

ELISABETH LANDAU'S NOVEL *DER HOLZWEG* (1918): A GERMAN-JEWISH GENDERED DISCUSSION OF HEIMAT

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ABSTRACT

Elisabeth Landau's novel *Der Holzweg* discusses her German-Jewish protagonists' attitudes to their estranged homeland in the climate of anti-Semitism in the last months of the First World War. With reference to contemporary theoretical writing, two main notions of Heimat, held by the novel's main characters, Karl and Elise, can be identified. Landau pits Karl's heroic but desperate clinging to his German homeland against the female protagonist Elise's clear-sighted argument for turning away from a nation that excludes its Jewish citizens and for building a new life elsewhere. Building on the concepts of motherhood and motherliness, and investing her heroine with a life-giving femininity and 'nomadic' subjectivity, Landau describes the 'female' perspective as the one showing the way into the future. An analysis of contemporary reviews of the novel shows how critics, who were not willing to concede the struggle for the acceptance of German Jews as equal citizens, ensured through misogynistic attacks that the novel and the criticism of the Heimat concept it carries were denied the readership it deserved.

Der Roman *Der Holzweg* der deutsch-jüdischen Schriftstellerin Elisabeth Landau, der als Reaktion auf die Welle des Antisemitismus der letzten Kriegsmonate zu lesen ist, verhandelt die Frage nach den möglichen Haltungen deutscher Juden zu ihrer entfremdeten Heimat. Vor dem Hintergrund des zeitgenössischen kritisch-theoretischen Denkens über Heimat lassen sich die zwei wichtigsten, im Roman über die Protagonisten Karl und Elise kontrastiv angelegten Anschauungsweisen des Begriffs herausarbeiten. Steht Karl für das Festhalten an seiner regional und national definierten Heimat und für die Entscheidung in Deutschland zu bleiben, so bezeichnet Elise den Weg in die Emigration und die Möglichkeit, eine neue identitäre Zugehörigkeit zu schaffen. Landau schreibt ihrer über die Prinzipien von Mutterschaft und Mütterlichkeit emphatisch als weiblich kodierten Haltung, die im Kontext 'nomadischer' Subjektivität (oder Emanzipation) zu interpretieren ist, die überlegene Position zu, da sie die Abwendung von einer die deutschen Juden ausschließenden Heimat vertritt und den Weg in die Zukunft weist. Der Blick auf Rezensionen aus dem Erscheinungsjahr verdeutlicht, wie die weiterhin auf ein Zusammenleben von deutschen Christen und Juden ausgerichtete deutsch-jüdische Presse mithilfe von misogynistischen Angriffen sicherstellte, dass der Roman und die Kritik am Heimatbegriff, die er transportiert, so gut wie keine Verbreitung erfuhr.

The German-Jewish author Elisabeth Landau wrote her first novel, *Der Holzweg*, in the final year of the First World War, reacting to the wave of anti-Semitism that swept the country at the time. Anti-Semitic sentiment had

been permeating society even in the pre-war years, but had manifested itself in an unspoken consensus or 'cultural code'.¹ Now, as the nation's defeat became probable, it burst out into the open with a vehemence that was unprecedented. Many Jews reacted to this open aggression by intensifying their striving for integration and acceptance as equal German citizens, but for others this was, as Paul Mendes-Flohr writes, 'der kritische Augenblick, in dem eine Umorientierung ihrer Identität entstand'² – the point at which they accepted the 'otherness' attributed to them with a certain defiant pride.

Elisabeth Landau was one of this latter group. Before the war, she had published a slim volume of elegiac poetry, *Aus allen Tonarten*, under the name Lizzie Landau.³ In these dreamy poems there is no sign as yet of any interest in questions of German-Jewish identity. *Der Holzweg*, however, subtitled *Ein Berliner Roman* and published in 1918, sharply analyses the situation of Jews in Germany. The author name on the cover now reads 'L. Audnal'; this reversal of Landau's birth-name points to the destabilisation of her identity in the war years and can be read as an act of re-constituting and re-positioning her author personality.⁴

Conceived as the first volume of a trilogy, *Der Holzweg* was published by the renowned Erich Reiss Verlag, which included among its authors some of the most important names of early twentieth-century literature, among them Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Gabriele d'Annunzio, Ernst Toller, André Gide, and Maximilian Harden. It might be expected, therefore, that Landau's novel should attain considerable resonance and profile. However, this was not the case, and the reason, I shall argue, is firmly linked with the author's exploration of the theme of Heimat.

Der Holzweg is a sweeping, panoramic, social novel, but one of its main concerns is the discussion of the relationship between German Jews and their home country, their German Heimat. Through her two main characters, Karl Hinrichsen and Elise Frank, Landau discusses the options of either staying on and – in solidarity with fellow Jews – opposing anti-Semitic aggression and exclusion with heightened energy, or leaving Germany and starting a new life elsewhere. Both positions are portrayed positively, as both are rooted in the principles of personal integrity, the acknowledgement of Jewish difference, and responsibility for others. On these grounds, they are both contrasted with the 'Holzweg' (the dead

¹ See Shulamit Volkov, *Antisemitismus als kultureller Code*, Munich 2000, pp. 13–36.

² Paul Mendes-Flohr, 'Im Schatten des Weltkrieges', in Avraham Barkai and P. Mendes-Flohr, *Deutsch-jüdische Geschichte der Neuzeit* (4 vols), IV: *Aufbruch und Zerstörung 1918–1945*, Munich 1997, pp. 15–36 (p. 21).

³ Lizzie Landau, *Aus allen Tonarten*, Berlin 1912.

⁴ See Landau's remark in a letter to the lexicographer Karl Brümmer: 'Durch den Krieg erfuhr ich eine große Wandlung'; Elisabeth Landau, letter to Karl Brümmer, 1 June 1922 (Nachlass Franz Brümmer, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Handschriftenabteilung, Signatur: E. Landau Brü NL).

end) of undignified over-assimilation to the Christian majority, a path that Landau cruelly caricatures and sharply condemns. I aim, first, to present in further detail the two positive German-Jewish stances towards their homeland that this novel discusses and to embed them in contemporary theoretical thinking about the concept of Heimat. I will then investigate how Landau links these stances with notions of gender and how she configures the 'female' way of thinking, in a remarkable congruence with Rosi Braidotti's model of 'nomadic subjectivity', as a call to engage with futurity and new beginnings. On the basis of this analysis, I shall, finally, return to the question of the novel's reception.

The fact that the discussion of Heimat is the central focus of this novel reflects how significant this concept – and the related discourse – was in contemporary Germany. The geographer and free-thinker Paul Krische, who published an astonishingly forward-looking monograph on the 'Problem der Heimat' in the same year as *Der Holzweg* appeared (1918), observes an unprecedented intensity of what he calls 'Heimatsbewusstsein' in the later stages of the war.⁵ He attributes this on the one hand to a genuine groundswell of feeling on the part of those fighting a war; however, on the other hand, he also indicates his disquiet at an ideology-driven instrumentalisation of this genuine sentiment. He comments wryly, 'dass heute der Heimatbegriff aus kurz-sichtigen, politischen und staatswirtschaftlichen Gründen oft verwischt und in pharisäerhafte Gesinnungsprahlerei verkehrt wird'.⁶ In propaganda texts of the time, the rhetoric of Heimat and of anti-Semitism often go hand in hand; Krische, who was active in reformist circles, thus represents a remarkable exception amongst contemporary voices, when he grants 'jede[m], der auf deutscher Scholle lebt' the right to a German Heimat.⁷

Krische describes the conventional concept of Heimat, which connects the idea of belonging to a social space with a specific geographic attachment. But he goes on to contrast this – in his view 'stale' and problematic – concept with one that is more flexible, that conceives of social space as actively constructed, and on this basis allows the individual to free their sense of belonging from its geographical fixation.⁸ Recourse

⁵ See Paul Krische, *Heimat! Grundsätzliches zur Gemeinschaft von Scholle und Mensch*, Berlin 1918, p. 41: '[S]o hat der Weltkrieg Millionen Menschen erst ein altes, vergessenes Problem wieder zugeführt und lebendig gemacht, mit dem sie sich beschäftigen werden und [...] an dem sie einfach nicht mehr so gleichgültig, wie früher, vorübergehen können.'

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 88. The synecdoche of the 'deutsche Scholle' was often instrumentalised in anti-Semitic rhetoric, especially in contrasts between German ways of life grounded in working the land and Jewish work in abstract financial transactions or other ways of earning a living associated with capitalist modernity (see, for instance, Gustav Freytag, *Soll und Haben*, 1855). Krische's use of the word in a way that counters such discourses is remarkable.

⁸ Friederike Eigler describes these two discursive strands as central to the discussion of Heimat in the early twentieth century, referring to the importance of Friedrich Ratzel's *Politische Geographie* (1897)

to this dialectical model of Heimat concepts helps us to identify discrete contrastive aspects of the discussion in Landau's *Holzweg*.

The idea of Heimat that is represented by Karl Hinrichsen, the male protagonist of Landau's novel, focuses in a narrow sense on regional rootedness, but beyond this also extends to the national framework: to Germany and the German 'Geist'. The small-town community in Schleswig-Holstein in which he grew up, which unquestioningly included Jewish families, and the semi-rural way of life there have allowed him to form a close bond to this Heimat that is defined by an attachment to community and to the land itself.⁹ Landau's repeated reference to Hinrichsen's 'Bodenständigkeit'¹⁰ emphasises his rootedness in his regional Heimat. He is so much part of it – in other words, he is so highly assimilated – that not only his actions and values, but also his physical appearance is undistinguishable from that of other Northern Germans. 'Kein Mensch will mir [...] [die jüdische Herkunft] jemals glauben, – wir sehen alle germanisch aus in meiner Familie', he explains; and in his follow-on comment, 'Das ist vermutlich die Mimikry!' (*H*, p. 31), we may well see not only a reference to Darwin's theory of evolution, but also an ironic reference to the topos of Jewish mimicry in contemporary anti-Semitic discourse.¹¹

Hinrichsen never calls into question the ties that bind him to his regional Heimat; it remains an imaginary place of refuge, even when his relationship with the German nation as a whole comes under greatest strain. For he experiences the fact that Germany has turned against him in an anti-Semitic surge ('daß meine Heimat also handelt'; *H*, p. 102) as humiliation and as an incomprehensible act, especially in view of his deep emotional attachment to what he sees as his home nation.

for the traditionalists and to Georg Simmel's *Soziologie* (1908) for the uncoupling of Heimat and local fixity; see Friederike Eigler, *Heimat, Space, Narrative*, Rochester, NY 2014, p. 13. It is also interesting to consider Krische's thinking in view of later theoretical discussions of the relationship between concepts of space associated with mobility, and the idea of bounded, immobile place; see Elizabeth Boa's article in this volume, which refers to Doreen Massey's and Aleida Assmann's explorations of the subject.

⁹ Especially in view of its significance as a border region, but also as a land supported by agriculture and as the supposed home region of the 'Nordic race', Schleswig-Holstein had been one of the main centres of Heimat discourse since the late nineteenth century; see Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman, *Heimat: A German Dream. Regional Loyalties and National Identity in German Culture 1890–1990*, Oxford 2000, pp. 150–1.

¹⁰ L. Audnal, *Der Holzweg. Ein Berliner Roman*, Berlin 1918, p. 16. Further references to the novel appear in brackets in the text, abbreviated as *H*, followed by the page number.

¹¹ See, for instance, Hans Blüher, *Seessio Judaica. Philosophische Grundlegung der historischen Situation des Judentums und der antisemitischen Bewegung*, Berlin 1922, p. 19: 'Die Juden sind das einzige Volk, das Mimikry treibt. Mimikry des Blutes, des Namens und der Gestalt. [...] Wenn aber der Jude Mimikry treibt, so verbirgt er seine ganze Substanz'. For a discussion of the use of the concept in anti-Semitic discourse see also Arndt Kremer, *Deutsche Juden, deutsche Sprache: jüdische und judenfeindliche Sprachkonzepte und -konflikte, 1893–1933*, Berlin 2007, pp. 120–6.

Indeed, Landau represents his attachment to Germany as an affect and, decidedly critically, as a somewhat regressive need. As Peter Blickle has pointed out in his 'critical theory of the German notion of Heimat' of 2002, many recent studies emphasise this regressive tendency implied in the Heimat concept and define it as a mental escape into an imaginary protective space related to childhood memories.¹² Paul Krsche was already putting this view forward in 1918 – very much against the tide of majority thinking at the time – and explicitly connected it with Freudian theory, when he described the attachment to Heimat as 'einen stark instinktmäßigen Drang, den wir [...] Trieb nennen'. 'Die Erfüllung eines solchen Triebes', he continues, 'erfolgt ohne Besinnen und Nachdenken, [...] lediglich, um ein Bedürfnis des rein Persönlichen, des Triebmenschen zu befriedigen.'¹³

Landau's Hinrichsen appears almost as a case study of this instinctive and libidinous attachment. Repeatedly, the author describes his inability to renounce his Heimat – and to embrace the change of identity this would entail: 'ich könnte mich nimmermehr dazu verstehen, im Ausland zu leben', he claims (*H*, p. 107) and 'ich vermag nicht anders zu werden' (*H*, p. 193). The content, however, of this inseparable attachment remains rather diffuse, it does not go beyond the affirmation of discursive generalities along the lines of 'ich liebe die Heimat, mein Geist ist deutsch' (*H*, p. 192). If we apply Paul Krsche's terminology, Hinrichsen's Heimat concept is 'romantisch': it is grounded in 'einem unbestimmten Gefühl, in dem [...] das Bewußtsein von etwas Zugehörigem lebt'.¹⁴ Considering the climate of insecurity and fear that characterised the situation of the German Jews in 1918, this attempt to cling to an idea of 'Zugehörigkeit', of belonging, is understandable. Inverting the positive components of the definition of Heimat, Gisela Ecker has pointed to the insecurities that underpin the concept:

'Heimat' bietet eine Reduktion von Komplexität (unter dem Stichwort 'Vertrautheit'), begegnet der Angst vor Instabilität (unter dem Stichwort 'Beständigkeit'), der Angst vor Auflösung von Identität (unter dem Stichwort eines starken 'Wir' und der Grenzziehungen zwischen Innen und Außen).¹⁵

The fears and insecurities referred to here certainly lie at the root of Hinrichsen's refusal to renounce his Heimat, and yet Landau frames his

¹² See, for example, Peter Blickle, *Heimat. A Critical Theory of the German Homeland*, Rochester, NY 2002, p. 72.

¹³ Krsche, *Heimat!* (note 5), p. 50.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁵ Gisela Ecker, "'Heimat': Das Elend der unterschlagenen Differenz (Einleitung)", in *Kein Land in Sicht: Heimat – weiblich?*, ed. G. Ecker, Munich 1997, pp. 7–31 (p. 30).

position as one of the two positive options for Jewish agency in the face of anti-Semitic aggression. She does so by distinguishing Hinrichsen's Heimat attachment from the merely passive, nostalgic, and resigned attitude often associated with the conservative *petite bourgeoisie*,¹⁶ and instead linking it firmly with an active, altruistic, and courageous struggle for the acceptance of his fellow Jewish Germans as members of the 'Volksgemeinschaft'.

However, Landau shows Hinrichsen to be beset by severe doubts about the success and even the worth of his actions, and when he accounts for his decision to stay in Germany with the words 'ich will die Heimat durch meine Liebe gewinnen', the implication is clear that his Heimat resists and eludes him (*H*, p. 108). Even without Elise Frank's description of his idealism as 'Kampf mit Windmühlen' (*H*, p. 106) it is clear that – in the author's view – Hinrichsen's attachment lacks an adequate understanding of reality. The sense of a society permeated by anti-Semitism, with which Landau presents us on every page of this novel, leaves no doubt about this.

In Elise, the main female character and Hinrichsen's counterpart, Landau provides a contrasting character whose approach to her German homeland is based on a rational, critical evaluation of the current political climate and whose sense of belonging is not rooted in local attachment but rather embraces the idea of continual renewal and re-constitution. Elise's position is that of the acutely perceptive outsider; akin to Georg Simmel's figure of the 'stranger', she has a clear, critical, view of the situation of German Jewry.¹⁷ Elise has cut her emotional ties to Germany and is now preparing to take the physical step of emigrating. 'Sie glauben dem deutschen Judenleid Abhilfe schaffen zu können', she points out to Hinrichsen, '– ich gebe diese Sache verloren, wir vermögen [die Deutschen] nicht zu bessern – das Elend setzt seinen unseligen Kreislauf fort, hält nur ein, wenn der letzte Jude der Verfolgung zum Opfer fällt' (*H*, p. 105). Such pessimism may have appeared as defeatism to contemporary readers, but from our perspective today, Elise's understanding of the situation (which is also that of the author) is remarkably clear-sighted.

Elise avoids using the concept of Heimat: in a polemical equation of Heimat and patriotism she points out the exclusionary power of both concepts as they are turned against the German Jews: 'wenn ich [...] höre, daß es Deutsche gibt, die kaltblütig den Wunsch aussprechen, das Pogromverfahren auch in ihrem Lande angewendet zu sehen, dann werden Sie wohl meinen Mangel an Patriotismus begreiflich finden!' (*H*,

¹⁶ See Blickle, *Heimat* (note 12), p. 72.

¹⁷ See Georg Simmel, 'Exkurs über den Fremden', in G. Simmel, *Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung* [1908], ed. Otthein Rammstedt, Frankfurt a. M. 1992, pp. 764–71.

p. 192). In contrast to Hinrichsen's notion of the Heimat bond as a unilateral attachment of the individual to country and community, Elise conceives of identitarian belonging as a dialogic bond, thus allowing the individual a far greater degree of autonomy and agency. 'Du bist frei, deine Heimat hat dich freigegeben!' (*H*, p. 271), she explains to Hinrichsen. Whereas he cannot take this step towards freedom, Elise, for her part, sees extrication from a relationship that denies her her dignity as a necessary condition for any future life.

Social belonging, for her, has to be based on mutual give and take; it is a relationship that has to be actively constituted and maintained. This understanding corresponds fully to the progressive concept of Heimat promoted by Paul Krische. 'Es ist ein mittelalterlicher Irrwahn, für starre Dinge zu kämpfen und eine Fruchtlosigkeit', he states and, consequently, acknowledges that a Heimat bond that is not, or is no longer, based on constant mutual renewal may be relinquished in order for a new relationship between the individual and (a different) Heimat to be constituted.¹⁸ Heimat thus emerges not as a static, but as a dynamic and geographically transposable concept, and one that is rooted not in reference to a given community, but in the subjectivity of the individual and the possibility of innumerable new acts of self-positioning.¹⁹

This emphasis on subjective experience rather than any collective is fundamental to Elise's thinking. Her notion of belonging refers to a set of cultural values that are not determined by the place of her birth: namely her religion and her claim to the right 'frei und gleichberechtigt unter den anderen zu stehen' (*H*, p. 106). The understanding of religion as the basis of belonging is reminiscent of Heinrich Heine's reference to the Torah as his 'portatives Vaterland'.²⁰ The ideas of tolerance and equality, on the other hand, are values of the Enlightenment, and specifically also of the German Enlightenment of Kant, Lessing, and Goethe. But Landau's Elise recognises that the Germany she lives in is no longer 'das Deutschland Goethes' (*H*, p. 272), and consequently her bond with the German nation is revocable.

She rejects – and goes beyond – the seemingly binary choice between Heimat and 'Fremde', because she embraces a freedom and an agency that Hinrichsen cannot grasp and because her rational and value-oriented thinking allows the thought of a new beginning in another community built on western Enlightenment principles and culture. Landau thus presents a

¹⁸ Krische, *Heimat!* (note 5), p. 63.

¹⁹ Recent sociological research also adopts this more flexible approach based on individual subjectivity. See Ina-Maria Greverus, 'The "Heimat" Problem', in *Der Begriff 'Heimat' in der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur*, ed. Helfried Seliger, Munich 1987, pp. 9–28.

²⁰ For further discussion of this concept, see Anat Feinberg, 'Abiding in a Haunted Land: The Issue of Heimat in Contemporary German-Jewish Writing', *New German Critique*, 70 (1997), 161–81.

third option beside those of 'being German' and being 'heimatlos':²¹ the option of being a European.²²

When, at the end of the novel, Elise leaves Germany for England with her young son, Konrad, she contemplates his future with optimism: 'Er wird sich später da ansiedeln, wo es ihm gefällt und wo er einen befriedigenden Wirkungskreis finden kann, ohne durch seinen Glauben behindert oder verbittert zu werden' (*H*, p. 107). Of course their emigration is a reaction to the social exclusion which they experience as German Jews, but Elise also initiates her departure actively and positively and understands it (at least in part) as an opportunity for her re-orientation in the world and for personal growth: 'in jenem berühmten Nomadentum der Kinder Israels', she explains, 'liegt der Segen ihres Fluches, ein großer Schwung geht durch den Wanderer, der ihm Sinn und Augen öffnet' (*H*, p. 106).

Landau's naming of her main female character may be no coincidence then. After all, in the foundation myth of the city of Carthage, Elissa (not Dido) is the name of the Phoenician, i.e. Semitic, princess, who, having fled violence and persecution in her homeland, builds a new and better world on foreign shores.²³ Landau's choice of name – whether conscious or not – thus supports the narrative power of Elise's story of female vision, migration, and new beginnings.²⁴

From our vantage point today, and in view of philosophical and political theory of the late twentieth century, Elise can be read as the embodiment of a 'nomadic subject' as conceptualised by Rosi Braidotti. Building on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of a 'minor literature' ('*littérature mineure*'), which rests on the principles of deterritorialisation, of the questioning and disruption of hegemonic structures, and of an essentially political significance,²⁵ Braidotti's 'nomadic subject' is an identitarian model into which mobility, the liberation from restrictive norms, and openness to an unlimited number of re-constitutions of belonging are inscribed. Braidotti draws a clear distinction between 'nomadic subjectivity' and the subjectivity of the exile, which is backward-looking and orientated towards the past. She highlights two aspects that are of central importance

²¹ This was the position of the assimilated German Jewry as described by Gabriel Rießer in the mid-nineteenth century. He claimed: 'wenn [...] der Deutsche uns Deutsche fremd nennen dürfte, so wären wir ohne Heimat und Vaterland'; Gabriel Rießer, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 1867–8 (4 vols), IV, pp. 303 ff., quoted in H. G. Adler, *Die Juden in Deutschland. Von der Aufklärung bis zum Nationalsozialismus*, Munich 1961, p. 71.

²² In the last novel of her trilogy, *Die Brandfackel* (1929), she develops this idea further, propagating the utopian concept of a united Europe.

²³ For the foundation myth of Carthage, see Werner Huß, *Geschichte der Karthager*, Munich 1985, pp. 41–2.

²⁴ Carol Gilligan offers a similar re-writing of the myth in her novel *Kyra* (2008), in which the protagonist, a female American architect, founds a new city on an island off the shores of Massachusetts in order to build a new society based on communal living and the renunciation of violence.

²⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka. Für eine kleine Literatur*, Frankfurt a. M. 1975, pp. 24–5.

to the 'nomadic subject' and which are also key to Landau's Elise: first, the aspect of resistance – against restrictively binary ways of thinking, against any claims of power and oppression, against the pressure to conform to hegemonic perspectives of world and self and, crucially, against exclusion of any kind. 'The critical intellectual camping at the city gates is not seeking readmission', Braidotti writes, 'but rather taking a rest before crossing the next stretch of desert.'²⁶

The second aspect that Braidotti emphasises in her description of the 'nomadic subject' focuses on ideas of responsible, independent agency and the development of alternative models of a future life. Nomadism as a political stance is conceived as a possibility of transporting and thus saving ideas that are under threat from oppression or exclusion – as a political project that is fed by narratives of hope and change.

Importantly, Braidotti links 'nomadic subjectivity' with a feminist consciousness that builds on the understanding of female difference, derived, with Luce Irigaray, from the intersection of biological, symbolic, and sociological definitions.²⁷ Among other factors motherhood and motherliness play an important role here – as specifically female forms of experience and perspective, but also as concepts with strategic and political potential. This emphasis chimes with discursive strategies used by the proponents of the first wave of feminism of the early twentieth century, who posited an empathic, caring 'erweiterte Mütterlichkeit', as a corrective to masculine patterns of thought and action and, through this key concept, opened up opportunities for female social agency.²⁸ Landau, though not a member of the organised women's movement, also links the feminist with the 'nomadic' perspective. Her Elise stands for an alternative model of consciousness and for a way of thinking about the attachment to Heimat and nation that is specifically coded as feminine. Femininity and, more particularly, motherliness are Elise's defining character traits: it is motherliness that marks her position as superior (repeatedly, she addresses Hinrichsen as 'mein armer Junge') and motherliness, namely the wish to secure a future for her son, that provides her main reason for emigrating.

In contrast to Hinrichsen's idealistic sense of duty towards the 'unzählige[] Bedrängte[], die mutig für ihren Glauben eintreten, die schweigend leiden' (*H*, p. 191), Elise declares herself too egocentric for the struggle 'für die jüdische Menschheit' (*H*, p. 106) and instead focuses on the more concrete concern of providing for her son 'jene Sicherheit und Selbstverständlichkeit [...], die den meisten unserer Rasse fehlt' (*H*, p. 107).

²⁶ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects. Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*, New York 1994, p. 56.

²⁷ See *ibid.*, pp. 91–115.

²⁸ See, for instance, Alice Salomon, 'Die Frau in der sozialen Hilfstätigkeit', in *Handbuch der Frauenbewegung, 2. Teil: Frauenbewegung und soziale Frauentätigkeit in Deutschland nach Einzelgebieten*, ed. Helene Lange and Gertrud Bäumer, Berlin 1901, pp. 1–122.

In Landau's eyes the responsibility of a mother is of greater import than the more abstract solidarity with the German Jews as a whole as a persecuted people, not least because of its orientation towards the future: 'Ihre Sorge gilt der Gegenwart', Elise points out to Hinrichsen, 'die meine der Zukunft' (*H*, p. 104). This focus on the personal, however, does not preclude a wider political message: 'Und so wie ich meinen Konrad gestalten helfe, so wünsche ich mir die Juden!', Elise concludes (*H*, p. 107).

Landau thus configures the path into emigration as that of feminine rationality, of motherly care, and as embracing the future. Elise's way is in fact no less than the decision for life, taken against the threat of annihilation, as the author's use of dark biologicistic metaphors makes clear: 'Deutschlands Leben', she writes, 'ist wie eingemauert, sein Blutlauf gehemmt, abgeschnürt Und über der Erde auf unserem kümmerlichen Brachfeld treiben sich irre Schatten herum, die ihr Unkraut ernten, anstatt es zu jäten!' (*H*, p. 272). In another passage, Berlin is depicted in harrowing Expressionist imagery as a landscape of extinction and death: 'Sengender Hauch fegt Karl ins Antlitz, toter, vernichtender Sand [...]. Und die Mark [Brandenburg] erschien ihm, es knistert in ihren kümmerlichen Gewändern, aus ihren dünnen Fingern läßt sie Sand rinnen' (*H*, p. 196).

It is in opposition to such stark metaphors of destruction that Landau develops Elise's femininity und motherly responsibility into central values, which – supported by Nietzschean ideas of cultural renewal – show the way out of the life-threatening environment of a nation that rejects its German-Jewish citizens. In view of the specific historical situation in which Landau finds herself as a German Jew, she breaks the traditional conceptual bond between life-giving femininity and Heimat and turns it into its opposite, as principles of femininity, motherliness and vitality are here linked with the rejection of the traditional Heimat concept.

Braidotti's theory may have the 'nomadic subject' of the globalised post-modern era in mind and the trans-national life trajectories that this era has brought forth, but it is easy to see how the social movements of the twentieth century – and especially the erosion of notions of belonging and Heimat, which German Jews experienced in most acute form – can also be seen as contexts which support the liberating 'nomadisation' of the subject. Landau depicts in her Elise a figure of resistance to not just one, but two majority positions: first (in the national context) resistance to the ubiquitous emphasis on and instrumentalisation of Heimat rhetoric, and second (in the narrower field of German-Jewish discourse) to the urgent call for an increased pursuit of the elusive ideal of German-Jewish symbiosis. As these two positions of resistance are combined here to feed into a doubly oppositional project that is specifically coded as feminine/female (the rejection of Heimat and the emigration to England in the name of motherly care for the future), it is almost inevitable that the novel would be met with indignation. Indeed, *Im Deutschen Reich* and *Neue jüdische Monatshefte*, the two leading German-Jewish journals of the period, both reviewed Landau's

text in the year of its publication and condemned it in the harshest terms.

J. L., writing in *Im Deutschen Reich*, does praise the 'Wahrhaftigkeit und Bekenntnistreue' of Landau's depictions of various Berlin milieux and lauds her 'Scharfblick', but he scathingly berates her critical representation of the assimilatory efforts of the majority of German Jews, remarking that her tone betrays the 'Wehleidigkeit einer Frau, die unter den Mängeln oder Unarten ihrer nächsten Angehörigen bitter leidet'.²⁹ With this misogynist sideswipe, he belittles her power of judgement and effectively undermines her authority, citing the need for cohesion amongst the Jewish population as justification: 'Wenn es gilt, sich gegen einen äußeren Feind zu verteidigen, dann müssen innere Streitigkeiten schweigen.' He is so incensed by Landau's negative portrayals that he completely ignores the two positive attitudes that Landau sketches out in her main characters: neither Hinrichsen nor Elise is even mentioned. As a look at the reviewer's other contributions to the journal makes clear, he had for a long time been engaged in the campaign to see German Jews integrated into mainstream German society,³⁰ and Landau's protagonists, who both assert Jewish difference, do not fit with this stance. The difference of opinion seems to have made a fair and balanced appreciation of her work impossible; the disparaging reference to the author's gender was simply the nearest weapon to hand.

A similar reproach can be made to the reviewer of *Der Holzweg* in the *Neue jüdische Monatshefte*, Siegbert Feuchtwanger. Feuchtwanger, an influential journalist and lawyer and a cousin of Lion Feuchtwanger, had made a name for himself with publications that emphasised the Jewish contribution to German culture and attempted, through the positive portrayal of the German Jews, to further the cause of their being accepted as equals.³¹ Like his colleague at *Im Deutschen Reich*, Feuchtwanger took exception to Landau's harsh and unflattering depiction of spineless assimilation in Jewish circles and he too used Landau's gender to frame his attack. He reveals the fact 'daß eine Frau sich hinter dem Namen "Audnal" verbirgt' in order to explain what he styles 'manche [...] Eigentümlichkeit' of the novel: the outdated, derivative style (following Heinrich Mann and Fontane), Landau's supposed incompetency to assess 'die Judenfrage', and the allegedly excessive idealisation of the male protagonist, Hinrichsen ('wie Held Siegfried').³² Hardly any mention at all is made of Elise, the strong female character, who shows the way towards emigration through her rational, clear-sighted argumentation.

²⁹ J. L., 'Ein Berliner jüdischer Roman', *Im Deutschen Reich*, 12 (1918), 467–8 (467). Though the identity of the reviewer could not be established, it may be assumed that the writer was male.

³⁰ See, for example, J. L., 'Bilder aus dem Reichstag', *Im Deutschen Reich*, 4 (1905), 190–200; J. L., 'Borkum in – Deutschland', *Im Deutschen Reich*, 10 (1905), 520–4.

³¹ See Siegbert Feuchtwanger, *Die Judenfrage als politisches und wissenschaftliches Problem*, Berlin 1916.

³² Siegbert Feuchtwanger, 'L. Audnal, *Der Holzweg*', *Neue jüdische Monatshefte*, 3–5 (1918–19), 112.

Both reviewers, then, instrumentalise Landau's female authorship with a denigrating, disqualifying intention. Their aim to dismiss or neutralise her novel is understandable in view of the historical situation of the German Jews in 1918 and of both reviewers' conviction of the necessity to fight for attitudes and aims that they saw decried and opposed in Landau's work. Their strategy was highly successful, as these reviews, which both appeared in a prominent position, have doubtlessly influenced the history of reception of the novel for a very long time. Knowledge about *Der Holzweg* and about its remarkable heroine Elise sank almost without a trace after 1918, and the novel's two sequels, *Ahasver* (1920) and *Die Brandfackel* (1929), were never reviewed in the relevant journals.

Now, as a hundred years have passed since the first publication of *Der Holzweg*, it is time to accord Landau's novel the recognition it is due. In 1918, in a climate in which the German Heimat was instrumentalised as a political weapon and a touchstone for cultural definitions of belonging, its critique was too dangerous to be embraced by those vulnerable to falling foul of the demarcation lines between 'us' and 'them'. In our times, as voices are heard again that rhetorically bolster an exclusionary Heimat concept and link it with demands for strict assimilatory alignment with the German 'Leitkultur', *Der Holzweg* is an important reminder of the perspective of those we define as 'other'.