., mixes forms: it begins as an epistolary novel with metafictional overtones, since the letters are written by a character who is an author, and then shifts rather abruptly to a fairy-tale narrative in the third person. Although the overt metafictional overtones seem to disappear in the third person narrative, these appear again before the protagonist's death. I concentrate on the play between personas and voices, in particular the characters of Jussuf and the first person narrator. Jussuf and the third person narrator are creations of the first person narrator, as well as masks for her. Jussuf, however, gains autonomy from her and becomes a separate subject. Lasker-Schüler's use of metafictional techniques, personas and the emerging subject Jussuf reveals part of the process she perhaps uses in creating subjects. Considered in the light of Kristeva's view of the fluid self, the play between these three figures may also be interpreted as Lasker-Schüler's own play with a diversified and non-self identical self. Gender influences these subjects in significant ways, too: Lasker-Schüler juxtaposes the creative with the procreative in the feminine character of the first person narrator; she posits masculine homosexual love as an ideal love, and she aligns the masculine with power and art in the character of Jussuf. This discussion will be grounded in an analysis of the two textual realms: the world of the first person narrator, a "real" and mundane place, illustrated within the epistolary section of the work, and the utopian-alternative world of Jussuf constructed within the fairy-tale narrative.

Excerpts of what was later to become Der Malik first appeared between 1913 and 1917 in the weekly Expressionist paper, "die Aktion," published by

Franz Pfemfert. The collection, entitled "Briefe und Bilder," were broken into numbered letters. Another section of the work, entitled "Der Malik," appeared in "Brenner," and later "die Aktion" came out with another section. The last part of the work was published between 1916 and 1917 in "Neue Jugend." The structure and the letters in "die Aktion" are nearly identical to the later, complete version, first published in 1919 by Paul Cassirer in Berlin. The earliest version, however, is different from the Cassirer version in some rather subtle ways: for example, capitalization of certain words differs between the two versions, and "Höllriegel" in the earlier version of letter number two becomes "Herr X" in the last version. There are some semantic changes as well. In the earlier version of the fifth letter in "die Aktion," Lasker-Schüler writes:

> Meine Stadt Theben ist nicht erbaut davon. Meine Stadt Theben ist ein islamitischer Priester. Meine Stadt Theben ist ein Bureaukrat. Meine Stadt Theben ist mein Urgroßvater. Meine Stadt Theben paßt mir auf bei jedem Schritt. Meine Stadt Theben ist ein - Ekel. Ich schickte dem ungläubigen Ritter lauter Spielsachen... ("Die Aktion" 226)[9]

She divides the fifth letter into two separate letters in the Cassirer version, and transforms this particular section into the following:

> Meine Stadt Theben ist nicht erbaut davon. Meine Stadt Theben ist ein ehrwürdiger hoher Priester. Meine Stadt Theben ist die Knospe Zebaoths. Meine Stadt Theben ist mein Ur-Urgroßvater. Meine Stadt Theben begleitet mich bei jedem Schritt. Meine Stadt Theben ist ein hochmütiger Scheitan. – Ich schickte dem ungläubigen Ritter lauter Spielsachen.... (ELS 401)

Lasker-Schüler eliminates the reference to Islam, presumably because Jussuf later becomes a specifically Jewish hero, the leader of the wild Jews. She emphasizes elements that enhance the mysterious, Middle Eastern and ancient quality of Thebes: for example, the "Urgroßvater" becomes an "Ur-Urgroßvater," and the phrases "Knospe Zebaoths" and "Scheitan" are added, while more mundane references to Thebes as "Bureaukrat" and the pronouncement, "Ekel," are simply

dropped. I will base my analysis on the later version of Der Malik, which was first published in 1919 by Paul Cassirer in Berlin.

Bauschinger, among others, views Der Malik as a continuation of Mein Herz, a collection of letters addressed to Lasker-Schüler's ex-husband and a friend. She writes, "Mit 'Mein Herz' verbinden 'Malik' andererseits nicht nur die Briefform des ersten Teils und die eingestreuten Zeichnungen, meist Köpfe der Künstlerfreunde, von denen gerade die Rede ist, sondern vor allem wieder die enge Beziehung des Berichteten zu Else Lasker-Schülers eigenem Leben" (Bauschinger 152). Lasker-Schüler, though, did possess an identifiable artistic style. Her quick sketches, bright colors, preference for profiles, as well as her choice of subject matter, the oriental Prince with flowers, hearts or stars adorning his cheeks, the city Thebes, the figures of men who merge into one another, all make her work highly recognizable. The consistency that her artwork may lend to the two works is a simply a function of her personal artistic style and vocabulary. This consistency extends across the larger body of her drawings and paintings, and not just across the artworks in these two literary works. Moreover, most of her writing, including her poetry and plays, as well as her prose, is intimately bound with her personal life. The intimate connection between life and art, after all, was paramount in her artistic philosophy. The similarities Bauschinger points out between these two works concerning the author's artwork and personal life, then, extend to the greater body of her writings. These do not tie these two works together in particular.

Although, as Bauschinger points out, Der Malik and Mein Herz seem to have a common epistolary form, this similarity is only skin-deep, too. Unlike Der Malik, Mein Herz guards the epistolary form; the author includes a number of "letters" written by others, but work is entirely told from the first person perspective. Der Malik, on the other hand, contains mainly letters from the first

person narrator and Jussuf, who are frequently identical to one another, and only a few letters from others in Jussuf's world. The epistolary form, moreover, is only maintained for about a third of the work. Furthermore, unlike the Kaisergeschichte, which has a single poem, Mein Herz contains many poems. Clearly, Mein Herz and Der Malik are different in form.

These two works differ substantially in their main characters and content. Lasker-Schüler does not limit herself to a small number of characters through whom she speaks in Mein Herz, as she does in Der Malik, but she employs a number of self-voices: Tino of Bagdad, Jussuf as Prince of Thebes, Amanda writing in dialect, and even a Shakespeare and an Odesseus, among others. The fantasy realm of Thebes, though included in Mein Herz, by no means dominates it as Thebes does in the Kaisergeschichte. The narrator refers consistently to the realm of Berlin though out the work in her many references to cafés, publishers, and other poets. This "realistic" realm is not subsumed by the fantasy realm, as it is in Der Malik. Mein Herz, though it arguably contains an emotional progression, also lacks the plot progression of Der Malik. This work is also far closer to autobiography than the fanciful Malik. These two works differ in their subject matter as well as in their form.

Clearly, the three works, Mein Herz, Der Prinz von Theben, and Der Malik are all related, since they share some characters and the realm Thebes. These works, though, differ in structure, subject matter and in their main characters. In short, each of these three may stand alone, and for this reason, I have chosen to examine Der Malik as a separate work from these.

Recent Criticism on Der Malik

To my knowledge, no single analysis concentrating on this work has been attempted. In fact, there are relatively few studies that concentrate on any one

prose work. Critics like Sigrid Bauschinger and Sonja M. Hedgepeth have dealt with her prose categorically and given general overviews of it, while other critics, such as Klaus Weissenberger, have examined the poetic qualities of her prose style. Still others have traced a particular persona from work to work. For example, Bauschinger traces the development of the Jussuf figure from Mein Herz to Der Malik, while Weissenberger examines the relationship between Lasker-Schüler's Jussuf and the biblical Joseph.

When scholars do address Der Malik, most center their analysis around some aspect of Lasker-Schüler's biography. Mary Elizabeth O'Brien treats the author's creation and adoption of the masculine Jussuf figure as a mask through which the author seeks to overcome the powerlessness and pain inherent in a feminine voice. O'Brien compares the feminine Tino persona to Jussuf, and pinpoints the place where the poet abandons her heroine for a more powerful hero; this scholar then places Lasker-Schüler's struggle within the context of her relationships with her parents, and her position as a Jewish woman within a patriarchal, anti-Semitic society. Dieter Bänsch reads the Jussuf figure as part of the artist's plan to shroud herself in myth.[10] Hedgepeth understands the Egyptian realm of Thebes to be a mythical homeland posited by the author, who was not at home in Berlin (Hedgepeth 107, 112-114). Moreover, she suggests that Lasker-Schüler, as the powerful Malik of Thebes, could condemn the war and express her grief over dead friends fallen in the line of duty (Hedgepeth 131-132). Bauschinger as well sees a close connection between Der Malik and Lasker-Schüler's personal life. She notes Lasker-Schüler's objections to the war and her efforts to convince friends not to join it, the similarities between the poet's son Paul and Jussuf's younger brother Bulus, and other significant life events which found expression in this work. The majority of these studies concentrate on the epistolary section of the work as it relates to Lasker-Schüler's life, and they make

references to Jussuf's vision and death at the end. Most do not deal with the third person narrative, whose overt connections to Lasker-Schüler's life is less apparent. While each of these studies touch upon Der Malik, and some present a brief study of the work, I believe that this difficult piece deserves a more thorough investigation.

Although I do not intend to work in a primarily biographical vein, I will argue that Der Malik does revolve around an author: the character of the first person narrator, and Jussuf, who is himself a poet. The process of creativity, particularly writing, plays a primary role in this work as well. I do not wish, however, to conflate this first person narrator or Jussuf with Else Lasker-Schüler as a number of critics have, even if it is very likely that the author associated herself with these characters.[11] I will leave the intricate connections between Lasker-Schüler's biography and this work to those who have already devoted much time and care to unraveling these mysteries. Moreover, Bauschinger warns against the pitfalls of naive autobiographical readings of her works:

> So sehr es verlocken mag, in einem derart autobiographisch beeinflußten Werk wie dem Else Lasker-Schülers, Dichtung und Wirklichkeit jeweils wort-wörtlich aufeinander zu beziehen, so sehr muß man sich davor hüten. Else Lasker-Schüler hat eine sehr strenge Auswahl unter den autobiographischen Fakten vergenommen, die sie... oft höchst verklärt in ihr Werk übernahm.... Auf keinen Fall aber darf man die fiktiven Briefe aus "Mein Herz" und dem "Malik" als autobiographische Zeugnisse verstehen. (Bauschinger 132)

Those interested in this vein should consult Bauschinger's thorough and essential work, Else Lasker-Schüler: Ihr Werk und Ihre Zeit. One of the most recent treatments of the relationship between Lasker-Schüler's life and work is Sonja M. Hedgepeth's book, Überall blicke ich nach einem heimatlichen Boden aus, which focuses on Lasker-Schüler's experiences as an author in exile. Hedgepeth interprets Lasker-Schüler's isolation within the Weimar Republic's culture as a

kind of exile which preceded her political exile from Germany, and seeks to understand the effect that exile status had upon her life's work.

The Form of Der Malik

Der Malik is composed in a mixed form. It is a collage of styles, containing letters, a narrative and even one poem. The work shifts frequently from one point of view to another. The two most dominant point of views are that of the first person narrator, Jussuf and the third person narrator, but Lasker-Schüler occasionally allows her omniscient third person narrator to speak from a minor character's perspective. Lasker-Schüler is not exceptional in employing the collage in this work; many Expressionists used this format. Kandinsky and Marc's work, Der Blaue Reiter, to which Lasker-Schüler deliberately refers by giving her letter recipient this name, is itself a collage with unifying visual themes. Like Der Blaue Reiter, which combines many visual forms by placing photographs of sculpture alongside images of paintings, but also includes essays, short stories and sayings by Marc, Burljuk, Delacroix, Macke, and A. Schönberg, among others, Lasker-Schüler's work contained drawings and sketches that accompanied her text. Unfortunately, many new editions and anthologized versions of this work do not contain the pictures that its author had placed with the text.

What is the form of Der Malik? If one understands a collage to be a mixture of traditional genres, is the work's form simply this? This collage transgresses the traditional genres it employs: it is neither autobiographical nor entirely fictional; it is not entirely epistolary, nor is it a continuous narrative; it is sometimes metafictional, yet not consistently so; it is not even purely textual, since it contains illustrations commenting upon the text. The ambiguity of this work extends to its cultural evaluation: Lasker-Schüler's works are canonized,

yet, as noted earlier, her prose is considered by some to be inferior, or it is overlooked.

Der Malik as an Example of Life Writing

Marlene Kadar's definition of "life writings" provides a good framework within which one may understand the place and classification of this varied work. Kadar places life writing within the context of feminist treatments of autobiography. She notes that most literature considered "gynocritic" is identified as such based on its subject matter, i.e. personal texts (Kadar 5). Life writing, unlike traditional autobiography, includes "the fictional frame in which we might find an autobiographical voice;" for example, experimental forms, narrative poetry, metafiction, oral histories and even biography may be included within this genre (Kadar 7, 11). Life writing, moreover, may represent but is not limited to writings by or about women. Kadar defines this genre as follows: "Life writing comprises texts that are written by an author who does not continuously write about someone else, and who also does not pretend to be absent from the [black, brown or white] text himself/ herself" (Kadar 10).[12] Lasker-Schüler's work, then, certainly fits this description. The epistolary section of Der Malik contains clear references to events in her life, such as her divorce or her friendship with Franz Marc. Her writings about Jussuf are equally personal, since she dressed as this character and even gave his name out as her own. Far from being absent from her text, Lasker-Schüler identified strongly with her own writing, believing that life and writing were not mutually exclusive categories.

Kadar calls life writing "incontournable," and she uses this term in relation to a narrative having a beginning, middle and end: "... we realize that 'the convention of unity ... is seductive because of its potential to keep the disturbing uncertainty of the subject buried,' or incontournable" (159). Der

Malik does not present an image of a unified subject. The subject of this work may be threefold, or she may be three separate subjects. The first person narrator confounds herself with her character Jussuf, but Jussuf does not identify himself with her. In fact, his vision of her precipitates the ultimate dissolution of his identity, that is, his death. The third person narrator does not identify with either of these two, and yet, since one knows that the first person narrator is an author, one may assume that this third person voice belongs to her as her creature, an omniscient narrator. This voice would then be the narrating voice of this author as she writes Jussuf's story, whereas the first person's voice within the letters is not limited to Jussuf's story. Finally, some scholars identify all three of these voices with Lasker-Schüler, while others only identify Jussuf and the first person narrator with her, but exclude the third person narrator (example: O'Brien). The two appearances of a mother or mothers confound identity issues further, since the first person narrator deeply identifies with her mother, Jussuf has great longing for his, and Lasker-Schüler is known to have identified strongly with hers.[13] The subject within this work, then, is certainly incontournable, that is, one cannot identify her "edges" or contour. The reader does not know where or with whom this multiple self begins or ends, and this confusion is played out within the secondary literature about this work.

Because the "subject" of Der Malik is difficult to identify, for she or he may be a multiple self, a fractured self, or simply several selves, one cannot read this work as autobiography. Although many feminist critics who read texts in an autobiographical vein acknowledge the merits of post-modern questionings of the self, such criticism is still highly invested in maintaining a concept of the self, even if that self is dispersed. Katherine Goodman writes, "...it is of the utmost importance that they [women] do not relinquish the concepts of 'self' or the authenticity of experience in so doing.... the concept of 'self' is essential if we are

not to remain fatalistic and without a sense of choice" (Goodman xvi). Since one cannot delineate the self within Der Malik, a discussion of the possible scripts for a life arising from this text, or the development of an ordinary or an exemplary self that one frequently encounters in a Bildungsroman, is not possible or pertinent in this context. Instead, Julia Kristeva's understanding of the feminine, fluid self, a self whose boundaries are in constant flux, is germane.

Lasker-Schüler's Use of Modifiers and her Compositional Technique

Kristeva's fluid self is, moreover, a self in relation to others. Lasker-Schüler's prose subject(s) frequently depend on the presence or implied presence of another, or at least the memory of another in order to speak, and to continue speaking. The epistolary form of Der Malik exemplifies this. The first person narrator's relationship to Franz Marc or Jussuf's relationship with Ruben fuels the narrative. It is within this intimate space that the action of the work unfolds, and the loss of this relationship haunts the third person narrative; the "ich" reverts to an "er," since there is no longer a "du" (Franz or Ruben) to whom one may say "ich." Moreover, Lasker-Schüler dedicates this work to her dear friend, the painter Franz Marc, and she uses him as her model for two primary characters, the letter recipient Franz Marc and Ruben.

Karl E. Webb explores the relationship between works of these two artists. Since the personal relationship between Marc and Lasker-Schüler forms the basis for Der Malik, his study is of particular interest. Lasker-Schüler, having studied painting and having brought recognition to a lesser known painting of his after his death, was certainly knowledgeable about his style. It is clear from their letter exchanges, which often contained drawings, poems or paintings, that each artist found the other mutually inspiring. In Der Malik, the first person narrator calls the character Franz Marc "der blaue Reiter." As noted earlier, this is a

reference to his participation in "Der Blaue Reiter" movement with Wassily Kandinsky.

Karl E. Webb discusses the affinities between Lasker-Schüler and Marc. He situates their work within the modern city: "They ... abhorred the impersonal and dehumanized modern technological world and felt deeply threatened by it. They sought as a result the means to withdraw from this world into a personal realm more commensurate with their own thinking" (Webb 284). According to Webb, the artistic realm functioned for each as a haven from the cold, impersonal modern world. Lasker-Schüler, then, writes not only about how she perceives her world and life, but she also posits an ideal, personal world and how one could live and interact with others within this personal world. Der Malik is full of her observations of Berlin and her city Thebes is, in many ways, a utopian rendering of this city. Berlin is the dwelling place of the discontented first person narrator, while the joyful Jussuf is enthroned in Thebes. The realm of Thebes comes into being in the epistolary section of the work and it dominates the third person narrative. When the first person narrator speaks of Berlin, she asserts that she lacks both power and will-power there, mentions her isolation as the only antiquated Jew and complains of her meager finances (405). In stark contrast to Berlin stands Thebes: a city whose inhabitants rule Jussuf ("Aber Mein treu Volk... ist ein einziger Malik mit Mir, Du!!" 422) by enacting his many willful desires as legislation ("Ich darf nun tun, was ich will!!!" 421); Thebes is a colorful land brimming with plenty, including plenty of antiquated Jews. Thebes fits Webb's description of a humanized, personal realm.

Webb believes that Lasker-Schüler's personal philosophy found expression in a striking and personal artistic form of writing: "One of the most pronounced of these stylistic equivalencies [between Marc and Lasker-Schüler] is the prominent and often independent role which both artists gave to the so-

called modifiers in their works– the colors in the painting and the adjectives and adverbs in the poetry" (Webb 291). He elaborates, Lasker-Schüler's "words, like the colors in Marc's paintings, assumed a validity and meaning all their own, independent of their descriptive duty in the sentence.... Within a given context, these elements also created an additional 'psychological' implication which in most cases became their primary purpose.... the traditional connection between modifier and antecedent has been entirely obscured while the emotional or psychological context and significance have been greatly intensified" (Webb 291-2).[14]

Lasker-Schüler uses such a style in her prose as well. For example, in the opening paragraph of Der Malik, she writes:

> Ich bin allein auf der Welt lebendig, auf der Hochzeit des leichtlebigen Monats mit der Blume, und ich werde täglich allein begraben und ich weine und lache dazu– denn meine Traurigkeit ist weißer Burgunder, mein Frohsein roter Süßwein. Wenn man die Augen zumacht, weiß man nicht, ob man froh oder traurig ist, da irrt sich der beste Weinkenner. (395)

The adjective "allein" grows in this passage beyond its normal implications. Within the first clause, she implies that she alone recognizes and enjoys the spring month; as a poet, perhaps she has a better understanding and appreciation for the beauty of the new season, or one wonders if she feels abandoned by those she loves. However, when "allein" is applied to death and sleep in the second clause, it is clear that only each individual can experience his or her own death and his or her own unconsciousness in sleep. The adjective "allein," then, comes to stand for the singularity of each individual's experience in these two activities, und ultimately, the singularity of each individual life. The direction of this move towards life, though, was also indicated in the first clause through the adjective "lebendig."

The assonance arrived at through Lasker-Schüler's echoing of the "ei" sound, first introduced in the word "allein," also ties this passage together. The "ei" sound echoes in "Hochzeit" and "leichtlebigen" in the dependent clause. The semantic connections between "allein" and life are reinforced by the acoustic tie to "Hochzeit," which represents semantically two individuals' new life together and often the beginning of a third, new individual's life, and "leichtlebigen." Assonance, then, supports semantic connections. This "ei" sound is repeated in the next couple independent clauses in "weine," "meine," "Traurigkeit," "weißer," "Frohsein," "Süßwein," and finally in "weiß" and "Weinkenner." Acoustically, "allein," which is related semantically to life, is also related to "weißer Burgunder," "Süßwein," and "Weinkenner," three phrases which are, upon examination, also metaphorically connected to life.

The image of wine is carefully interwoven in this passage, so that it becomes a metaphor for sorrow, then happiness, and finally living, itself. The image of wine is perhaps foreshadowed when the wedding between the spring month and flowers is mentioned, since wine is enjoyed at weddings and is often included as part of a wedding ceremony. It is further interesting that she cries, "ich weine," and her sorrow becomes "weißer Burgunder," or wine. Acoustically, "weine" and "weißer" are tied together through their vowel sounds and initial consonants. There is also a play on the aural similarity between the verb "weinen" and the noun "Wein." She further plays upon her own image of white wine as sorrow by contrasting it with happiness as sweet red wine. Wine, then, is now a metaphor for living, since living entails both happiness and sorrow, the burgundy and the sweet wine. As noted earlier, the connections between these words are reinforced through their echoing of the "ei" vowel sound, as well as the consonant "w" in "weinen," "weißer," "Wein," and "Weinkenner." Wine as a metaphor for life, like "allein," the adjective signifying

singularity, becomes further enhanced by contact with death, since the best wine taster (person living fully) cannot determine the red from the white (happiness from sorrow) when she closes her eyes (in sleep or in death).

At the outset, this passage seems to work through association: pairing (the spring month and flowers) is associated with marriage. The word "Hochzeit" names an event where it is common to encounter both persons who weep (weinen) and drink wine (Wein). Wine is then broken into its types, "weißer Burgunder" and "Süßwein," which brings to mind the "Weinkenner," who can tell the difference between types of wine. These subtle associations belie the fact that Lasker-Schüler carefully directs her conceit towards an overarching theme: the encounter of the living with death, and the confusion of the living (irren) and its heightened value in the face of death. As Webb suggests, Lasker-Schüler's adjectives and metaphors take on powerful psychological significance, and their function exceeds their normal grammatical function as descriptors.

Furthermore, Webb asserts that this personal style is the structure:

> It is a compositional technique constituting a progression of images, each related to the others by a series of thematic or structural associations. Though at first these images may appear to progress in a purely arbitrary or disjointed fashion, they in fact all belong to a carefully constructed compositional harmony. (Webb 294)

Lasker-Schüler's prose often lacks a clear plot, and Der Malik is no exception to this rule. Again, Webb's observations of her poetry may be applied to her prose. Der Malik contains five recurrent themes which hold the work together, despite its unpredictable turns, repetitions and a plethora of nearly disjointed images. Each of these five themes is worked throughout Der Malik in order to create a delicate balance. Webb states further, "This creation of a type of motif association among the various levels and entities of the work becomes, as a result, a most successful and necessary technique in bringing harmony and unity to a work with highly varied, complicated, and compressed style when it might

otherwise have deteriorated into a confusion of disjointed forms" (Webb 295). Hedgepeth, on the other hand, suggests that the reader rely upon biographical information when unraveling the storylines of her prose pieces, and this method has proved useful to countless critics. Where appropriate, I will attempt to point out biographical observations which are pertinent to this analysis.

Summary of Der Malik Based on Five Primary Themes

First, I would like to give a brief summary of Der Malik. Informed by Webb's position, I observed that five themes appear repeatedly throughout the work: the importance of artistic expression, the horrors of war, the prominence of love and friendship, the overturning and re-establishment of power, and the ambiguity of gender. For the purposes of my analysis, I will concentrate on the importance of artistic expression and the ambiguity of gender within the text. It is necessary, though, to refer to all five of these in order to present a coherent summary of the work. The continuous interweaving of these five themes, like the recurring images Webb noticed within Lasker-Schüler's poetry, give the work its consistency and balance.

The work opens as a letter to the blue rider, or a character named Franz Marc. The letter recipient Franz Marc represents Lasker-Schüler's friend by that name, a historical artist who made up the "Blauer Reiter" movement with Wassily Kandinsky, yet the letters in the work are fictional. According to biographer Michael Schmid, these letters were never sent to the real Franz Marc (Schmid 29). Future references to Franz Marc, then, will refer to the character of the letter recipient, rather than the historical person upon whom this fictional character is based. Likewise the character of the Malik, the narrator's fictional persona, addresses his letters to Ruben, his half-brother. Ruben is a persona for Franz Marc, as the Malik Jussuf is a persona for the first person narrator. This

epistolary structure underscores the importance of friendship: the reader sees only one side of this correspondence, but knows that the existence of the other, the friend, is essential in calling the correspondence into existence. If one views the letters themselves as creative expression, then the interdependence between art and friendship is cast into relief.

The early letters underscore the importance of artistic expression. The first letter describes the narrator's apartment and a number of her dreams. It is evident from the letter the speaker is an imaginative woman author[15] living modestly in Berlin. Her dreams and fantasies, however, are quite extravagant: she describes the magical and exotic realm of Thebes to her friend, and tells him that she is Prinz Jussuf and will soon be crowned king. The letters fluctuate between the voice of the narrator through the filter of her Malik persona and her own voice. She often speaks of herself as Jussuf and describes the events taking place in his world. It is clear, though, that she is a writer and he is her character: she creates histories for Jussuf, a coronation and a mythology for his great city Thebes, and of course describes all of this to Franz Marc, but at the same time she discusses with Marc her own literary readings, encounters with friends, conflicts with her landlady, and her exploration of the streets of Berlin, or she muses over her Jewishness, opium smoking, and financial difficulties. Thus, the primacy of artistic expression can be seen when one compares the life of the woman to the imaginary one of the Malik: his life, the life of an artistic figure, is full of adventures and colorful persons, and his makes hers seem rather drab.

The theme of friendship intersects with the anti-war sentiment expressed in the work. When the letter recipient apparently chooses to join in the war, the structure of the work shifts from an epistolary structure to an unidentified third person narrator, whose voice is occasionally interrupted by that of the Malik. This new narrator is solely concerned with the fate of the Malik and his world.

References to the world of the woman and her friend Franz Marc disappear, and all action takes place within the magical realm created by the fictional author. Hence, it appears that the first person narrator and Franz Marc have been replaced with Jussuf and Ruben, but the relationship between these two implicitly tells the fates of the first two as well, as I will argue later. The disruption of friendship through war, then, appears to be the motivation for the shift in the work's structure.

The Malik is not, however, opposed to all wars: just one, the great war within which the Aryan nations have engaged and the one that Jussuf's Western friends encourage him to join. All other battles and wars are not problematic for him. In fact, in the early part of the work, he leads troops against a group of cannibals, captures the golden city Irsahab and threatens to kill all in Siam if they refuse him possession of the beautiful Venus of Siam. This particular war is dangerous because Jussuf looses many dear to his heart through it. In his other wars, he hardly looses a soldier.

Friendship is first destablized through war when Jussuf writes to Ruben about his desire to save a mutual friend, Sascha. Sascha's eventual death because of the great war certainly disrupts his relationship with the Malik, but Jussuf's relationship with Ruben is also disturbed. The death of this friend precedes the Malik's attempt to dissuade Ruben from joining the war, and thus becomes part of Jussuf's attempt to dissuade him. Unlike the earlier letters from the narrator/author to Franz Marc, these letters are not numbered and are not always in chronological order. His letters are embedded in quotes in the third person narrative. It is clear that Ruben has not joined the war previous to the Malik's attempts to rescue Sascha, because Jussuf writes to him, but the disappearance of the epistolary structure, itself, foreshadows the eventual loss of the letter partner. The last letter that Jussuf writes to Ruben before he departs on

his journey to Russia is set apart in the text, unlike his other letters. In this letter he bids Ruben good-bye and asserts that he will save Sascha. Ruben's death is then foreshadowed: the third person narrator mentions that this was the last letter Jussuf sent to Ruben, and then describes the disturbing image of Ruben's body at the bottom of a river. The narrator then describes the Malik's preparations for his journey, Sascha's demise in his arms, his anger at discovering that Ruben had entered the war, his loneliness without Ruben, and finally, his pain when he learns that Ruben has died.

The friendship and war themes are further strengthened throughout the work. During the course of his adventures, Jussuf gains a following: six young men become his closest companions and his top advisers, and he also becomes enraptured with a young visiting royal Aryan who was also a childhood friend, Giselheer, and who later becomes his enemy. The Malik's affection for this young man and his fear of loosing his precious friends or the citizens of his beloved Thebes to war make up his primary motivations to not enter the war. Interestingly enough, artistic expression seems to have cast its lot with war, because a number of his noble artist friends try to convince him to enter the war in order to bring about a world more supportive of the arts.

Gender ambiguity creeps in with the arts, but it eventually threatens to overthrow friendship. A tall woman who dresses as a man, Milli Millus, enters his city. After the Malik has composed poems about his lost love Giselheer, she creeps behind him. He knows she is there, and he does not fear her as his friends do. He asks her if she would like to become the seventh in his group of top advisors. She agrees with joy, and shows him a sculpture she had made of him. She turns out to be a traitorous person later: she designs to marry one of his other followers and become a ruler herself, and she even makes an attempt on his life. Gender ambiguity reaches its zenith in the last passages of the work: the Malik,

after the murder of one of his faithful advisors, goes and sits alone under a tree to contemplate the dear friends he has lost to war. He sets out alone and climbs a hill. There he sits under a tree, and he has a vision: the soul of his queen mother appears in the branches, borne up on golden wings. He then dreams of a woman poet, far in the west, who, in her tiny cramped room, plays games with the moon. Her image is disturbingly similar to that of the first person narrator in the epistolary section of the work, and I will argue that she represents this character. Jussuf returns confused and sorrowful to his palace. This is the moment when Milli makes her attempt on his life. She merely wounds him, but he then hangs himself, and his brother succeeds him as Malik.

The theme of power in flux is also interwoven within the other themes. It intersects frequently with love and friendship. Jussuf has a faithful Somali body servant, Oßman. Approximately three or four times in the work, the city of Thebes celebrates Oßman's day. On this day, Oßman becomes Malik and Jussuf becomes his servant. Oßman's deep loyalty to the Malik, of course, makes this day possible. When Jussuf sets off to rescue his friend Sascha, he has a good friend installed as viceroy over Thebes during his absence. Interestingly, Jussuf does not leave on his trip immediately, but rather has his viceroy rule while he is still there. Although Jussuf feels an occasional tinge of jealousy against his viceroy, he also greatly enjoys his company. He allows his advisors great freedom, too. In fact, the advisor who was murdered had been dressed up as the Malik at the time of his death: the enemy had intended to kill the playful Jussuf. Curiously, although Jussuf gives his beloved friends ample opportunities to betray him, they normally do not. Power is passed between Jussuf and his friends like a plaything, and it is rare that one of them becomes dangerously greedy. There are a few indications that this state is occasionally strained. For example, Oßman tells the viceroy of his prowess as Malik during his ruling day,

and the reader suspects that he may feel slighted by Jussuf's choice of viceroy, but Jussuf certainly does not notice this.

Jussuf also has a younger beloved brother, Bulus, who frequently attempts to influence the Malik's decisions. In fact, Bulus is one of the Malik's friends who encourages the Malik to enter the hateful war. It is also Bulus who must bring the city of Thebes into order, after the Malik, in his sorrow over the murder of one of his advisors, allows the city to fall into disrepair. Bulus succeeds Jussuf on the throne after Jussuf takes his own life. In their relationship, one of the most intimate relationships in the text, then, power, love and friendship and Jussuf's anti-war sentiment all intersect.

There are two traitors in the text: his beloved Giselheer and the man-woman, Milli. Giselheer's power over the Malik stems from the latter's deep love for him. Love, although it usually allows for the smooth transition of power between characters in the text, also allows for the betrayal of Jussuf by Giselheer. In the case of Milli, gender ambiguity confuses Jussuf. He treats her as a man in raising her to the status of an advisor. Yet she turns out to be just a power-hungry "wily woman" after all. She uses love to try to win one of Jussuf's other advisors to her side, and when she fails at this, she attempts to murder the Malik. I will argue, too, that Jussuf's own gender ambiguity fuels his weaknesses, and it is his fear of his own androgyny that feeds his distrust of women, but also weakens him in the presence of the androgynous Milli.

Division of the Work into Two Textual Realms

I would like to examine the division of the work into two worlds: the mundane world of the writing character, and the fanciful world of her creation, Jussuf. The opening letter of the work sets the stage for the rest of the narrative. From the beginning, we are introduced to a highly imaginative narrator:

> Mein lieber, lieber, lieber, lieber blauer Reiter Franz Marc.
> Du willst wissen, wie ich alles zu Hause angetroffen habe? Durch die Fensterluke kann ich mir aus der Nacht ein schwarz Schäfchen greifen, das der Mond behütet; ich wär dann nicht mehr so allein, hätte etwas zum Spielen. Meine Spelunke ist eigentlich ein kleiner Korridor, eine Allee ohne Bäume. Ungefähr fünfzig Vögel besitz ich, zwar wohnen tun sie draußen, aber morgens sitzen sie alle vor meinem Fenster und warten auf mein täglich Brot. (395)

The letter recipient has two names: his fanciful title "blauer Reiter" and Franz Marc. This is our first obvious clue that the world we enter through the letter is not ordinary. From the descriptions that follow, objects may be identified, but they are overlaid and encoded in poetic images: a cloud that blocks the moon from the narrator's view becomes a black sheep protected by the moon, which is further personified, since the narrator wishes to take it out of the sky and turn it into a playful companion. Her cramped room becomes an "Allee ohne Bäume," an open space, while birds that wait in the morning outside her window for scraps of bread become creatures in her possession. Just as the title proceeds the person in her opening address, so does the imagination color and alter our understanding of everyday objects: clouds, rooms and birds all take on fanciful, mysterious qualities. The following passage reinforces this:

> Ich nehme schon seit Wochen Opium, dann werden Ratten Rosen und morgens fliegen die bunten Sonnenfleckchen wie Engelchen in meine Spelunke und tanzen über den Boden, über mein Sterbehemd herüber und färben es bunt; o, ich bin lebensmüde. (395)

The power of opium, which turns rats into roses, becomes a metaphor for the power of the imagination. It embosses ordinary objects with beauty; association enfolds clouds, birds and rooms in intriguing borrowed characteristics. Moreover, the term "lebensmüde" may not only mean tired of living, but may also signify the narrator's weariness of this material life: the concrete, ordinary world, the ugly world of rats. She desires an escape into the fantasy life, an opium world of roses.

She not only desires such an escape, but she creates, motivated by these visions. She is an author: she refers to her new book in the bookstores (397), and once remarks to Franz in a discussion over her medication, "kein Mensch glaubt mehr, daß ich eine Dichterin bin..." (398). She draws as well as writes: she promises Franz, "Aber ich habe nun auch eine Karte gezeichnet. Dich und Deine Mareia," in which she draws him as a horse and his spouse as a lioness (400). She is also procreative. In the eighth letter, she mentions her child, who was delighted by Franz's pictures. Franz, too, is clearly an artist, since she mentions his pictures on various occasions. She dreams and she creates; she engages in aesthetic exchanges with Franz. Her world is a locus of creativity. She is the central figure in this world as well. Although she speaks of meetings with friends or her new love interest, she deals primarily with her own thoughts and feelings in her letters.

As the letter continues, it is apparent that the narrator is female: she refers to playing "Liebste und Liebster," then identifies her lover as "den Liebsten," and dreams of loosing her party dresses to her landlady for rent. The world of the narrator, where birds sing outside the window and rats scurry inside the small cramped room, where colorful postcards arrive in the mail from Franz, we see only through her eyes. This letter structure, which is written in her voice, I will label feminine, and the feminine world is specifically the world in which the narrator dwells.

When the world of the Malik, an artistically created realm, is introduced in the work, it is clear that some persons and objects in the first person narrator's world underlie it. Even when it seems to exist separately the moment the first person narrator disappears, the outer realm of the first person narrator is still implied, just as the cloud lurks behind the black sheep. In fact, the passage cited earlier, in which the narrator speaks of her death cloak and her weariness of life,

foreshadows the suicide of the Malik. Curiously, the Malik's world is first introduced as a denial. After the narrator mentions a gift from her lover, an ebony crown and some coins that he gave her as a tribute to her city Thebes, she states: "Ich habe nun keine Stadt mehr, ich will auch nicht mehr Kaiser werden, es gibt keinen Menschen, über den ich regieren möchte, keinen Menschen, den ich zur Krönungsfeier einladen mag" (396). Perhaps Thebes is introduced as a negative entity because it does not exist in the same manner that the narrator and her lover do. It exists only in the fantasy shared between the letter writer and her recipient, and implicitly, between the narrator and her impudent lover. Later it is uncertain where it exists, since the letter recipient dies[16] and the first person narrator disappears from the text. Most likely, it continues to exist after they have vanished from the text because the first person narrator continues to imagine the Malik's world, just as the universe continues to exist only because Vishnu dreams in Hindi mythology. According to the above passage, the Malik's realm may be banished from existence by the will of the narrator. It is clearly dependent upon her, but her world is not dependent upon it. It may be a place of refuge for her, but it is not separate from her. The imaginative narrator, then, is established as the true authority over the Malik's realm, for she may create or annihilate it.

She is separate from the fantasy realm: she precedes it in the narrative and continues to exist when it does not. This is counter-intuitive, because she is absent in the second half of the text, while the Malik's realm continues in a third person narrative. She may be the third person narrator, herself, or she may have created this narrator as another assumed persona; either way, she implicitly exists. Her existence is alluded to at the end of the text; the Malik, shortly before he ends his life, has the following dream: "...es wäre eine abendländische

Dichterin in einem kleinen Kämmerlein hoch in einem Turme und spiele mit dem Mond und seinen Sternen Zickzack" (Lasker-Schüler 487).

O'Brien interprets the poetess in the tower as Jussuf's own female identity, "the poetess within himself," and relates this to Lasker-Schüler's own difficulties in assuming a male persona (O'Brien 13). O'Brien, though, does not differentiate between the Malik and the first person narrator as I do. Although the first person narrator does speak in the voice of Jussuf, I do not treat the two characters as identical for the following reasons: as indicated above, Jussuf is dependent upon her, his creator, for existence, and he, though he may dream of her, never speaks in her voice. The two are clearly not on equal footing with one another. In fact, when the third person narrator takes over, there are only traces of the first person narrator's existence in the text. Unlike the first person narrator, who can enter Jussuf's world or banish it from existence, and who may speak his voice, Jussuf may only dream of her and her world– he cannot enter her realm. If the third person narrator is to be understood as the woman creator's voice, or, more likely, as a narrating character created by her, then the shift from first to third person may be interpreted as her distancing herself from her character Jussuf. This distancing, itself, foreshadows his death, since he literally becomes an "er" in the text, an object to be referred to and spoken about, rather than the living "ich," the subjective voice breathing being into words.

Jussuf's Realm Defined as Masculine and Utopian

The imaginative world, the world of King Jussuf, is masculine. The woman creator's relationship with Jussuf is that of desire to wish fulfillment: in the "Sterbehemd" passage cited earlier, she wishes for death, while Jussuf actually takes his life. Likewise, she describes Jussuf's ascension to the throne of Thebes as follows:

> Nun träumen wir nur noch Träume, die biblisch sind. Manchmal narrt mich so ein Traum, wie heute nacht. O, ich hatte einen boshaften Traum; allerdings mein sehnlichster Wunsch erfüllte sich– ich war plötzlich König, in Theben.... (399)

This marks the masculine fantasy realm as ideal, since it is the place where desire is realized, whether it be for death or power. While this fantasy world is valued highly by the narrator, the feminine "real" world in the text, like the female narrator herself, still takes precedence over it. The feminine actuality, therefore, remains the stuff upon which the masculine dream is built. Power is located there, since it is the source for the existence of the other.[17]

One may object that the masculine realm of the Malik is not ideal since it is plagued by war and the loss of dear friends. Jussuf even looses his desire to live. The relationship between the feminine world and the masculine is responsible for these circumstances. As noted earlier, the reality of the feminine narrator is the stuff from which the masculine fantasy arises. When tragic events occur, these are tied to outside "actual" events in the world of the feminine narrator. The fantasy world, then, acts as a haven for healing for the feminine creator, the place where she comes to terms with tragedy. The journey to Russia to save Sascha is a good example. Jussuf fails to rescue his friend, presumably because of the implied woman creator's real inability to aide a corresponding friend. He can, however, listen to his friend's last words, carry his coffin himself back to Thebes, and bury the loved one with great ceremony; women of Thebes mourn Sascha for thirty days, and ravens sing psalms in his honor. Clearly, the Malik has greater powers to properly mourn the dead than the imagining woman. She, recall, has bad dreams centered around paying rent; it is unlikely she would be able to honor a dead friend as she might wish, so she imagines the Malik's elaborate ceremonies to make up for her own insufficiencies. Many critics have noted that Der Malik retells the tragic events of Lasker-Schüler's own life. Judith

Kuckart characterizes the relationship between Lasker-Schüler and Jussuf elegantly:

> In ihrer seelischen und finanziellen Not wird der Prinz zum zweiten Ich, dem es besser gehen soll. Sein Lebensstil lindert die profanen Lebensnotwendigkeiten. Bis zum Ende ihres Lebens, als er schon längst aus ihrem literarischen Schaffen verschwunden ist, trägt sie sein Kostüm, herrscht in seiner Stadt, regiert sein Volk. Er ist Prinz, der in ihren Träumen herrscht und dem sie dient, wenn sie wach ist. (Kuckart 24)

Likewise, the occurrences within the great king's realm must be tied to tragedies within the first person narrator's world. When the ideal fantasy realm is disturbed by painful events, it reflects the limitations imposed upon it by its dependence upon the feminine, "real" world. However, it is also a locus of empowerment and healing for both the Malik and the imagining woman writer. Therefore, the masculine fantasy realm, despite its limitations, is ideal because it either fulfills the wishes of the female protagonist or offers her succor against pain. Kuckart elaborates on this point: "Traum will nicht nur Fluchtpunkt aus der Wirklichkeit sein, sondern auch utopischer Ort, wo sich Schmerzenslinien bündeln, um aus dem Leid die Leidenschaft zum Schreiben wachsen zu lassen" (Kuckart 66).

Bauschinger interprets the world of the Malik within a different context, that of the emerging technology-centered city Berlin. She argues that Lasker-Schüler's choice of an ancient Egyptian prince results from a reaction to Berlin: the poet felt alienated in the cold technological environment of the large city, and wished to live in ancient times. Bauschinger relates this fact to the poet's longing for an ancient, original language in which she could express herself.[18] In the same context, she notes that Lasker-Schüler divided persons into two categories: the "Philister, Bürger, unkünstlerische Plebejer," who have no understanding for art, and the artists and their friends. According to Bauschinger, Jussuf, the Prince of Thebes, represents artists and his realm, where the artists have power, is an

alternative to another, less-than-optimal reality, bourgeois Berlin. This interpretation agrees to an extent with mine since the masculine, ideal world of the Malik is aligned with the artists and an ancient, original language, while the mundane feminine may be aligned with the Philistines. However, I place artistic creativity in the feminine world within Der Malik, even though the Philistines do seem to have the upper hand in the first person narrator's home, Berlin. The feminine, then, is not merely the Philistine counterpart of the creative masculine world.

The Abasement of Philistines within Jussuf's Realm

This artist-Philistine opposition within Thebes, as described by Bauschinger, is a clearly hierarchical arrangement. Within Jussuf's realm, the artists have the upper hand, and the Philistines, although they dominate in the first person narrator's world, are usurped and humiliated. Again, within Thebes, the fantasies of the first person narrator for power and recognition are fulfilled. For example, those class distinctions and barriers, held dear to the middle and upper classes, are lifted in Thebes. Shortly after the Malik's installation in the palace, his people give him one hundred personal body guards. He confides to his brother, "Ich habe Mich mit Meiner ganzen Leibwache geduzt" (417). Jussuf relinquishes the proper, polite form of address, "Sie," for the familiar "du." In so doing, he erases basic distinctions between the public and the private (since one uses the familiar form with family members and the polite form with those on the outside the family), or the personal and the political. This is significant, because the public/private partition is the first basic social division upon which all other class and gender distinctions within Philistine Berlin rest. Jussuf also wishes to level the hierarchical distinction between himself and his citizens. In the speech that he gives during his crowning ceremony, he announces:

> So lieb Ich euch, ihr Brüder und Schwestern Meiner Stadt Theben, und Ich bin euer Bruder und euer König und euer Knecht. Denn wer nicht gehorchen kann, kann nicht regieren, und wer nicht regieren kann, rühme sich der Demut nicht.... Jeder von euch, und ist's der Ärmste, heißt Mein Kaiserlicher Bruder. Wir wollen uns küssen auf den Mund. (431)

The Malik addresses his citizens with an informal tone, and asserts that they are all his brothers. He alludes to the fact that the king's power resides in the people's obedience, and acknowledges their authority over him. He essentially sets his people upon an equal footing with him, although he remains king.

Not only does Jussuf desire to blot out the social distinctions between himself and his own people, but he also dissolves the distinction between conquerors and the conquered when his army captures Irsahab: "Du, die Soldaten sind begeistert, wir nahmen Irsahab ein, die Goldstadt. Ich gab am selben Abend ein Fest, auf dem mußten sich meine Soldaten duzen mit den Einwohnern" (413). Lasker-Schüler, then, draws a comparison between the basic social distinctions upheld by the bourgeoisie and the distinction between conquerors and the conquered. Thus political leaders, employers, and persons within the dominant classes are compared to conquerors, while their social inferiors resemble the conquered; the dominance of the public sphere over the private is implicated here as well. Jussuf, though, eradicates these social barriers and raises all to his own status. In sharp contrast to Philistine Berlin, where social distinctions are guarded jealously and the personal and political are alienated from one another, the atmosphere aspired to by Thebes is a holistic and familiar one.

The hierarchical balance between masculine and feminine, as well as master and servant, is also disturbed within Thebes. This is significant, since Thebes does tend to preserve these two Philistine divisions. The text is unambiguous with regard to the servile role assumed by Oßman and other

Somalis in Thebes, and women within the kingdom likewise take a subservient role. The text does contain, however, a moment in which these two hierarchies are overturned. On Oßman's Day, Oßman and Jussuf take on characteristics similar to Bakhtin's crowned festival fool. Bakhtin states:

> ...the king is the clown. He is elected by all the people and is mocked by all the people. He is abused and beaten when the time of his reign is over.... The clown was first disguised as a king, but once his reign had come to an end his costume was changed, 'travestied,' to turn him once more into a clown. The abuse and thrashing are equivalent to a change of costume, to a metamorphosis. Abuse reveals the other, true face of the abused, it tears off his disguise and mask. It is the king's uncrowning. (Reader 223)

Jussuf is both clown and king at the same time. He quite literally becomes the royal clown once when Oßman, his true servant, was king for a day. During one of these days, he climbs up a bamboo bush and sways back and forth in wide arcs for the entertainment of the others, while Oßman enjoys all the pomp associated with Jussuf's traditional position (463). Jussuf's antics do indeed entertain his friends, including foreign guests.

Jussuf's behavior as clown on Oßman's day upsets the precedence of the masculine over the feminine. Earlier that day, he did not sit at Oßman's side, as he often had, but rather wandered among Thebes' women; "Um die Spaßmacher drängten sie (die Frauen) sich, klatschten kindlich in ihre unschuldigen Hände, den unnahbaren Kaiser unter den Geringsten der Stadt nicht vermutend" (464). Disguised and temporarily dethroned, Jussuf wanders among women and allows them to touch him: this is significant since he rarely approaches women or allows them to see him when he is not grandly attired, and his distrust for them is notorious throughout the kingdom. But, as Bakhtin would probably point out, the mask sometimes reveals the true self: the dethroned and foolish Jussuf, who as we will later see harbors a woman within himself, may wander among the lowest, the women, since on this day he becomes low. Yet, his eventual suicide,

according to O'Brien, also results from his inability to face his own feminine side (O'Brien 14). He chooses suicide after Milli Millus, the man-woman, had attempted to stab him. Her abuse helps to bring down his patriarchal and royal mask, so that his feminine self may be revealed. It is the existence of this lowly feminine and foolish self under the mask of the masculine king that allows Jussuf, disguised yet revealed, to play among women in the first place.

Furthermore, when one remembers that underneath the Malik's sparkling world lurks his unhappy female creator and her world, then it is no surprise that the "Geringste," woman, would dwell within the king, since she is at the same time the creating goddess in his realm. Both the masculine and the feminine take their turns in positions of authority or debasement within these two realms.

Jussuf's rise to power is accompanied by many associations which mark his rule and his kingdom as a new order aligning itself with life and vitality, while the older, superseded order embodies Philistine values. For example, shortly before he is crowned Malik, Jussuf, who is often proud of his lack of education, confides to his friend, *"Man feiere Meine Unwissenheit!!"* (423). This is important not only since a lack of education associates him with the ignorance of youth, but also because it contrasts him against the defeated elders within Irsahab: "Ruben, mit Meiner dritten Hauptstadt Irsahab kann ich keine Fühlung gewinnen. Diese vorsichtigen, leisen, gelehrten Hebräer..." (423). The third person narrator later refers to them as "langbärtige Väter," (445), a description which certainly marks them as aged and learned. Learning and education, remember, is regarded highly by Berlin's middle class. This Philistine value, then, is debased in Thebes through its association with the obstinate old fathers in Irsahab. Later in the story, this city suffers a division between fathers and sons because of the Malik. The old fathers do not want their sons to join the Malik's quest into Russia, and many fathers lock their sons within their homes, but some

sons sneak out to join Jussuf. Clearly, the learned elders of Irsahab represent an older social order which does not wish to give way to the young, ignorant Malik. However, Jussuf has the vitality of life and youth on his side, and the very youth of this ancient city rebels against their old fathers to follow him. The old, learned fathers, who fear and despise change, represent the Philistines, who wished to discourage the Berlin Expressionists from their project of human renewal. Within the realm of Thebes, their resistance to the new order of artists is broken and marginalized.

While the fathers of Irsahab are associated with an excess of book knowledge (gelehrte) and old age, Jussuf and his rule is associated with new-born, innocent (not spoiled through an excess of education) life. In the scene preceding his official crowning, the Malik aligns him self and his rule with new life: "Meine Kamelin Rebb hat ein ganz kleines Kamelchen zur Welt gebracht. Im Palastgarten dürfen die kleinsten Kinder darauf reiten" (424). Jussuf also closes this letter to Ruben as "Dein kleiner Spielkaiser Jussuf." Again, new life comes into the world with the establishment of his reign. The tiniest children are allowed to ride the newborn since his new rule, which is itself in the process of becoming, represents the newest of life. His title, "Spielkaiser," reinforces the association between himself and life in the process of becoming. The notion of play is also intimately connected with the creative process for Lasker-Schüler, as well as with the vivacity of youth. Jussuf is not only a ruler who sides with youth and new life, that is, the procreative process, but he is also the representative of artists, persons engaged in the creative process. Creativity and procreativity are both emphasized in the person of Jussuf and placed on the side of his new order. Lasker-Schüler's Thebes, then, associates youth with art.

In contrast to Thebes, which represents emerging life, the old social order of Philistines meets its end symbolically with Jussuf's rise to power. After the

new Malik receives a visitor and friend, the Herzog of Leipzig, the people of Thebes lay violent hands upon his companions. The third person narrator states:

> Aber die Leute, die den Herzog von Leipzig begleiteten, lagen lange im Magen des Flusses. Sie rümpften ihre Nasen und höhnten über die Bilder, die sich die Menschen in Theben auf ihre Wangen zu malen pflegten. Am Abend wurden die abendländischen Fremdlinge im Wasser ersäuft. (433)

Surely this seems a harsh punishment for a quibble over aesthetic differences, and the Herzog's lack of interest in the fates of his companions seems equally odd. However, this deathly quibble over tattoos results not merely because of the unpredictable and rash anger of the exotic Thebians. One will see that the strangers' offense was grave and deserved, since they dared to insult that which is highest and holiest in Thebes.

The city of Thebes and the surrounding kingdom is a new social order based on the supremacy of art. Numerous examples in the text support this assumption. First, the Malik often honors artists or poets with royal titles, and names cities after creative persons or their loved ones. On countless occasions, the Malik and his city are impressed with certain individuals, such as the sculptress Milli Millus, because of their artistic ability. The title of artist, then, is the highest recognition that may be bestowed upon a person. Second, art is used to discipline criminals and traitors. When Jussuf wishes to punish a traitor, he locks the criminal within a tower containing paintings of himself, "Damit er immer in die ernsten, gläubigen Augen seines Kaisers sieht" (429). The psychological power of art lends itself to the punishment of criminals. It is preferred above physical violence, not because it is more humane, but rather because it renders appropriate justice to crime: the faithful eyes of the Malik, in art as in real life, should peer into the traitor's soul, awakening everlasting shame and penitence. Third, great power resides in art. Paintings are again important when the Malik has trouble winning the hearts of the contrary citizens of Irsahab:

he orders artists to paint pictures of all Irsahab and its landscape so that he may, "...solang noch ein Mensch in der Stadt lebt, sie nur noch im Bild besitzen" (424). Possessing a city's image, then, is a good substitute for the city itself. Moreover, when Jussuf attempts to rescue his friend Sascha, he offers a Russian honorary a collection of his poems; one may negotiate with art. In summary, for Thebes' citizenry, esteem, fame, and the powers to punish, possess or free persons all reside in art. The offense against art, then, is a grave one since it is paramount to belittling this society's the highest principles.

Therefore, the prudish Westerners who represent the dying, old Philistine order that has no appreciation for art deserve their untimely end. As Philistines, the enemies and offenders of art, they receive an appropriate punishment: execution by drowning. Their violent and unexpected demise at the hands of Thebes' playful population is a reflection of the values held by the new order. Moreover, the old must die to make room for the new. The fact that they meet their death in water, an element necessary to life, further supports this. The Herzog's own indifference to his people and his later embracing of the Thebians as their beloved viceroy all mark him as one who willingly enters and participates in the new social order based in art. For this reason, he is spared the fate of his followers.

One final example of this phenomenon, the alignment of art with life and the Philistines with punishment and death, deserves closer analysis. Just days before his crowning ceremony, he collects all of Thebes' children in the palace, and each one chooses a new name. Many name themselves after Jussuf, the "Spielprinz von Theben," while others call themselves Abigail, Ruben, Oßman or Mareia (Ruben's wife). This association between children and the artists is significant for a number of reasons. First, children taking the names of adults suggest that somehow, in memory or in spirit, those adults will live beyond their

own lives through the children. This also suggests a continuity of life between generations: although they are different individuals, they are one people. Some children's assumption of the name Abigail, a name and title that generations of Maliks took, certainly supports the idea of continuity between generations. In fact, the wise Malik exploits continuity to establish his authority: on the one hand, he emphasizes the vitality and youth of his reign by associating it with children, but on the other hand, the giving of his names and the names of his powerful friends specifically to children creates an atmosphere of ancient endurance that contradicts its own newness. His kingdom, the kingdom of the playing prince, is both young and eternal; he associates his reign with the very regenerative power of life itself through children. Art, likewise, possesses the power to regenerate both artist and appreciator.

Jussuf's reign is like his weapon of choice: the boomerang. Although it seems primitive, like a child's toy, Jussuf never fails to defeat his enemies when he uses it. The boomerang also represents the power of art: although art may seem harmless and may even be ignored or cast away by the Philistines, it returns as new, younger generations come to appreciate it. Furthermore, the boomerang, as an object which always returns no matter how far away it is cast, embodies the contradictory nature of Thebes: a kingdom which is ever changing, brimming with youth, and yet ancient and enduring. Thebes, in this way, echoes the eternal and yet ever new tones of art itself: just as artists are often perceived as descending from a long line of "great masters," Jussuf descends from a long line of Maliks. Likewise, the burgeoning and ebb of the life force within Thebes is a metaphor for the generative and regenerative power of artistic creativity.

The First Person Narrator's Feminine World

The first person narrator, who generates the ideal world of the Malik despite her own unhappy condition, is one such important female character. Much power resides in her, and her position in the piece destabilizes the overtly hierarchical priveleging of the masculine over the feminine in the text. It is highly probable that her assumption of a masculine persona results from a desire for more power in her own world within the city Berlin, a world which, we may assume, shared sexism with Lasker-Schüler's Weimar Republic. Her assumption of a masculine persona may reflect a desire to escape from the shackles that her society has imposed upon members of her gender. Imagining herself as Jussuf, then, serves as a temporary solace from her society.

The text contains only scarce references to the Berlin she inhabits, and since she is often alone, it is difficult to reconstruct the world outside of her apartment, much less determine the extent to which the narrator encountered sexism. Her conception of love between men and women, however, does suggest that gender inequality plays a role in her society. She writes, "In der Nacht spiele ich mit mir Liebste und Liebster..." Note that the image following her statement is an ideal one of male homosexual love:

> ...eigentlich sind wir zwei Jungens. Das ist das keuscheste Liebesspiel auf der Welt; kein Hinweis auf den Unterschied, Liebe ohne Ziel und Zweck, holde Unzucht. (395-6)

Imperfect heterosexual love, from the female perspective, is mentioned first, and then her imagination transforms it into a masculine homosexual ideal. We may infer that what she says of homosexual love is not true of heterosexual love. "...kein Hinweis auf den Unterschied" implies that within heterosexual love, the recognition of difference between woman and man causes disharmony and sometimes the devaluing of one partner. Also, "Liebe ohne Ziel und Zweck"

suggests that heterosexual love may be relegated to a secondary position or used as a means to an end, for example, the bearing of children. Unlike heterosexual love, love between boys is purely undifferentiated and exists for its own sake. O'Brien writes

> In the mask of Jussuf at play, Lasker-Schüler describes a love that rejects difference. Since she plays both roles, the lover and the beloved, she achieves a union between the Other and the Self. (O'Brien 13)

Unlike O'Brien, who reads this passage as Lasker-Schüler's ideal love, I interpret this boy love as the fantasy of the first person narrator. However, O'Brien's comment aptly supports the assertion that this is an ideal love. If the narrator has created both characters, then, as O'Brien suggests, this boy love may also be understood as Self-love, a joining of the parts of the Self. Within such an arrangement, one may only embrace the Other to the extent that one discovers the Other within oneself.

We have established that sexism most likely plagues the narrator's world. What else may we establish concerning the narrator's world? It is an isolated, lonely place. The first letter is set within her room. Although she enjoys the company of the animals, she is alone. She dreams of playing games with a lover, rather than actually sharing her room with one. Her room is a "Spelunke," and she elaborates, "Meine Spelunke ist eigentlich ein kleiner Korridor, eine Allee ohne Bäume" (395). Neither a corridor nor a street is a good place for human habitation: they are each passageways that lead to other places. The description of the "Allee ohne Bäume" further strengthens the image of desolation, since an "Allee" without trees would hardly be an "Allee" at all. Hallways and streets are temporary, transient places, not often noticed by passerbys. She further describes her home as "ein langer, banger Sarg" (395). A coffin may suggest to believers the passageway to another realm, the afterworld, but to the living, it is woeful death, the loneliest state imaginable.

She speaks directly of her loneliness in two separate passages:

> ... ich möchte eine Brücke finden, darüber eine Seele zu meiner käme, so ganz unverhofft. Eine Seele so ganz allein ist doch was Schreckliches!!! O, ich könnte direkt meine Seele (meinetwegen) mit Syndetikon an eine zweite kleben. (399)

Although she herself is in a transient place, she wishes that another would find a path to her. This passage is wrought with irony, given that the companion soul that should find her is "unverhofft" and she speaks of this soul in the subjunctive. Since she hopes or looks for that which is unexpected and not anticipated, the joining of another soul with hers, she undermines the fulfillment of this wish. Her wish cannot be fulfilled until she has ceased to wish. This impossibility is further reinforced by the passages that follow. She states that the existence of such a soul would be terrible. They would fit together imperfectly: "Syndetikon klebt auch Glas und Gold..." Her joining with another, then, would be forced and unnatural, like the joining of gold and glass. In her longing for a soul companion, she posits the impossibility of such a connection.

Her description of the soul alone, that should find her, may apply to herself as well. She is as alone as the soul that she hopes will discover her. This is no coincidence, since she later posits a love relationship with herself as an ideal solution to loneliness: "Könnte ich mich doch in mich verlieben, ich liege mir doch so nah – man weiß dann, was man hat" (402). A truly dependable and stable love relationship, then, would be between oneself and oneself, if this were possible. Within this context, her creation of Jussuf as a second self, is a partial attempt to realize this unattainable goal.

The Artistic and Relational Self within Der Malik

One cannot, however, actually have a relationship with oneself. The first person narrator acknowledges this through her use of the subjunctive tense.

Other passages in the text, as well as the epistolary structure of this section, emphasize the importance of relationships with others. After her recent love interest does not work out, she complains to Franz:

> Ich bin eben enttäuscht. Ich habe immer nach der Hand gesucht, und was lag in meiner Hand – wenn's gut ging – ein Handschuh. (403)

Her use of the glove in hand is significant here. The glove fits the hand: it is proportioned after the hand, like a model of it made from cloth. A relationship with only oneself or with another version of oneself that one has artistically created, is like the glove: it may serve as comfort, but it is a poor substitute for a hand to hold. Caryl Emerson, in her discussion of Mikhail Bakhtin's architectonic self, explains the importance of relationships in the formation and maintenance of a "stable" identity:

> ...according to Bakhtin, one of the services that outsideness can, and indeed must, provide in the world is a routine finalization of others' *images*. (Such transitory consummation is a gift that we continually bestow upon others and others upon us, as we turn up, repeatedly and needfully, on each other's horizons; for we are constructed to crave definition.) *Images*, then, function to delineate us as hard-edged finalized things. (Emerson 407, italics and parenthetical information is in original text.)

Emerson's reading of Bakhtin suggests that in order to have a self at all, one is dependent upon others for self-definition.

Bakhtin's notion of self, like Kristeva's semiotic self, is changing and fluid: "The personality of another person in real life is usually not experienced as a fluid whole" (Emerson 407). This self depends upon others for definition; it cannot define itself, but can rather choose to accept the self-images others offer it. Emerson elaborates, "Our lives are too busy and we must be opportunistic. We rarely have time to do more than extract a useful image or two from another person and then move on to our next task" (407). Moreover, the closed, stable ego is an illusion: although the images of the self may be fixed, the self seen by

others and the self that one experiences is actually fluid. It needs definition from the outside to attain its edges. Similarly, Kristeva considers the consequences of poetic language for the subject. She writes:

> If it is true that there would unavoidably be a speaking subject since the signifying set exists, it is nonetheless evident that this subject, in order to tally with its heterogeneity, must be, let us say, a questionable subject-in-process. ("From One Identity" 135)

She also refers to the subject-in-process as "the unsettled and questionable subject of poetic language" ("From One Identity" 136). According to Kristeva, the closed ego is actually a construction imposed upon the fluid self by symbolic language, and this is done at the cost of instinctual drives ("From One Identity" 136). However, none of us actually come in contact with unmediated Language, but rather, we continually encounter Language through the medium of others' speech. We learn to speak, read and write because we hear and see others do this. Self-definition through Language and the mirror, then, points to a similar phenomenon as that described by Bakhtin: we are defined by the images of ourselves that we encounter in the speech of others. The speech of others is the mirror which gives us an image of ourselves, and, according to Bakhtin, despite the fact that the image seems stable, we continually discard and collect new images of ourselves in our encounters with other people. The image, like the word "I," is socially constructed and interchangeable. The longing of the first person narrator in Der Malik for another, then, is at the same time a longing for self-definition.

There is one crucial difference between Kristeva's definition of the artificial ego and Bakhtin's architectonic self. Kristeva views the symbolic self, which one gains in language through the use of the word "I," as in conflict with the semiotic undercurrent of the body and its instinctual drives ("From One Identity" 136). The subject-in-process of poetic language, Kristeva writes,

"maintains itself at the cost of reactivating this repressed instinctual, maternal element," or the semiotic, which is working to undermine the stability of the subject ("From One Identity" 136). Poetic language, that very language which one assumes to be skillfully chosen and crafted together, which seems to imply a subject in control, is actually threatening that fragile subject with disintegration subsumption by the drives. Bakhtin, on the other hand, sees agency in language choice, including poetic language. Emerson writes,

> 'Content'... is the raw material of personality. It is fluid, full of potential, capable of surprising combinations and renewals. Bakhtin came to see the *personally uttered word* as the most efficient and flexible vehicle for carrying the content-energy of personality, whether in live conversations or in the more mediated–but not one whit less alive–dialogues that we carry on with personalities embedded, through literature, in books. (Emerson 409)[19]

The personally uttered word, whether spoken by a real human being to another or read when a reader encounters a character, is the signature of a unique, living other. This personally uttered word exists in dialogue, but it is the moment when a subject shows its own individual "otherness" to another subject. In Lasker-Schüler's text, the first person narrator is torn between conflicting desires: she wishes to allow Jussuf to attain autonomy, to speak his otherness from her, to utter his personal word. She gives birth to him through her pen, and through her artistic skill, furnishes him with his own world, attributes, friends, servants and adventures. Yet, she wishes to live through him and to dwell in Thebes herself. Her affection for Jussuf, because of this primary identification with him, leaves her still longing for self-definition, since only someone or something outside herself can provide her with this.

She longs for a special kind of self-definition, though. Certainly her relationship with Franz provides her with many useful and valuable self-images, but she longs for love. Love, according to Bakhtin, would provide a more precious form of self-definition. Emerson asserts, "Love is an *urgent curiosity*,

which is to say it is a cognitive quality, a concentration of attention that enriches the beloved over time" (Emerson 408). Love is not threatened by difference, and boundaries between the lover and beloved must be confirmed and respected, according to Bakhtin. Love does not seek to annihilate difference, but rather revels in the differences of the other in careful observation. Moreover, "...only love can 'see' the world with sufficient subtlety to be aesthetically productive." For Bakhtin, the eye of the artist and/or lover is the only eye that could truly take in difference with sufficient care to enter fully into a subject-subject relation with another (Emerson 407-8).[20] The self-image provided to the beloved by a lover is, at once, both "true" and artistic. Contrary to the old adage that love is blind, the self-image provided by a lover to the beloved in Bakhtin's understanding is the most accurate, since it "sees" the other's subtleties with an artist's eye. The narrator's desire for love, then, may be viewed as a desire for the most intimate form of self-definition, as well as a desire to enter into the delicate process of defining another. The first person narrator seeks a love and an understanding of herself which is essentially relational: therefore she cannot fall in love with herself or one of her creations. This would simply be grasping after a glove when one desires and needs warmth of another hand.

The Primacy of the Mother and the Feminine Relational Self

Nancy Chodorow discusses the relational nature of women's self-definition in her work, the Reproduction of Mothering. According to Chodorow, the process of individuation from mothers is different for daughters than that of sons (Chodorow 108). Chodorow writes:

> sons tend to be experienced [by mothers] as differentiated from their mothers, and mothers push this differentiation.... mothers normally identify more with daughters and experience them as less separate.... issues of primary identification, oneness, and separateness follow mother-

> daughter pairs from a daughter's earliest infancy until she is well into being a mother or even grandmother herself... (Chodorow 109-110)[21]

As a result, girls grow up with "a definition of self in relationship" (Chodorow 117-8). Kristeva[22], likewise, writes from the point of view of the mother:

> My body and . . . him. No relation. Nothing to do with one another. Nothing to do from the first gestures, cries, steps, well before his personality has made him my opposite: the child, *he* o r *she*, is irremediably another. That 'there is no relation between the sexes' (Lacan) is not much of a surprise in the face of this bolt of lightning that blinds me on the brink of the abyss between me and what was mine but is now irremediably alien. ("Stabat Mater" 112)

Kristeva includes for a moment that child as "she," but her citing of Lacan and original use of "he" indicates that she differentiates between a mother's treatment of the daughter and the son, with separation and alienation being stronger in the case of the son. Elsewhere concerning mothers and daughters, she writes:

> Women no doubt reproduce between them the peculiar, forgotten forms of close combat in which they engaged with their mothers.... we live in such things, escapees from our identity cards and our names, loose in an ocean of detail, a data-bank of the unnamable.... The languages of great civilizations that used to be matrilineal must avoid, do avoid the use of personal pronouns.... ("Stabat Mater" 113-4)

Kristeva describes the relations among women as antagonistic to the singularity of women ("Stabat Mater" 113-4). This denial of the singularity of the other woman is rooted, for Kristeva as well, in the mother's initial refusal to recognize her daughter as an "ego" ("Stabat Mater" 113). Both Chodorow and Kristeva, then, suggest that the (in)stability of the self is intrinsically different for men and women, and this difference is rooted in the early identification of mothers and daughters, and the recognition, on the mother's part, of the son's difference.

This has both positive and negative consequences for the personalities of women. Chodorow believes this dependence upon relationships may cause women to underestimate their own worth and success when they lack another

with whom to share experiences. Kristeva's language in describing the community of women implies that they are repressive and even violent in their desire to protect the integrity of the community against the "singularity" of any individual. This system, then, allows women to both underestimate their own worth while insuring the cohesive community through repression and violence.[23] On the other hand, Chodorow writes, "Girls emerge ... with a basis for 'empathy' built into their primary definition of self in a way that boys do not" (Chodorow 167). Likewise, Kristeva writes, "...with the arrival of a child – which frees a woman from uniqueness and gives her a chance, albeit not a certainty, of access to the other, to the ethical" ("Stabat Mater" 115). Kristeva asserts moreover that women, imbued with the desire to reproduce, are the stabilizers of society ("Stabat Mater" 117-8). In other words, women have an intrinsic stake in insuring the survival of others. They may more easily cross the boundary between the self and the other in order to imagine the world from another's point of view, since for them this boundary is less material than it is for men.

The First Person Narrator's Relationship to her Mother

The first person narrator has a very close relationship to her mother: she writes Franz:

> Ich soll Dir auch von meiner Mutter erzählen. Sie ging immer verschleiert; niemand war ihrer Schönheit und Hoheit wert... Mein Herz blüht auf, wenn ich an meine Mutter denke. Ich habe kein Geheimnis vor ihr, sie nahm mich mit sich von der Erde fort, sie blieb in meinem Herzen hier auf der Welt; ich bin Leben und Grab; darum wechselt meine Stimmung vom Traurigsten bis zum Jubel so unvermutet oft. (410-1)

Note that the most intimate secrets are shared between mother and daughter, and that the daughter locates the mother within herself. It is not only the memory of her mother that lives in her heart, but rather she is on some level identical to her dead mother. Because of this sense of identity, the mother,

though dead, dwells on the earth, and she, though living, already inhabits the grave. This explains why the narrator lives in a transient place, a "Korridor" or "Sarg." Since one part of herself, her mother, is already dead, she must dwell on the boundary between life and death, symbolized by the temporary and the transient corridor and coffin.

The language she uses to describe her mother is uplifting and religious: "niemand war ihrer Schönheit und Hoheit wert"(410). The mother is above and more than any mere mortal. Just as God lifted Enoch, Elijah, Jesus and Mary, the mother lifts the daughter up from the earth. The mother "blieb in meinem Herzen," just as God dwells within the hearts of the pious. The wide emotional range described in this passage, "vom Traurigsten bis zum Jubel," is appropriate to what one experiences in the presence of the holy. The mother dwells both within the daughter (in her heart) and without her daughter (in Heaven), transcending her, just as the Holy of Holies is both within and without the pious. Together, the mother and daughter transgress (cross and defy) death. Together they experience the immediacy (life, daughter) and eternity (death, mother) like a transcendental being (God). Death's defeat is of primary importance in the deification of a being. Kristeva writes of Mary:

> That entity compounded of woman and God and given the name Mary was made complete by the avoidance of death.... Mary does not die but rather – echoing Taoist and other oriental beliefs in which human bodies pass from one place to another in a never-ending cycle which is in itself an imitation of the process of childbirth – she passes over.
> ("Stabat Mater" 105)

The unity which is mother and daughter, in Lasker-Schüler's writing, is deified. This relationship between mother and daughter uplifts both and allows both to be transcendent. However, the mother herself is truly transcendental to the daughter in the sense of "otherworldly," that is, the mother is absent from the daughter's material world, and physically unreachable by the daughter, because

she inhabits that other world. The daughter's assertion of identity with the mother, then, is actually an expression of her desire to unite with the mother.

While describing her feelings of loneliness, the first person narrator tells three different stories. Each of these stories emphasize the basic importance of the mother and child relationship, by illustrating the lack of connection between mother and child. The first concerns a stranger-child at a family's table, who is not allowed to express its joy over the food. The child is being nourished by adults alien to him, but their actions make him long for that not-alien being, his own mother, who would not be disturbed if he expressed his joy. This memory, then, emphasizes his status as the outsider within this family. The second story uses an image of a child's jealousy over the close proximity that another enjoys with its mother:

> Hör nur ... die Geschichte von einem anderen fremden Kind – das von der Stiefmutter spazieren geführt wurde, ihr eigenes Kind aber unter dem Herzen trug. (397)

Loneliness and abandonment is characterized by a child with a mother not its own; his sorrow is increased by the close proximity of a child and mother whose bond it cannot share. The other child is both physically and emotionally close to its mother, since she "[trug] ihr eigenes Kind aber unter dem Herzen;" she carries it within her body under her heart, (the center of emotion for Lasker-Schüler) since she is pregnant with it, but "unter dem Herzen" also refers to the mother's emotional bond with this child. The first child, the step-child, feels truly disconnected from this mother since it was neither within her body or nor ever dear to her, i.e. close to her heart. This is emphasized by the contrast between the mother leading the stepchild by the hand, but "carrying" her own child 'under her heart' (within her body and within her 'heart,' emotional center). The narrator's craving for love and self-definition, then, may be a desire to reunite with a lost part of herself: her mother. Likewise, her attachment and

identification with Jussuf, although Jussuf is male, follows the mother-daughter pattern described by Kristeva and Chodorow. She desires to exist in Jussuf's Thebes through Jussuf just as her own mother exists through her on earth, and she does not wish to differentiate herself from Jussuf, for fear that she may have to face her own differentiation from her mother.

The First Person Narrator's Relationship to her Father, in Contrast

The first person narrator does not confound herself with her father when she describes him as she does in her descriptions of her mother. On the contrary, she describes his importance in the town, and gives his genealogy, which includes a great rabbi, in the seventeenth letter. Moreover, when she describes his genealogy, she sets him within an exclusively male context: she envisions the great rabbi eating with his thirty-two sons, and the youngest of these was the most beloved and he had twelve sons, and among their sons and daughters, the narrator's father is the youngest son. Although granddaughters are mentioned, the sons and grandsons are counted, and the youngest son is the most beloved. This privileging of the younger son follows a biblical pattern established with Abraham: the covenant that God has with Abraham is passed to his younger son Isaac and not to Ishmael, and the to Isaac's younger son, Jacob and not to Esau, and Jacob, in turn, has twelve sons but he favors the youngest two: Joseph and later Benjamin. Daughters do not enter into this system of privilege.

The narrator also imagines and describes to Franz the great rabbi's sorrow at finding his beloved friend's body exhumed by Christians in the graveyard: she refers to the deceased as his "innigster Gefährte," and "Freund" (410). The dearly beloved companion of the rabbi is male, like his most beloved descendants. It is interesting, moreover, that while she ends her story about her mother with an affirmation of the mother's continued existence through her, she

ends her father's story with a gruesome tale of an encounter with the dead body of a loved one. The second story reinforces the pain of death as separation from the living: the living rabbi and his sons look on the dead friend, whose "Augen [waren] aufgetan, wie er sie öffnete im Leben, wenn sein geweihter Freund ihn besuchte" (410). The rabbi stares at the dead body, and the eyes of the corpse remind him of visits with this man when he had lived. This encounter reminds the rabbi of what he has lost. The memory of her father, then, is connected with death and loss, as well as an exclusive male lineage. This is so because she is essentially separate from her father; they are not identical, but differentiated. Kristeva calls this exclusivity between women and men as "the foreclosure of the opposite sex," and she speaks of their "irreducible differences" and "irreconcilable interests" ("Stabat Mater" 116-7).[24] The narrating author, remembering her father, dwells on their separateness through loss and death. The memory of her mother, though, awakens an affirmation of continued life through their shared identity.

Lasker-Schüler's Mother and Jussuf's Mother

There is some biographical evidence that Lasker-Schüler saw her talents as a matrilineal trait. O'Brien writes:

> Three women seem to have played an important role in teaching the young Else language, poetic sense, colors and rhymes. She imagines her maternal grandmother Johanna Kopp and her mother Jeanette Schüler née Kissing to be great poetesses and thus links herself to her female ancestors through their common lyrical language. (O'Brien 2)

O'Brien goes on to describe a rhyming word-game that the author remembers playing with her mother. Creativity is a matrilineal trait. Perhaps it is no wonder that the vision of the Malik's mother precedes the dream of the poetess: the feminine procreative and creative forces existing outside of his world are

revealed to him together. It is highly appropriate, then, that the first person narrator appears after Jussuf's mother, since she is the source of Jussuf's creator (his mother). A matrilineal heritage, in the characters of the fictional author's mother, the fictional author (who is also a mother and is Jussuf's creator) Jussuf's mother, and the feminine Jussuf materializes as Der Malik progresses.

Empathy and the Creative Self

The process of empathy may be defined as an attempt to fathom the position of the other by imagining oneself in the other's position, or by "merging," through the imagination, with the other. When one considers Kristeva's position, women appear particularly suited to be empathizers, since their identities are fluid. The process of empathy, moreover, resembles in some ways Bakhtin's conception of the writer's creative process. Bakhtin first sees love as a precondition for artistic production. Emerson elaborates:

> It takes passionate energy, and huge inner need, to embrace another personality lovingly *as a whole*. But the literary artist creating a literary character must do just that.... For to create, Bakhtin insists, is not merely to invent.... the most rigorous attention and consistency are required to create and tune up a fictional consciousness to the extent where it is autonomous enough to live on its own, to enter into its own persuasive subject-subject relations. (Emerson 408)

The person who empathizes with another follows a similar pattern to that of the writer: the other's position must be observed carefully and one must take the tiniest details into account. With these details, the empathizer reconstructs the other's thoughts and feelings based on what he or she might feel in this situation; this person essentially constructs an internal image of the other and uses it for reference when he or she relates to this other person. This other person, according to Bakhtin's ideas, may in turn take this self-image as his or her own. In the artistic process, one constructs all of the details surrounding a

character, and then imagines the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of this person. Like the empathizer, the writer may draw on his or her own experiences to do this, but the autonomous character emerges as he or she gains more and more unique experiences that the writer may not have experienced. The writer empathizes with the character, then, until that character takes on a life and vitality of its own.

In the epistolary section of Der Malik, Jussuf has not separated entirely from the first person narrator. She often speaks through his voice, and signs her letters with his name. The interaction between Jussuf and Ruben is encased within the first person narrator's correspondence with Franz Marc. I interpret her use of the Jussuf mask as the moments in the text when she speaks primarily of Thebes and the events occurring there. In the majority of her letters, though, she mixes accounts of Thebes with accounts of poetry readings, meetings over coffee, and her newest love. What we see in these letters is the gradual construction of Thebes. For example, in the sixth letter, she describes the "fremde Stadt" Berlin in the first paragraph, but in the second paragraph she breathes life into Thebes:

> Meine Stadt Theben ist ein ehrwürdiger hoher Priester. Meine Stadt Theben ist die Knospe Zebaoths. Meine Stadt Theben ist mein Ur-Urgroßvater. Meine Stadt Theben begleitet mich bei jedem Schritt. Meine Stadt Theben ist ein hochmütiger Scheitan. (401)

The formulaic repetition of "meine Stadt Theben" is an incantation that brings these aspects of the city into being. The words of the author are performative, like the pronouncements of a judge or a god. In fact, the language Lasker-Schüler uses to describe Thebes is religious. The city of Thebes, as representative of creative activity, takes on divine aspects in this passage: it is priest, ancestor, ruler and ever-present. It guides and rules its devoted creator. Her creation,

then, becomes her own connection with the divine. Likewise, when she describes falling in love within the same letter, she gives her beloved a name and a history:

> Er heißt Giselheer. Sein Gehirn ist ein Leuchtturm. Er ist aus den Nibelungen. (401)

She essentially recreates him as a character and introduces him into the fantasy realm of Thebes. He comes into her fantasy realm as a contradiction in himself: he arises out of the misty past, a mythic warrior from the Nibelungen, but his mind is a light house, that is, a relatively new technological invention; one may also understand the connection between his mind and light as a reference to the Enlightenment, or the beginning of the modern era. Giselheer evokes both the far distant past and recent times.

Many critics understand Giselheer as representing Gottfried Benn. Hedgepeth writes, "Der Kaiser von Theben bietet Giselheer die Liebe an, die er aber zurückweist, wie es im realen Leben der Dichterin auch geschah" (Hedgepeth 133). Bauschinger warns against a strictly biographical interpretation of this character:

> Auf keinen Fall aber darf man die fiktiven Briefe aus "Mein Herz" und dem "Malik" als autobiographische Zeugnisse verstehen. Wenn es im "Malik" heißt: "Ich habe mich oft doch wirklich wieder verliebt... Er heißt Giselheer" (II, 401), so ist keine private Mitteilung an Franz Marc darin zu sehen.... (Bauschinger 132)

Lasker-Schüler was certainly inspired by Benn: "Aber sie war in ihn verliebt[25] um seiner Kunst willen, ohne die sie ihn ja gar nicht zur Kenntnis genommen hätte" (Bauschinger 133). It is clear that she based characters on him, but it is not clear to what extent the fictional relationships within her texts reflect her real relationships. If we return to Bakhtin's theory on the role played by love in writing and consider that many vibrant characters in her texts were inspired by Benn, we may assume that Else Lasker-Schüler at least loved Gottfried Benn as an artist loves her emerging subjective character.

Two characters in the text are based on Gottfried Benn: Giselheer and the fictional Dr. Benn. Although many scholars do not distinguish between these two characters, I do. The narrator recounts to her friend:

> Den Doktor Benn rief ich, der meinte, das Loch in meinem Herzen könnte man mit einem einzigen Faden zunähen. Ich vertraute ihm die Geschichte meiner Liebe an, zeigte ihm Giselheers Briefe und sagte ihm alles. Er behauptet, ich habe meine Welt in G. hineingelegt, und der habe keine Ahnung von mir.... Ich habe dem Doktor Benn ehrenwörtlich versprochen, nicht mehr an den armen König zu denken, der noch nicht einmal ein Herz besitzt zum Verschwenden. (408-9)

Dr. Benn is sympathetic, while Giselheer is unappreciative of the narrator's affection. Later, Gieselheer inhabits the realm of Thebes and has other encounters with Jussuf. The character of Dr. Benn never enters the realm of Thebes. Interestingly, the narrator remarks in the same letter that if Thebes knew of her affection for Giselheer, she would not have become Malik. Giselheer, who appears in other works by Lasker-Schüler and who certainly represents Gottfried Benn in these,[26] may be the shadow of the fictional Dr. Benn in the masculine fantasy realm, but he is no more identical to the Doctor than the letter recipient Franz Marc is to his alternate self, Ruben.

Kuckart asserts that Thebes is an alternative reality for Lasker-Schüler: "Theben ist nicht ihr Exil, es ist ungeortete und ungeordnete Gegenwirklichkeit, Angelpunkt, um, sicher im Abseits, von der eigenen Einsamkeit doch noch behaupten zu können..." (Kuckart 37). The realm of Thebes in Der Malik is certainly an alternative reality for the first person narrator, and Giselheer is her image of the fictional Dr. Benn. After she first encounters Dr. Benn, and possibly even falls in love with him, she calls into existence the character Giselheer in the land of Thebes, and this character grows in the affection of the Malik as the story progresses. By the twenty-sixth letter, Giselheer, shortened affectionately to "Gisel," has gained common childhood experiences with Jussuf: they once played together in the old palace of Thebes, pretending to be animals or insects,

and Giselheer even wanted to give Jussuf a tooth (414). In the next letter, Jussuf, a prince at the moment, fears his affection for the northern Giselheer will be his undoing in the eyes of his people, and he fears he has lost the respect of his soldiers because of an old letter that he had written to Gisel as a child (415). The narrator, though, does not have similar conflicts with the Doctor. Giselheer, though, is her creation. She names him and gives him a history. She imagines the details of his life as a Nibelungen knight. Using Bakhtin's terminology, she lovingly creates an autonomous character, a subjective textual consciousness capable of interacting with readers and of holding his own against another emerging textual subject, Jussuf.

Lasker-Schüler's Narrator as Polyphonic Writer

As the letters progress, references to the actual world of the narrator decrease and the stories of Thebes increase. She speaks less of public readings, her plans to begin a new literary journal, and Berlin. The Malik's battle against Northern cannibals, his crowning ceremony, the ways in which his city honors him, and his search for a marriage partner fill the narrator's letters to Marc. In Bakhtin's discussion of the polyphonic novel, using Dostoevsky's writings as an example, the voice of the character is independent from that of the author. Bakhtin writes:

> ...it (the character's word) possesses extraordinary independence in the structure of the work; it sounds, as it were, alongside the author's word and in a special way combines both with it and with the full and equally valid voices of other characters. (Reader 89)

In the tenth letter, the voice of the first person narrator dominates the beginning of the letter, but Jussuf's voice eclipses hers in the end:

> Ich denke jetzt nur noch an Euch und an mein Zimmer. Das weint, wenn ich abends ausgehen will, durch die Straßen willenlos irren muß. Ich übe mich in den Waffen, die überall bei mir an den Wänden hängen. Also ich

> versäum' nix, wenn ich zu Haus bleib' (solang es dauert?). Ich denk' manches, matchiche pfeif' ich, Matche wett' ich; bin mit einem Wort ansässig geworden in meines Zimmers Ägypten, und warte auf das Kornfeld meiner flachen Hand. Zieht doch zu mir! (405)

When she speaks of wandering lost through the streets, it is clear that the first person narrator speaks. Jussuf knows Thebes well, and would not be lost there. However, he who owns cornfields and resides in Egypt is clearly Jussuf. Within the voice of his author, the character Jussuf speaks. But the Egypt within the room clearly refers again to the fictional author's dwelling place. The words of the author, then, convey both her words and his; his voice sounds alongside hers.

Stylistically, this passage has many interesting aspects. Her room becomes a character, a being able to express sorrow at her absence. While she wanders aimlessly, bereft of her sense of determination ("willenlos irren muß"), she imbues an inanimate object, her room, with human emotion. In fact, she seems to leave both willpower and her sense of direction in her room when she enters the city, but she possesses these again while in that room: "ich versäum' nix, wenn ich zu Haus bleib.'" While in her room, she exercises her weapons, that is, her imagination, and allows Jussuf to exist. Her weapons are specifically of a verbal nature. Her statement, "bin mit einem Wort ansässig geworden in meines Zimmers Ägypten," emphasizes the power of the imaginative word; this imaginative word, Jussuf, resides within other words, like Egypt or Thebes, and words are her ideal self and her true homeland.

This passage casts into relief, perhaps, an important difference between Lasker-Schüler's views on writing and Bakhtin's views on writing. Rather than having the words of the actual author act as medium for a character, as we do in the case cited by Bakhtin, we have a fictional author demonstrating this same concept by giving voice to her own character. According to the viewpoint of Bakhtin, one would read Lasker-Schüler's voice as also present here, but she

writes with a polyphonic pen: she allows a character (the first person narrator) to harbor its own creativity within its words. Whereas Dostoevsky, in his texts examined by Bakhtin, has simply sought to allow "..a plurality of equally-valid consciousness, each within its own world" (Reader 89) into his texts, Lasker-Schüler has added a metafictional element to this process through her depiction of the first person narrator as an author in the process of creating a character, Jussuf. In Lasker-Schüler's text, the reader reads the writings of a fictional author, and the reader follows the development of Jussuf as he, connected intimately to her, separates slowly from his creator. Lasker-Schüler has given us a glimpse into her own creative process.

Bakhtin would differ on this point. He asserts the importance of the division between character and author, and the autonomy of each in the face of the other:

> Self-consciousness, as the artistic dominant in the construction of the hero's image, is by itself sufficient to break down the monologic unity of an artistic world – but only on condition that the hero, as self-consciousness, is really represented and not merely expressed, that is, does not fuse with the author, does not become the mouthpiece for his voice; only on condition, consequently, that accents of the hero's self-consciousness are really objectified and that the work itself observes a distance between the hero and the author. If the umbilical cord uniting the hero to his creator is not cut, then what we have is not a work of art but a personal document. (Reader 93)

A personal document or autobiography– life writing– then, would not observe the artistic dominant of polyphony; it is monologic, because it only allows room for the author's voice.[27] The process that Lasker-Schüler demonstrates in Der Malik contradicts Bakhtin's viewpoint. The character Jussuf is indeed, throughout a good deal of the work, still united to the first person narrator. It is not until he is crowned Malik, and the epistolary section ends, that his author distances herself from him by using the third person voice. Nevertheless, as demonstrated earlier, Jussuf and his creator did speak alongside one another; the

passage cited earlier was not monologic. If we observe carefully Lasker-Schüler's construction of these two characters, we will see that the first person narrator empathizes with Jussuf until he separates from her. He begins, indeed, as a part of her, as fused with her, but he slowly takes on his own motivations, his own consciousness as she uses her imagination to flesh out both his world and his personality. Like a person who empathizes with another, she begins with herself, her own feelings, needs and desires in order to fathom those of the other. Out of this she brings him forth. In contrast to Bakhtin's rigid division between the monologic-personal and the polyphonic, Lasker-Schüler demonstrates that characters may begin as personal documents, and that a personal connection between an author and her characters may be a necessary first step in the breathing of life into real subjects.[28] Jussuf begins as the first person narrator's self-expression, but slowly grows until he is his own self-expression. The first person narrator does eventually cut the umbilical cord, but we read of her pregnant with him for some time before he gains his independence.[29]

The closings of the letters indicate Jussuf's shift from a dependent part of the first person narrator's self to an emerging, independent subjectivity: the first and second letters have no close, but the third closes with "Dein verraten und verkaufter Jussuf." In this letter, the narrator first dreams of becoming the Malik, so her close as Jussuf, who calls to mind the enslaved Joseph journeying to Egypt, is appropriate. The fourth letter closes with Jussuf, but the fifth and sixth do not. The seventh again closes with Jussuf, but more letters without the masculine greeting follow. The letters begin to alternate between closing with Jussuf, a version of "Dein Bruder" or no name. The ninth letter contains an interesting close, which suggests the narrator's switch from her feminine self to her masculine persona: "Deine... Dein frommer Bruder Jussuf." Beginning with the fifteenth letter, she regularly closes with a masculine title. The world of the

Malik, likewise, slowly takes over the text, existing where previously we found the narrating author. As he comes fully into being, she reveals less and less about herself and her own activities. When the third person narrator takes over the story, the woman author seems to have melted completely into her persona. The feminine subject, then, has seemingly slipped out of the narrative, but its presence and power are sometimes felt in the female characters and in the androgyny of the Malik, himself. After he has developed, she allows his voice to fill her letters. Bakhtin writes, "Not only the reality of the hero himself, but even the external world and the everyday life surrounding him are drawn into the process of self-awareness, are transferred from the author's to the hero's field of vision" (Reader 92). The first person narrator, then, has allowed this transformation to take place.

The first person narrator disappears altogether at the same time Jussuf becomes Malik. His rise to political power, then, coincides with his rise to personal autonomy. His first speech as Malik follows his last letter to Ruben. Recall that in this letter, he tells Ruben that Sascha is a prisoner in Russia, and he makes his decision to leave Thebes. He begins to lose his connection with Ruben. He writes Ruben only one more letter after this one. His rise to power, then, comes with a price. He has become very different: he gains burdens, prestige, and autonomy from the first person narrator, since she has allowed his voice to dominate. In short, his character gains in detail; he has been "fleshed out." He is aware of this difference. He confides to Ruben: "Auf Meiner Stirn beginnt sich ein Hieroglyph einzugraben, der Mir fremd ist" (422). This the mark of difference is his emerging subjectivity and his growing independence from his creator. This strange sign, this word, represents his *personally uttered word* , as Bakhtin might say. It represents his ability to speak in his own voice for himself. O'Brien, however, reads this passage within the context of Lasker-Schüler's own

play with personas. She writes, "The power to create originates in difference, which separates the self from others" (O'Brien 5).

Gender Relations in Der Malik

At this point, an investigation into the shifting power relations between the two genders in Thebes would be useful. Women do not fare well in the kingdom. At one point, the Malik gives Thebes' women the following advice; "Sie sollten sich mit nichts anderem beschäftigen, als für ihren Malik zu schwärmen" (428). He does not request such worship from Thebes' men. In other passages, the Malik's "Abneigung gegen Eva" (448) or "Abneigung gegen alles Weib" (448) is mentioned. Furthermore, he regards the Venus of Siam as "ein unvergleichliches Kunstwerk" (448). The third person narrator frequently describes women performing traditionally feminine tasks, such as baking sweets for Oßman on Oßmanstag, and Jussuf once has gossipy old women executed for their negative influence over other women. Women do not participate in battles or matters of the state, and many positive women characters, like Mareia, are lauded because of their associations with their artistic husbands and their husband's accomplishments, rather than for their own endeavors. Two notable exceptions are Milli Millus and Jussuf's mother; possible reasons for this will be explored later. Moreover, the Malik, when he extends the invitation to his people to "duzt" him, does so in clearly masculine terms: his brothers should greet him with a kiss on the mouth, not his brothers and sisters. He does call the women his sisters, yet, as noted later in the text, he conscientiously avoids contact with his sisters and is suspicious of them. Women are second class citizens in his kingdom.[30]

Jussuf's Masculinity and Lasker-Schüler's Position on the Feminine

Women appear to be at a disadvantage in the realm of the first person narrator as well, for reasons discussed previously. Why else would the first person narrator choose a man as her persona? Is not his gender pertinent in her decision? Critics such as Hedgepeth and O'Brien believe gender is an important issue in this work. The persona Jussuf was a character with whom Lasker-Schüler associated herself for a long time. She wore his costumes and signed his name in personal correspondence. She also continued to speak fondly of this character long after she had set his costumes aside and had stopped writing about him. Hedgepeth and O'Brien view her assumption of a masculine persona as a rejection of the feminine by Else Lasker-Schüler. O'Brien, in her study of the author's move from the feminine persona Tino to the Jussuf persona, views Lasker-Schüler's abandonment of Tino as a rejection of the feminine. Likewise, Lasker-Schüler's personal positions on a number of gender issues are known to be anything but progressive.[31] Hedgepeth writes, "Für Frauenrechtlerinnen begeisterte sich Else Lasker-Schüler kaum, und von dem Aussehen der bürgerlichen Frau fühlte sie sich provoziert..." (Hedgepeth 222). Hedgepeth then cites a passage in which Lasker-Schüler identifies herself with Jack the Ripper. This scholar also believes that, inherent within Lasker-Schüler's play with costumes and her association of herself with boys, is a rejection of the female body.

I will argue that the interaction of the genders within Der Malik give a different account. This interaction is one which celebrates the powers inherent in both the masculine and the feminine position. How is this work different? Her feminine protagonist, the first person narrator, is an author: another textual rendering of herself. Through this character she perhaps reveals some of her assumptions about herself as a writer. Lasker-Schüler agreed to an extent with

sexist notions concerning women's lesser artistic abilities, but she considered herself to be the exception to the rule, the woman who wrote like a man. She did not associate herself with other women writers, and did not like to see her work placed within a context of "women's writings." To some extent, her discouragement of such categorization was an attempt to elude the denigration of her writings. In this attempt to protect herself, she bought into, so to speak, the gender-disparagement of her contemporaries. Her faith in herself as an artist of worth, though, remained strong throughout her life. I intend like to show how this conviction plays itself out through the privileging of some important female characters in this prose piece.

While I am treating here primarily Der Malik, other critics, such as Kuckart, Hedgepeth and O'Brien, see the low status of the feminine as recurrent in many of Else Lasker-Schüler's works. O'Brien traces the identification of the female with pain in the Tino persona, and writes of her poetry:

> Lasker-Schüler creates a symbolic world in which woman often signifies pain. From the female position, the ego relinquishes individuality and experiences a symbolic death in order to begin a new erotic life in union with man. (O'Brien 7)

According to Hedgepeth, the poet often sought to distance herself from other women, and her identification with boys and men entailed a rejection of her female body. Hedgepeth states: "Ihr Äußeres deckte sich nicht mit ihrer Selbstvorstellung.... Die Dichterin... erschien gern als männliche Figur, die in der unentwickelten, kindlichen Phase ein androgynes Wesen ist...." (Hedgepeth 223).[32] However, Kuckart sees her rejection of the feminine as follows: "...sie ist auch Widerstand gegen eine Zurichtung zur genormten Weiblichkeit, die in den Schranken ihrer Zuweisung erstickt" (Kuckart, 96). Kuckart, though, acknowledges the anti-feminine current in Lasker-Schüler's works and offers the following explanation:

> Die Frau, die da schreibt, verbindet die Suche nach einem fruchtbaren Boden für die Begegnung der Geschlechter mit der Suche nach einer anderen Sprachebene. Sie schreibt als Frau, aber als eine Frau, die vergessen hat, daß sie eine ist, so daß ihre Seiten voll sind von jener seltsamen geschlechtlichen Qualität, die nur entsteht, wenn das Geschlecht sich seiner nicht bewußt ist. (Kuckart 102)

Although the feminine is certainly debased within the Malik's kingdom, I am not certain that the feminine, within the work as a whole, remains debased. Instead, the delicate balance of power between the two genders within the work is intimately related to the balance of power between the sphere of the first person narrator and the Malik's realm. Moreover, a closer look at the roles of Jussuf's androgeny, his mother and Milli Millus within their metafictional context may tell a different story.

Jussuf's Androgeny and Thebes' Women

Although the world of the Malik is dependent upon the feminine world of the narrator, the Malik himself is quite uncomfortable around women. The third person narrator explains: "Immer nur in Gala oder tief verschleiert hatte sich der Malik den Frauen Tibas gezeigt, und die glaubten an die Sage, daß Jussuf sie verachte noch seit Potiphars Weib" (464). Fear of Jussuf presumably keeps the women of Tiba in line, but he feels a need to hide himself from them, since he will only appear to them in ceremonial garb or veiled. What does he not want them to see? It is ironic that he appears veiled only to women, and to not men, particularly since beautiful and worthy women are often veiled in the text, while men are not. Recall that the first person narrator's mother was veiled: "Sie ging immer verschleiert" (410), as well as the Venus of Siam: "...die Venus von Siam trifft morgen verschleiert in Theben ein" (427). Perhaps these women, as representations of the all-knowing mother, are veiled to discourage the sexual desire of men, who might rob the daughter (Jussuf) of the mother. The mother of

the first person narrator was veiled because no one, except perhaps the daughter who shares her identity, "war ihrer Schönheit und Hoheit wert" (410). Veiling, then, protects the mother from those unworthy others, men or even other women. However, veiling is at least once associated with sexual desire: the first person narrator, when speaking of her lost love, states, "Immer trug ich seine Augen im Ring, böse, verschleierte Steine" (406). A second incident connects a veiled beauty with desire: as Jussuf accompanies the veiled Venus of Siam during her entrance into Thebes, a messenger confides to him that Giselheer has arrived, too. Jussuf rends apart the flesh and bones of the unfortunate messenger because of the strength of his joy and his hate for the beloved Giselheer (426). Veiling, though, is also associated with the loss of intimacy: the veiled mother has died, and the veiled eyes of the beloved are lost to the first person narrator, just as the desirable Giselheer is out of Jussuf's reach. Veiling is connected with all-seeing truth as well, when one recalls that the veiled mother of the narrator knew her most intimate thoughts and feelings. Veiling, then, may represent high worth, intimate knowledge, including sexual intimacy and desire, as well as the loss of these things. Jussuf's donning of veils before women, then, overtly implies that he wishes to separate himself from them, but the other connotations awakened by veiling imply that he desires intimacy with them but is unable to attain this, and that his own worth and knowledge is akin to theirs. The veil paradoxically stands for Jussuf's intimacy with women, since he harbors a feminine side, as well as his loss of connection to women, and to his mother in particular. He is also, at this point, separated from his creator, the first person narrator, through the enclosure of his story in the third person narrative. The veiled women among whom he wanders incognito may also represent his secret desire to reunite with his creator as well as to regain his lost mother. These

women may represent, too, his fear of the loss of self that would occur if he could realize his desires.

According to O'Brien, Jussuf's disdain for women and femininity results from the fact that he "... also possesses a female component himself, which he tries to deny or suppress" (O'Brien 13). However, Jussuf is interested primarily in hiding his feminine side from women, and not men:

> Denn Jussuf Abigail verbarg seine Abneigung gegen alles Weib, schon als Prinz von Theben..... Mêmed hatte Verständnis für des Kaisers Abneigung gegen Eva; trotzdem gerade das Himbeerträumerische in Jussuf, die Farbe der Prinzessinnenseele, ihn entzückte, aber er wagte nicht, die Beeren der Sträucher Seiner Seele zu pflücken. (448)

Interestingly, his companion Mêmed sees Jussuf's feminine side, and this is a quality he values. His feminine side, moreover, is encased in a beautiful metaphor in the text. The feminine within Jussuf is "Himbeerträumerische," it is "die Farbe der Prinzessinnenseele," "Beeren," but these gentle colors and dreamy raspberries are untouchable to Mêmed. These tempting delights are off-limits, forbidden. Perhaps they represent the presence of Jussuf's mother within him, just as the first person narrator perceived her mother as forbidden to others, veiled.

Jussuf also gives indications of his feminine side to Ruben. The first person narrator writes a letter to Ruben in the persona of Jussuf. As noted earlier, she opens with "Lieber Ruben aus der Bibel" and closes with "Deine... Dein frommer Bruder Jussuf" (404-5). This letter, which exists within both Jussuf's fantasy realm and the first person narrator's world, shows that Jussuf's ambiguous gender is no secret to his dear friend. In fact, the Malik even plans to marry another man in the text:

> Und noch dieses mußt Du hören, Bruder, Mein Volk beschäftigt sich täglich stürmischer mit der Vermählung ihres Basileus und die verehrten Häuptlinge beraten sich im Gewölbe Meines Palastes mit der Werbung. Auf der Tafel treten in engere Wahl der junge Kaiser Lidj Jassu von

> Abessinien, der Prinz Sascha von Moskau, der neue türkische Kriegsminister Enver Bey. Ich habe gegen alle drei Fürsten nichts einzuwenden, hoffe aber, daß Mein teures Volk, dem ich die Wahl überlassen werde, sich für Enver Bey entscheidet. (420)

This is does not seem to be regarded as odd by any of his friends and companions. We can infer from a letter that Ruben is surprised that Jussuf treats his marriage as an affair of state (421), but he is not surprised by the fact that Jussuf has only male suitors. Jussuf, however, does not ever marry. Perhaps the dreamy raspberries of his princess-soul are forbidden to other men besides Mêmed.

The Malik's erotic attitude towards his soldiers sometimes reflects his feminine side. Although erotic love is related to the homosexual ideal, the apparent homosexuality of the Malik is, at the same time, an expression of his feminine side. Recall that when the homosexual erotic ideal is first introduced, the first person narrator speaks of playing "Liebste und Liebster," i.e., heterosexuality, and then corrects herself with "eigentlich sind wir zwei Jungens" (395). Because the ideal homosexual erotic in this text masks a less than ideal heterosexual reality, Jussuf's homosexuality allows us a glimpse of his princess-soul. He states, "Ich kannte im Leben nur einen Neid – wenn Soldaten vorbeimarschierten, die Mir nicht gehörten" (413). This desire to possess soldiers is ambiguous: he may desire them on a sexual level as well as want power over more soldiers. He also states

> Drei gefangene Menschenfresser spielen nun mit meinen Soldaten Würfel und sehnen sich nach ihrem jungen Fleisch. Ich habe offen gestanden Mitleid mit ihnen.... (412)

It is not clear whether or not Jussuf sympathizes with his soldiers or whether he expresses sympathy with the cannibals in their longing for his soldiers' tender flesh. Earlier in the text, cannibalism is loosely connected with erotic love. The

first person narrator writes to Franz of her wish to be intimate with him and his wife:

> Wir haben nicht verlernt, unsere Haut herabzureißen wie ein Feierkleid. Was ist denn noch anders los als wie die Liebe; blauer Reiter, können wir von anderem leben wie von der Liebe, von Blut und Seele – ich will lieber ein Menschenfresser werden, als Nüchternheit wiederkauen. (400-1)

Likewise, Jussuf's sympathy with the cannibals may be of a sexual nature. Shortly after he speaks of the cannibals' desire for his soldiers, he asserts that the cannibals hunger after his heart (412). The heart, in this work and many others by Lasker-Schüler, is the locus of emotions, particularly love. Although he speaks quite literally about their desire to cook his heart in soup, he seems flattered by this. These passages, then, take on erotic connotations.

Kuckart views the androgynous nature of Jussuf as follows:

> Amadeus rettet sich, wie der Prinz von Theben, aus der domestizierten, aus den Vorschriften einer institutionalisierten Sexualität in eine nicht mehr bedürftige Erotik. Nicht als Mann oder Frau ist er verwundbar, sondern in seinem Herzen.... (Kuckart 99)

Moreover, she asserts:

> Der Androgyn ist sich selbst genug, weil er des anderen nicht mehr als eines gesellschaftlichen gefühlsmäßigen Komplementärs bedarf.... Die Erotik außerhalb der Machtverhältnisse wäre eine subversive im Zeichen des Widerstands gegen die abendländischen Herzfrostigkeiten und Kühlschrankideologien. (Kuckart 101)

It should be noted that Kuckart addresses Jussuf as he appears in a number of Lasker-Schüler's works. The Jussuf in Der Malik, however, does not seek to elude institutionalized sexuality because he desires a legal marriage. He is even willing to let the society of Thebes choose a mate for him. His not marrying, though, and his status of being off-limits, sexually, to his intimate friends, as well as his choice to not touch his soldiers despite his desires, may indicate an association between sexual union with men and the desired union with the mother. Moreover, he may be androgynous, but he is not sufficient for himself,

as Kuckart suggests. He, like the first person narrator, desires relationships; using insights from Bakhtin's theories, one realizes that Jussuf is not sufficient in himself because he needs others to remain defined as himself.

Jussuf's Mother, his Creator and Milli Millus

Why does Jussuf not want women to know of his feminine side? His distaste for women and everything feminine may be understood ironically, if we remember that behind the third person narrator lurks the woman author we encountered earlier. Jussuf, her persona, is now in a sense loose from her because he has gained autonomy in the transition into the third person narrative. Does Jussuf fear his own desire to reunite with his creator? Does he fear encountering her through the person of another woman in his kingdom? Perhaps he knows that the ultimate return to the creator-mother will entail his death, and he has an idea that she is here in his world. Ironically, when his mother returns to him in a vision followed by the appearance of his creator, he comes face to face with his physical and spiritual feminine origins: his mother brought him forth from her body,[33] and the woman poet dreamed him and his entire world into existence. His encounter with these two women affect him deeply: "Nach dieser Seelenwanderung fühlte sich Jussuf fremd seinen nächsten Menschen gegenüber" (487). Why? His contact with these, his mothers, creators, origins, is labeled "Seelenwanderung." This word implies that Jussuf may be an incarnation of one of these mothers, or he encounters versions of himself in them. His soul is not fixed; it wanders, it is loose in the world because it is no longer anchored to a mother, his origin. His feelings of alienation towards his fellows masks his real alienation: his separation from the Mother. When he encountered his mother and then his creator, he realized that he was ultimately separate from

them, and separate from himself. His desire for death, expressed in suicide, is his attempt to merge, once again, with them, the mothers.

Milli's attempt on his life is very curious in the text. When he returns to the palace in dejection after his visions, she "empfand ein unwiderstehliches Mitleid mit dem hilflosen Kaiser, wurde aber von den gespannten Häuptlingen verhindert, sich dem schmerzbewegten geliebten Feind zu nähern" (487). Her love and pity, awakened by his sorrow and helplessness, is almost maternal. The following passage describing the feelings of his advisors for him are certainly maternal:

> Neugierde und Pietät lähmte die fürstlichen Spielgefährten, ihren Streich zu enthüllen. Wenn sie auch große Lust verspürten, ihren Malik wie ein Kind zu umarmen, ihn eines Besseren zu belehren, ihre Liebe und Treue ihm zu versichern;.... (487)

Their feelings towards him are very strong and maternal, yet they do not express them because they do not believe it would be apropos, and they actively prevent Milli, the one person who would comfort him with physical closeness, from doing so. Oddly, Milli's attempt on his life follows her surge of sympathy. The passage describing her attempt on his life is equally mysterious:

> Da nun Abigail Jussuf das Schweigen seiner Häuptlinge für die Folge ihrer Schuld ansah und den festen Entschluß seines Planes nicht mehr entrücken konnte, stieß ahnungslos in den Brokat den Dolch, hohl in den toten Mantel Milli Millus.... (488)

Although the reader knows that Milli has perpetrated this action, Milli's act is labeled "ahnungslos," as if she were unaware of her own actions. It is as if the agency of Milli in this terrible act is being denied. Moreover, she had just expressed a motherly desire to comfort Jussuf. Why is this desire followed by her sudden attempt to murder him? Furthermore, when the emirs of the city are informed of Jussuf's death, they blame the advisors. Each advisor points a finger at another advisor, and Milli is the last advisor to have blame laid on her for his death. Yet she is not punished. The narrator's last words on her are as follows:

"Die zog betroffen in ihre Heimat, Mareia-Ir, zurück" (489). The linguistic weakening of her agency through the adjective "ahnungslos," along with her sympathy for Jussuf and the fact that she may freely (and sorrowfully) leave the palace, suggests rather that her attempt on his life was out of pity, or more likely, that she simply became the deadly vessel of a greater force. In this context that force is maternal, since the creator-author appears like a goddess to Jussuf in a dream after the heavenly visitation of his long-deceased mother. The murderous Milli may be the harbinger of Jussuf's death through suicide. Her role as such is quite appropriate, since her abilities as a sculptor link her to the artist-creator, and her ambiguous gender, as well as her desire for power, make her an appropriate Doppelgänger for the Malik.

Milli, moreover, is strangely similar to the first person narrator in many ways. Remember that the first person narrator, like Milli, wanted to rule in Thebes, but as the author, she can only create this world through writing and through her imagination. She must still wander the streets of Berlin, "willenlos," forced to remain in this world at least sometimes despite her imaginings. Moreover, like Milli, the first person narrator is a woman who wants to be a man: this is why she makes her hero, Jussuf, masculine. Milli is an artist, too. In fact, Milli, like the first person narrator, creates her own Jussuf: she makes a marble sculpture of him (469). Milïla may represent the longings of the first person narrator, loose in Thebes. This would explain many of her characteristics, including her status as an artist even though few women in this realm are artists, her motherly affection for Jussuf, her envy of him, and her sorrow after his death, as well as the fact that she is not punished for her behavior towards him.

Jussuf's kills himself after Milli's attempt on his life, but not because of her attempt:

> ...aber Er war einer Stufe, die nicht vorhanden, entgleitet, dumpf fuhr es Ihm durch die Eingeweide, und entriß die Wurzel Seines Blutes. Und in übermächtiger Scham über diese Fallgrube beleidigt, erhängte sich der schon seit langer Zeit schwermütige Kaiser noch in selbiger unglückseligen Stunde.... (488)

He takes his own life out of shame, pain and anger, but he has long been preparing to die. He is, after all, the realized desire of the "lebensmüde" woman author. Three deadly[34] women, then, have called him out of his world, and back into his mother's womb. As those who give and take life, who create works of art, and who transgress the divide between themselves and the other in order to empathize or create, they are powerful.

O'Brien's View of Thebes as Anti-Feminine

O'Brien, on the other hand, does not view the feminine in Thebes as representative of a powerful creative force. Rather, she reads them as follows: "Seen in the context of Jussuf's response to the Venus of Siam, Ruben's wife Mareia, and Milli Millus, these female characters come to represent the archetypal images of woman as powerless object, initiator of man's downfall, and seductive deceiver, respectively" (O'Brien 13). It should be noted first that O'Brien is examining the figure of Jussuf in an attempt to unravel Lasker-Schüler's unsuccessful quest for a unified and powerful self (in Jussuf), and she therefore places much emphasis upon the beliefs and opinions of Jussuf. Although Jussuf is certainly the persona with whom the first person narrator most identifies, the reader must not conflate his opinions and interpretations with those of either the first person narrator or Else Lasker-Schüler. Jussuf has gained autonomy as a character, and his viewpoints are his own.

Although Jussuf holds certain opinions concerning these women figures in the text, the third person narrator, also a creature of the fictional author, clearly

does not support his position. Remember that the text conspired to remove responsibility from Milli Millus for her own participation in Jussuf's suicide, and her status as an artist and Jussuf's seventh advisor, as well as her ambiguous gender, may all may be read positively, since she shares these with the first person narrator. The third person narrator has brought out her complexities, rather than simply marking her as a deceiver. The third person narrator's treatment of Ruben's wife, as well, is far better than Jussuf's treatment of her. Twice Jussuf blames Ruben's wife Mareia for Ruben's actions and ultimately, Ruben's demise. Note the following passage:

> Rubens Weib, die Mareia, beschuldete er ungerechterweise, eiferte wider ihre weiße Abstammung, die seinen stolzen, friedliebenden Bruder veranlaßte, mit den abendländischen Völkern zu kämfen; vergaß, daß sein starkwilliger Ruben einen ebenso selbständigen wie edlen Eigenwillen besaß. (441)

It is clear from the text that Mareia is not to blame for her husband's actions, and the Malik, himself, admits this when he later sends her gifts. In fact, the references to her white ancestry suggest ethnic prejudice on the part of Jussuf, rather than any real wrongdoing on Mareia's part. The third person narrator intends, in labeling the Malik's behavior unjust, to remove any suspicions a reader may have against Mareia. Moreover, the third person narrator defends Mareia against the Malik a second time:

> Wieder richtete sich sein [Jussufs] Zorn gegen des großen Bruders Weib. Nicht, daß Er irgend zu Vorwürfen berechtigt gewesen wäre, aber Er zerriß in Seiner unbändigen Art Mareias unschuldige Bildnisse. Knurrend sprach er von der milchweißen Sarah, die sich so viel Macht über Abraham erwarb. (461)

Far from sharing the Malik's anger, the narrator calls Mareia's images innocent and compares her to one of the most loved and respected matrons of the Jewish people, Sarah.

Likewise, the Venus of Siam appears to play a different role in the text from that assigned to her by Jussuf. Although the Malik views her as an art object, she is more than an object in the text. First, the association between her beauty and art, even though she is being objectified, has some positive connotations, since art is valued greatly within Thebes. Recall that cities are named for artists, and art is used to punish traitors as well as bargaining objects for freedom. Within the realm of Thebes, art has greater significance and power than it does in the first person narrator's realm. Second, although she is a minor character, her behavior at the end of the story suggests some agency on her part:

> Die Venus von Siam bewegte sich zum ersten Male goldfüßig aus der heiligen Nische ihres Tempels und weinte in ihren langen Traumhaaren. Ihres Kaisers Tiefsinn schob sie des Nibelungen kühlem Zauber zu und ihr rätselhafter Eidechsenkopf sann nach Rache. (488)

She speculates about Jussuf's motives for suicide, decides on a likely cause, and desires revenge. When one considers Lasker-Schüler's own ambivalence towards Gottfried Benn in her splintering of him into two characters in this text, the "good" doctor and the "bad" Nibelungen knight, it may seem that the Venus of Siam, far from being a mere object, expresses sympathies that may resemble the author's. Clearly Jussuf's life has had great meaning for the Venus of Siam, although this feeling was not reciprocal. In short, the third person narrator does not treat her as a mere object, but imbues her with emotions, thoughts and ambitions.

Jussuf's point of view is not identical to that of the third person narrator, or, as discussed earlier, the first person narrator, or even that of Else Lasker-Schüler. His encounter with the feminine through the persons of the fictional author, his mother and Milli Millus all suggest that his estimation of women falls short of what they actually are. Recall as well that Lasker-Schüler's text is polyphonic: it allows a multitude of characters to express themselves, and these

characters must not agree with one another. Jussuf, though the hero of the story, is only one autonomous subject among many within the text.

Likewise, the image of the feminine, itself, within Der Malik does not hinge upon Jussuf's dislike for women. The feminine takes a privileged position for a number of reasons. First, the feminine creator is depicted as the origin of the incredible world Thebes. Thebes' complexity and its utopian elements have emerged because of her. The power of the mother in the text is expressed in both the first person narrator's longing for her mother as well as Jussuf's awed respect for his mother. Besides these positive portrayals of the feminine, the very gender ambiguity of Jussuf and Milli Millus forces us to reconsider the categories masculine and feminine as viable classifications. Our investigation of the work's separation into realms and its depiction of power play between the genders suggests that each depends upon and aspires after the other. The existence of both within two primary characters suggests as well that the two are not closed, autonomous and opposed categories but rather open and ambiguous classifications.

III. Conclusions

Jussuf's Death and the Incontournable Self

What does Jussuf's death mean? Bauschinger points out that Jussuf never appeared in any other work after Der Malik. His suicide ended his fictional career, although Lasker-Schüler continued identify with him throughout her life. Bauschinger describes Jussuf as follows: "Der Prinz von Theben ist aber andererseits auch kein Mann, sondern fast noch ein Knabe, eine Figur jenseits des Weiblichen und Männlichen, androgyn und immer jung" (Bauschinger 118). He does have an immortal quality about him, since the author kept him alive within herself after his death. She continued to call herself Jussuf of Egypt, and to close letters with his name. Why did he die while she continued to live, if she continued to identify with him? He also dies in Der Prinz von Theben. Deaths and endings in fiction , after all, may be repeated or undone, or they may even stand in for something else, the merging with the mother. Lasker-Schüler, who identified strongly with her deceased mother, felt, perhaps, that she was no stranger to death. Thebes does not end with its Malik: he is succeeded by his younger brother. The ghostly appearance of his mother, moreover, implies that his existence could continue beyond his life, and as indeed it did, through Lasker-Schüler.

What of the self presented in this text? When Jussuf encounters his mother, and then the poetess, and lastly, Milli Millus, all very shortly before he ceases to exist, and before the story comes to a close, what does he encounter in them? The Mother? But Jussuf's soul shimmers with the color raspberry, a deep red like blood, but not cold shed blood, rather warm red, the interior of a body. In one sense, he carries his mother "under his heart" and within his soul, just as

the first person narrator's mother dwells within her heart (411). And Milli Millus strangely resembles the first person narrator, and she expresses a motherly empathy towards Jussuf. The third person narrator, who normally follows Jussuf, but who may take the liberty of assuming Mêmed's view, or tell the thoughts of the Venus of Siam, is the creature of the first person narrator, is she not? This woman, the writing first person narrator, asserts time and again that she is Jussuf, even though she appears to him separately, at the end of her own tale. Moreover, Jussuf's encounter with the mothers is referred to as a "Seelenwanderung"(487), a reincarnation. They are all, if taken together, an incontournable self. Or they are, as Kristeva might suggest, "a submerged, transverbal correspondence of bodies," "the unnameable community of women" ("Stabat Mater" 114), and their being, encoded in semiotic, poetic language, "appropriates to itself this archaic, instinctual, and maternal territory; thus it [the conglomerate being] simultaneously prevents the word from becoming mere sign and the mother from becoming an object like any other– forbidden" ("From One Identity" 136).

Likewise Else Lasker-Schüler's deliberate weaving of her life in her (life) writings, and her twining of her fantasies within her life, as well as her fictionalizing, her alteration of her biography in art, and her crafting of lies during her life, lying to others, about her birth date, a detail of her origin– all indicate, perhaps, her desire to prevent the words, her stories, poems and plays, from being reduced to mere fiction, an object for contemplation, an object like any other, forbidden to be identical to her, author, mother. Her fictions are her life. Life and art are not exclusive. As late as 1944, she signed the name "Jussuf" at the close of a letter to friends. We are left wandering who or what she is, and the only answer we have is Else, Jussuf, Tino, Artist, Mother, Jew, Exile, Poet(ess), Abigail, Amanda, Malik or Owner of Thebes in Egypt.

[1] For more information, consult the Encyclopaedia Britannica 1996, on-line: http://www.eb.com.
[2] This citation is taken from an electronic correspondence I received from Dr. Malik Balla, a distinguished professor of the Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian and African Languages and of the African Studies Center at Michigan State University, on Thursday May 30, 1996. I contacted Dr. Balla , hoping he could help me unravel Lasker-Schüler's use of this word, since this word is also his name. His response was thorough and detailed. I am indebted to him for his help and kindness.
[3] I am interested primarily in the formal aspects of life writing, as defined by Kadar. Kadar, however, is interested in defining a form of writing which is based on the kinds of writings that women have historically participated in, and she therefore includes much so-called "low literature." Lasker-Schüler, however, wrote primarily with a small, elite audience in mind. She sought to participate in the male-dominated "high culture" tradition of her time. She intentionally distanced herself from "women's writing" of the day, and would not have appreciated such a classification. Some of the formal elements explored by Kadar, though, do lend an understanding to Lasker-Schüler's prose.
[4] In assembling this short biography of Lasker-Schüler, I relied on the "Zeittafel" in Klüsener, 138-141.
[5] I think this (philosophically coherent) eccentricity was the primary reason that a number of her contemporaries and critics believed her to be mentally ill. There was too much method in her "madness" for it to have arisen from mental illness, though. Furthermore, she was a healthy and functioning individual in most other aspects of her life (as healthy and as functional as was possible under the pressures of her time), as well as a successful writer. More recent critics on Lasker-Schüler dismiss the notion that she was simply mentally ill.
[6] Hedgepeth pulls this citation from Käte Hamburger, Die Logik der Dichtung (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1987) 177.
[7] O'Brien notes that Tino was also unique of her sex in her gifts and androgeny (O'Brien 6-7).
[8] Judith Kuckart, on the other hand, examines passages in which the poet describes a friendship with a girl in "'Ich streife heimatlos durch bleiche Zeiten': Über Else Lasker-Schüler."
[9] Excerpt from Rietzschel.
[10] Bauschinger characterizes his views as follows: "Dieter Bänsch möchte aus dieser Tatsache einen grandiosen 'Versuch von literarischer Selbstmythisierung' konstruieren, der seinesgleichen nicht einmal in Nietzsche findet, und in gefälliger Folgerichtigkeit bezieht er alle autobiographischen Korrekturen der Dichterin, ihre Identifizierung mit der Josephsgestalt, deren Erhebung zum Prinzen und dessen Rolle als Liebesbringer bis zu seinem Tod auf diesen Punkt," on page 156.
[11] I was surprised at the frequent occurrence of such practices within Lasker-Schüler criticism. Of the critics that I work with, Judith Kuckart and Sonja Hedgepeth tend to do this more than others. Kuckart, however, does not have a traditional background in literary criticism. She worked in the theater, and presumably became interested in Lasker-Schüler through her plays. Hedgepeth, on the other hand, seems to have a personal philosophy which supports this practice, and she bases this in Lasker-Schüler's own ideas on the indivisibility of life and art. For example, she occasionally uses phrases such as "der Malik/Lasker-Schüler" (132), and reads Giselheer's rejection of Jussuf 's love as Gottfried Benn's rejection Lasker-Schüler's love (133). Bauschinger notes that many do this and she criticizes such practices, particularly where Der Malik is concerned(132).
[12] Kadar describes ten characteristics of life writing. First, these texts contain narratives, but the narrative may be "deferred, fragmentary, or disunifying" (Kadar 159). Second, they may have a beginning, middle and end in the Aristotelian sense, although this sense of unity may mask the uncertainty of the subject. Third, these texts are "incontournable," which allows the reader to read life writings as "a process of becoming more self-conscious" (Kadar 159). Fourth, these narratives may use and fragment textual conventions into "intimate dyadic exchanges," thus favoring forms such as epistolary novels, letters, or gossip (Kadar 159). Fifth, the goal of these intimate exchanges is self-knowledge and self-care. Sixth, life and writing identify to the mutual benefit of each. Seventh, the distance between reader and author has been minimized. Eighth, life writing may be high literature or not. Ninth, "Most often in this century life writing is exploited by women writers..." and tenth, "Although life writing is not exclusively the property

of women writers, it is always accessible to them, and then, to all readers, and their jouissance"(Kadar 160). Although Kadar does not specifically say so, her description of life writing is idealistic in that it attempts to be both intimate and all-encompassing. She is careful to describe and list these features in such a way that they appear descriptive, rather than prescriptive; her frequent employment of the subjunctive, "may be" or "may not be" indicates as well that a text which does not have every feature may still be included within the genre life writing, given that it contains other features. Kadar's collection of essays, from which this description is taken, reflects this principle of non-exclusivity, since works as diverse as Plath's Bell Jar and Cervantes' s Don Quixote are argued to belong to this genre.

I object, however, to Kadar's tenth criteria, which I understand as a notion that texts ought to strive be inclusive to all readers. This criteria arises perhaps from a utopian urge to avoid previous wrongs, but, as an examination of Lasker-Schüler's case will suggest, its fulfillment on a practical level, in my opinion, is neither attainable nor desirable. The case of Else Lasker-Schüler, as an excluded author who writes for an exclusive circle of friends and sympathetic admirers, raises the question as to whether or not it is even desirable for any writing, including life writing, to attempt to be accessible to all readers. The "all" necessarily includes those who are intolerant and xenophobic, and a writing which includes such persons may, by necessity, be excessively narrow or superficial. Moreover, the main stream or "low" culture may itself be exclusive, if the majority to whom it appeals is intolerant or xenophobic. Kadar's discussion also sets aside the question of whether or not it is even possible for any kind of text, including life writings, to be accessible to all readers. Accessibility to all readers implies that all readers do share some form of universal or transcendental common ground. While this common ground may actually exist, it has frequently been the case that when individuals or groups have attempted to define this common ground that their discourses often take on an either intentional or unintentional exclusive quality. Lasker-Schüler's move to communicate fully and intimately with a few specific individuals may be a far more realistic attempt at communication than the attempt to communicate with all. Ironically, this intimate, exclusive mode may ultimately be less exclusive than an all-encompassing attempt: when one does not seek to include all humanity in the discussion, one does not attempt to define humanity, and therefore one never runs the risk of denying the humanity of any other through one's definition.

[13] I take up the issue of the mother's relationship with the first person narrator, Jussuf and writer in more detail later.

[14] Webb gives a number of examples of in his essay: "Er sang den Frauen Lieder/ In süsserlei Abendfarben;" "von meinen Lidern, Tropft schwarzer Schnee" (Webb 292).

[15] As noted earlier, many critics identify this narrator and the Malik with Else Lasker-Schüler. The extent of the author's identity with each of these characters is a complex question, and I intend to leave it to others.

[16] I assume that the character Franz Marc, like the real Franz Marc who befriended Lasker-Schüler, dies. "Der blaue Reiter Ruben," his representative in the Malik's fantasy realm, dies, in a war. Since the fantasy realm is dependent upon reality, one may assume that the actual Franz Marc of the text has also died. The shift from an epistolary form to a third person narrative supports this, since he, as letter recipient, can no longer receive letters. It is common knowledge that Lasker-Schüler was greatly disturbed over the death of the artist Franz Marc, and the text obviously refers to this historical fact. However, I think it is important to support this assumption within the text itself, as I have attempted to do.

[17] Lasker-Schüler seems to be positing the masculine as the "Other," a kind of "ewig Männliche," which inspires and is desired by her female narrator. Her narrator, though, wishes to embody the mysterious eternal masculine herself.

[18] Bauschinger 104. She cites lots of interesting examples in which the poet fabricates phrases and calls them "Elbananff" or "mystisch Asiatisch," "Syrisch," or "altaramäisch" (104-106).

[19] Later in his life, Bakhtin may have entered the slippery road upon which Kristeva travels. Emerson writes that Bakhtin became obsessed with the lie as the potential weakness and desecration of the personally uttered word. She writes, "In a series of increasingly ominous themes for future research, Bakhtin had jotted down: 'The lie is today's most ever-present form of evil. The phenomenology of the lie. Its extraordinary heterogeneity and the subtlety of its forms. The reasons for its extraordinary omnipresence. The philosophy of the lie. The rhetorical lie. The lie in artistic form'" (Emerson 409). If Bakhtin was moving in the direction of considering the

relationship of the lie to poetic form, which may lead to the lie as poetic form, his line of contemplation may have brought him close to Kristeva's line of thought. Kristeva calls poetic language "the equivalent of incest" for its subject, and also links poetic language with evil ("From One Identity" 136-137).

[20] Bakhtin's definition of love differs from many other definitions in a number of crucial areas: it does not desire to possess the other since it respects the other's boundaries; it seeks to influence the other through interaction, but cannot desire to make the other similar to itself since the lover, like the beloved, is dependent upon others, including the beloved, for self-definition, and since it is difference, itself, that lover appreciates. In many ways, Bakhtin's understanding of love is emancipated: it is not violent, dangerous or self-absorbed. It is other-centered, respectful and creative. It is a good model for feminists seeking to distance themselves from patriarchal models demanding conformity to a specific and unrealistic beauty ideal, self-sacrifice and the loss of autonomy from women. Unlike Bakhtin's model, such models seek to do away with difference.

[21] The adage "A son is a son 'til he takes a wife, a daughter's a daughter all her life," sums up this contrast fairly well.

[22] Jean Wyatt points to the similarities between Kristeva's view of the self and Chodorow's ideas in her article, "Avoiding self-definition: In defense of women's right to merge (Julia Kristeva and Mrs. Dalloway ." Dr. Karin Wurst called my attention to the similarities between Kristeva's "Stabat Mater" and Chodorow's Reproduction of Mothering.

[23] Although Kristeva's description of matriarchy is disturbing, she in no way privileges patriarchy as a viable alternative.

[24] Kristeva writes elsewhere of the "flagrant incompatibility and permanent state of war" between the sexes ("Stabat Mater" 101). She seems to imply that the two genders have always been at odds with one another, therefore naturalizing the conflicts between men and women, including the injustices of sexism.

[25] Bauschinger asserts that Lasker-Schüler differentiates between "lieben" and "verliebt sein." Love is the banal connection between two persons of the bourgeoisie with connotations of possession, while "Verliebt sein verhielt sich für sie zur Liebe wie Spiel zur Kunst" (Bauschinger 133).

[26] See Bauschinger, 132-135 for more about Lasker-Schüler's friendship with Benn.

[27] This assumption differs markedly from more recent theories on autobiography. Katherine Goodman in her introduction, "Women and Autobiography: Methodological Considerations," traces the history of theories of autobiography, paying special attention to ways in which the value of women's personal writings were denigrated through classifications of "Zufällig," "organisch," and not "vernünftig," as the personal writings of men were assumed to be (v). She also mentions the ways in which autobiography followed socially sanctioned scripts, which sometimes inhibited self-expression, rather than simply allowing for a monologic expression of the self, as Bakhtin's writings imply. Moreover, according to Goodman and others, the autobiographer constructs a "second self," which does not map neatly onto the writer (ii). Finally, she points out that many postmodern theories deny the existence of a self as a coherent, "monologic" unity, and discusses the problems that these raise for feminists studying the writings of women, many of whom had problems formulating the apparently unified "I' which these theories now disclaim as illusion (iii). Taking these issues into consideration, Bakhtin's classification of the personal as monologic and not-artistic is wrought with problems for any modern discussion of autobiography. Indeed, today we have little impetus to view the personal as either monologic or not-artistic. Moreover, as Goodman implies, the division of writings into subjective and objective, and artistic or non-artistic, is unstable and unclear. I have chosen to deal with this passage from Bakhtin because I find Lasker-Schüler's "answer" to his claims intriguing. She presents the reader with a relationship between fictional author and character which is rich in implications of how Lasker-Schüler's process works. Bakhtin's view seems to me the antithesis of the writing process illustrated by Lasker-Schüler. For this reason, I hope that the contrast between Bakhtin and Lasker-Schüler will be useful in clarifying Lasker-Schüler's position.

[28] Bakhtin does not seem to differentiate between fictional subjects and living, breathing subjects. In his discussion of subjectivity, he defines a fictional character as a subject if that character may hold its own in an encounter with the reader. From the point of view of a reader, then, a fictional character in a text is a subject if it can remain other from the reader (and writer) and if it can

maintain a dialogue with the reader. He does not consider the character as a subject from the point of view of the author, except to say, as cited earlier, that the character should be autonomous from the writer in order to be a subject and not just a personal expression of the writer. Lasker-Schüler, on the other hand, implicitly spends a good deal of time on the development of character in this work. Her fictional author is not simply a medium which channels the separate consciousness her character, as Bakhtin implies Dostoevsky does. Her fictional author goes through stages with the character: first they are identical, and the character slowly gains in detail and independence, until the break between author and character is made. This transition is not smooth, either. This will become apparent when I deal with Jussuf's death.

[29] I do not wish to suggest that all authors work this way, but certainly Lasker-Schüler does. Her work may be read as a corrective to Bakhtin's division between the personal and the objective. Her work suggests possible combinations that Bakhtin had not encountered, perhaps, in his work with Dostoevsky.

[30] It is also not clear when one reads Bakhtin's account of the classless carnival if this freedom from class applies to women as well. He writes of the "barriers among men" being lifted, not the barriers among people. The hierarchical distinctions between men and women may very well have remained in place during the medieval carnival. Moreover, as editor Morris points out in a footnote, some women are less than enthusiastic about Bakhtin author, Rabelais, since Rabelais writes some obviously misogynist material (Reader 237, footnote 9).

[31] Many of Lasker-Schüler's comments on women in general are self-defeating for a feminist. She viewed herself as the exceptional woman, a woman more like a man, but places most other women back into the inferior position dictated to them by their culture. It is no surprise, then, that she had few women as close friends, or had no stake in their issues. She did have a number of lasting and intimate friendships with a number of creative men: Peter Hille, Franz Marc, etc., (the list is fairly lengthy). Ironically, she took a firm stance on abortion: "Paragraph 218, wahrscheinlich der des Verbots der Abtreibung?? Ich wermute? Was noch nicht atmet, lebt nicht; die Schäden der 'Kindertragenden'- ihre Privatsache! Aber warum werden nicht öffentlich unschädliche Mittel verkauft? Außerdem haben nur weibliche Richter über diesen Paragraphen zu bestimmen, da bekanntlich Männer noch nie im Leben es bis zum neunten Monat gebracht haben," (Hedgepeth, 224. Citation is taken from Lasker Schüler's Konzert.)

[32] Hedgepeth cites many passages in which the poet states she does not identify her "Äußeres" with her art, and therefore does not want to be photographed, does not like women's clothing, and describes herself as a boy, etc. Hedgepeth sees all of these events as support for the assumption that Lasker-Schüler reflects her female body.

[33] Jussuf's father appears earlier in a mixed-voice letter. The letter begins with the address to Franz Marc and ends with the closing "dein tiefbewegter Jussuf."

[34] The woman author may be deadly to the Malik since she can create or destroy his realm. Remember that the fantasy realm was first introduced by her into the text in the negative. His mother is dead, and Milli Millus, of course, makes an attempt on his life.

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