

LITERATURE AS UTOPIA:
SPACES OF ALTERITY IN WEST GERMAN POSTCOLONIAL AND SCIENCE-
FICTION LITERATURE AFTER SIXTY-EIGHT

Kirkland Alexander Fulk

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Approved by:

Richard Langston

Eric Downing

Jonathan Hess

Mark Hansen

Priscilla Layne

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Abstract

KIRKLAND ALEXANDER FULK: Literature as Utopia: Spaces of Alterity in West German Postcolonial and Science-Fiction Literature after Sixty-Eight
(Under the direction of Richard Langston)

The dominant narrative surrounding West German literature of the seventies maintains that following the collapse of the student movement around 1968, the collective utopian aspirations of this generation gave way to the loss thereof in the new emphasis on private, political subjectivity in the following decade. *Literature as Utopia* challenges such commonplace accounts by examining spatial alterity in postcolonial and science fiction literature of the 1970s written by Nicolas Born, Hubert Fichte, Alexander Kluge, and the anonymous cult writer P.M. This study reassess the currency of utopia after 1968—both the “good place” and “no place”—by probing these authors’ works using post-Adornian aesthetic theories that emerged concurrently in West Germany in the seventies, namely those of Karl Heinz Bohrer, Hans Robert Jauß, Wolfgang Iser, Dieter Wellershoff, Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge. In addition, my dissertation traffics in the larger intellectual history surrounding the 1970s by bringing my primary texts into dialogue with theorists outside of Germany such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Susan Sontag, Clifford Geertz, Henri Lefebvre, and others in order to assess the ways in which the literature of this period begins to respond to theory. In this dissertation, I argue that this post-revolutionary literature was particularly adept at opening textual spaces in which the idea of utopia could regain a foothold as a socio-critical force after its demise just a few years earlier.

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Introduction

After the Deluge: From a Politics of the Self to Spatial Alterity

In the wake of the revolts that shook West Germany in the late 1960s, literature ostensibly shifted its focus from the realm of social politics and collective utopian aspirations to a new emphasis on private subjectivity and a politics of the self—or so the story goes.¹ While the decade following the collapse of the student movement is undoubtedly distinguished by the rise of “Neue Subjektivität” or “Neue Innerlichkeit,” there was more to this period than first meets the eye. This dissertation does not completely refute this commonly-held trajectory in literary history or the predominance of New Subjectivity in literary production. To be sure, New Subjectivity was not a wholehearted eschewal of the political, but rather a critical redefinition thereof that brought about new movements, such as the Greens and feminism.² Rather, this dissertation adds another dimension to this narrative.

¹ See for example, David Roberts, “From the 1960s to the 1970s: The Changing Contexts of German Literature,” in *After the Death of Literature*, Keith Bullivant, ed. (Oxford: Berg, 1989), pp. xi-xxiii, David Roberts, “Tendenzwenden: Die sechziger und siebziger Jahre in literaturhistorischer Perspektive,” *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 56:2 (June 1982), pp. 290-313, Richard W. McCormick, *Politics of the Self: Feminism and the Postmodern in West German Literature and Film* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991), Moray McGowan, “Neue Subjektivität,” in *After the Death of Literature*, pp. 53-68, Leslie Adelson, “Subjectivity Reconsidered: Botho Strauss and Contemporary West German Prose,” *New German Critique*, No. 30 (Autumn 1983), pp. 3-59.

² See David Roberts, “Tendenzwenden: Die sechziger und siebziger Jahre in literaturhistorischer Perspektive,” *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 56:2 (June 1982), pp. 290-313 and Richard W. McCormick, *Politics of the Self: Feminism and the Postmodern in West German Literature and Film* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991).

As so often happens, the dominance of such all-encompassing classifications as those above, which attempt to characterize an entire literary movement and decade, tend to leave much unaccounted for due to their haste to propose something new and novel. One of the critical elements overlooked by many scholars is the fate and continued predominance of utopia after sixty-eight. As subjectivity took firm hold of the literary stage in the 1970s, utopia appeared to have succumbed to the same fate as the student movement, namely, it too met its end.

This dissertation seeks to uncover the utopian legacy of the 1960s buried under the ruins of the student movement left standing in the 1970s. I argue that utopia not only survived the tumultuous 1960s, but also began to take note of and challenge the premises that gave rise to it during this decade. Utopia did not, to be sure, survive unscathed, but changed as the world around it did, taking on a new critical tenor with regard to itself as well as the manner in which it is produced and deployed.³ The West German 1970s gave birth to a type of utopian literature that arose alongside, responded to, and in some instances foreshadowed new theoretical models that were reassessing the role and function of literature after the student movement. In this way, my project traffics in the intellectual history of an idea as it emerges in and is illuminated in the medium of literature. While this work challenges the caesura between these two decades it does not attempt to reestablish new borders and boundaries. Rather than rewriting the literary history of the seventies, I query the fate of utopia after sixty-eight—itsself an idea deeply ingrained in the West German cultural landscape—and its renaissance in literature and aesthetics. This is an exploration of the *recto* and *verso* of the idea of utopia that poses the failure of sixty-eight as the politicization of

³ This is in following with Ruth Levitas's redefinition of utopia. As she states, "[...] a new definition of utopia is offered, which recognizes the common factor of the expression of desire." This definition creates flexibility for utopian projects and allows their content, form, and function to change over time. Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*. (New York: Syracuse UP, 1990), p. 8.

utopia and argues for the future and survival of utopia through its aestheticization. After sixty-eight, utopia regained a foothold literature, in particular, and aesthetics, in general. The following project investigates the medial specificity of utopia as a literary representation of spaces of alterity.

This dissertation is founded on two seemingly simple premises regarding utopia. The first is that utopia is fundamentally concerned with spaces of alterity. That is, utopia is always an other space, a world beyond the borders and boundaries of one's own. As Darko Suvin maintains, utopias are "this-worldly Other Worlds"; they are not transcendental but rather "*located in this world*."⁴ The question then becomes, what were the utopias, the other worlds, of the 1960s that crossed the decadal boundary into the 1970s? As I argue at length in the following pages, the 1960s were a time heavily invested in other worlds. The so-called Third World was a topic of perennial concern and was generally viewed as a site of revolution against the continued colonialism and imperialism of the West. From Vietnam and Iran to Central and South America, the student movement sought to align their struggles through solidarity with foreign revolutionary movements abroad. Quinn Slobodian adroitly summarizes the situation of the student movement, the New Left, in the Federal Republic thusly:

If West German social democracy had been bought off by consumer capitalism and East German communism was suffocating in authoritarian conformity, what was Left? Scrutinizing the claims of both Germanies to the label of democracy, New Leftists found both of them wanting. Children of the Cold War themselves, they questioned the received geopolitical categories and looked for options beyond the blocs.

The space newly dubbed the Third World seemed like one source of political

⁴ Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), p. viii, 42.

alternatives.⁵

Thus, where neither democracy nor communism, which divided the world into two competing camps after 1945, seemed to offer any real alternatives to a repressive and oppressive society, the students turned their gaze beyond the borders of their own country. A possible third way lay in the Third World, in countries that were themselves the contested zones of Cold War politics and where armed revolutions were already transpiring and threatening to topple the established order. The desires for revolutionary alternatives and possibilities in the 1960s were integrally linked to other worlds that loomed on the horizon like utopian islands.

The 1960s were also a time of increased contact with these others worlds. The influx of foreign students to the Federal Republic, primarily from Africa and Asia, brought with it new political ideas as well as first-hand accounts of militant struggles and encouraged cooperation between West German students and Third World emancipation movements.⁶ At the same time, however, this political, revolutionary exchange was also one-sided. While ideas and strategies were certainly traded across the geographical divide, far fewer students from West Germany made the trip abroad. Contact with these actual worlds was far more ideational than physical, from the standpoint of the West German students. This contact between other worlds in the 1960s resulted then in a flattening thereof in the name of revolutionary solidarity. As far as the West German students were concerned, they were all fighting for and struggling against the same thing irrespective of geographical, political, and cultural differences. Thus what was initially seen and prized as other, succumbed to a process

⁵ Quinn Slobodian, *Foreign Front: Third World Politics in Sixties West Germany* (Durham: Duke UP, 2012), p. 3.

⁶ Ibid., p. 17ff.

of spatial leveling; these other worlds were merely extensions of the revolutionary desires of the student movement.

If one were to follow the narrative outlined above, namely that the political investment in the sixties in realizing other worlds gave way to an emphasis on the self and subjectivity in the 1970s, then little room is left for this overwhelming concern with spaces beyond the borders of West Germany. Desires such as those of the 1960s, in general, and utopian desires, in particular, do not, however, die so easily. Rather than suggest that subjectivity eschews a concern with other worlds, I argue that the literature of the 1970s attempts to come to terms with the leveling of other worlds in the previous decade, to pull them apart, so to speak, in order to explore them as spaces of alterity fundamentally different from those of West Germany. This entails, on the one hand, a critique of the 1960s and, on the other hand, a recognition of literature's role in the creation of these other worlds, the aestheticization of utopia. This is both an epistemological as well as representational problem that comes face to face with the contradiction that knowledge about other worlds always frames the ways in which they are written about. This brings me to my second premise about utopia. Utopia is a literary construction that is highly self-aware and self-reflexive concerning the worlds it creates.⁷ Utopian literature is founded on the contradiction and paradox that the text not only knowingly creates other worlds, but is conscious of itself as a textual space. It is, as Louis Marin states, a literary space of "limitless contradiction."⁸ Before turning to the methodological and structural outline of this project, I wish first to demonstrate by way of example my claims above regarding the transposition of the critique

⁷ Louis Marin, *Utopics: The Semiological Play of Textual Spaces*, trans. Robert A. Vollrath (New York: Humanity, 1984), p. 65.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

of the other worlds after sixty-eight.

The Other Worlds of the 1970s: Dieter Kühn's *Und der Sultan von Oman*

The year was 1973 In West Germany, the student movement had come to an end. Three years prior, the SDS (Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund) formally disbanded and by 1972 the West German government had successfully passed the Radicals Ordinance, the occupational ban that kept former activists from attaining any position in the government.⁹ The long march through the institutions not to mention the political goals of the student revolts were seemingly swept off the table. The movement was fractured into various camps, from the greens and feminism to left wing terrorism.¹⁰ Within the spaces of literature, Peter Schneider's *Lenz* [1973] and Karin Struck's *Klassenliebe* [1973] ushered in what came to be called "Neue Subjektivität."¹¹ Elsewhere in the world, war and revolution were still the order of the day. As the war in Vietnam was slowly nearing its end with signing of the Paris Peace Accords and the initial withdrawal of American troops, crisis and war loomed on another front, the Middle East. In October 1973, Egyptian and Syrian forces crossed into Israeli-held territory beginning the three-week long Yom Kippur War. In response to the United States'

⁹ David Roberts, "Tendenzwenden: Die sechziger und siebziger Jahre in literaturhistorischer Perspektive," p. 295.

¹⁰ Each of these political offshoots of the student movement had substantial literary counterparts that can be placed within the literary movement of "Neue Subjektivität." Hans-Christoph Buch's *Das hervortreten des Ichs aus den Wörtern* [1978] joined the anti-nuclear movement with the new emphasis on the self and subjectivity. Karin Struck's *Klassenliebe* [1973] and Verena Stefan's *Häutungen* [1975] brought feminism and the "personal is political" to the forefront in literature. The controversial autobiography of left-wing terrorist Michael "Bommi" Baumann, *Wie alles anfing* [1975], bridged terrorism and love, espousing the former in favor of the latter, and the autobiography of former student movement activist and radical Bernward Vesper, *Die Reise* [1977], added another private, personal dimension to student movement.

¹¹ McGowan, "Neue Subjektivität," in *After the Death of Literature*, pp. 53-68, p. 53

support of Israel, the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, or OAPEC, levied an oil embargo. Together with the stock-market crash in January 1973, the oil embargo fanned the flames of economic crisis. What began as a seemingly local event had global implications resulting in the largest world-wide economic collapse since the Great Depression. It was during this time, as David Harvey argues, that the modern world witnessed another “time-space compression,” whereby the speed with which events occur and information travels “so overcom[es] spatial barriers that the world sometimes seems to collapse inwards upon us.”¹² Thus, while former student movement activists such as Schneider and Struck were turning to investigations of the self, geopolitical alignments and economic imperialism were creating a new set of global crises. This time-space compression was responsible for bridging divides as well as initiating economic catastrophes and war. These events form the background of Dieter Kühn’s novel *Und der Sultan von Oman* [1979].

Kühn’s novel centers on James O’Shaugnessy who works for the Public Relations Department of the fictional New York-based United Oil Corporation.¹³ At the height of the oil crisis, O’Shaugnessy embarks on a world-wide PR trip including Great Britain, West Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and Kuwait. Together with his boss David G. “Lips” Matheson, O’Shaugnessy is charged with combatting conspiracy theories that United Oil and OAPEC are in cahoots to drive up oil prices. Though tasked with providing speaking points for Matheson and keeping the information fresh and up-to-date, O’Shaugnessy has plenty of

¹² David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 240, 284. Harvey argues that the first “time-space compression” occurred during the mid-1840s during the time of the industrial revolution and was one of the central concerns of modernism.

¹³ Dieter Kühn, *Und der Sultan von Oman* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), from here on cited parenthetically as “SO.” Kühn republished this novel two times, once in 1982 in the shortened “Neuausgabe” and further abbreviated in 1998 in a collection of “Erzählungen.” Unless otherwise noted, I refer to the original novel from 1979.

time to fantasize. The core of his fantasies consists of a mixture of Middle Eastern lore, fairytale landscapes reminiscent of *One Thousand and One Nights* (*Arabian Nights*), and the revolutionary zeal of Lawrence of Arabia. Indeed, O'Shaughnessy sets his sights on the small Omani province of Dhofar, the site of a growing independence movement, in which he hopes to take part.

While the novel's protagonist is American, Kühn's novel tackles a decidedly German issue, namely the fate and legacy of the idea of utopia after sixty-eight. The internationalism of the student movement that sought solidarity with revolutions abroad is reflected through a representation of a globalized world, the results of the aforementioned time-space compression. Just as the arrival of students from Africa and Asia signaled both a cooperation between movements and a collapse of other worlds, so too did the influence of the U.S. protest movement and American students in West Germany. As Slobodian notes, the West German student movement's relationship with the U.S. was characterized not only by "interactions [...] between West German and U.S. activists," but also criticism of the foreign policy of the United States:

The United States was the dominant international presence in West Germany in the 1960s, as it was in much of the world. The global scope of U.S. soft and hard power in the decade made it impossible to speak about the world without simultaneously speaking about "America," to use the name that co-opted two continents. Its influence even overdetermined apparently Third World issues, as in the case of the Vietnam War, which was simultaneously about a postcolonial nation and about the United States.¹⁴

¹⁴ Slobodian, *Foreign Front*, p. 6. Paul Michael Lützeler echoes Slobodian's assessment that the anti-Americanism in West Germany in the 1960s was less about America *per se* as it was about global politics and imperialism. As he states: "Dieses politische Engagement ist in den USA oft mit Anti-Amerikanismus gleichgesetzt worden, was eine zwar verständliche, aber letztlich doch an der Sache vorbeigehende Interpretation ist. Vietnam sah man (zugegebenermaßen ohne Kenntnis der regionalen Hintergründe und Zusammenhänge) als Beispiel eines Dritte-Welt-Landes, das sich aus der Klammer neo-kolonialer Herrschaft befreien wollte." Lützeler, *Schriftsteller und "Dritte Welt: Studien zum postkolonialen Blick* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1998), p. 27.

That Dieter Kühn chooses an American as the protagonist in his novel corresponds with this assessment of America's role in the West German 1960s. To talk about America is at once to address military and economic imperialism, the Third World, Germany's complicity with U.S. foreign policy as well as revolt and revolution. Dieter Kühn's novel thus reflects on a critical juncture in the post-1968 history of West Germany, namely the rise of "Neue Subjektivität," new wars and economic crises brought on by the "time-space compression" and collapse of other worlds, and the revolutionary internationalism characteristic of the student movement.

O'Shaugnessy's interest in and knowledge of the Middle East and particularly Oman stems from a wide range of sources. His New York apartment is a cluttered mess of books, newspaper articles, notes, charts, graphs, and maps. His personal space has effectively become an information hub where he surrounds himself with pertinent data concerning his job:

Die Liege umgeben von gestapelten Zeitungen, Zeitschriften: rosarot die Financial Times, dickleibig Fortune und Times, New Yorker [...]. Aus Zeitungen, Zeitschriften ausgeschnittene, angepinnte Foto-Reproduktionen [...]. Zwei Wände verdeckt von Regalen: Bücher gereiht und geschichtet, Schnellhefter, Einschlagmappen, hektographierte, xerokopierte Schriften. Vor allem aus waagrecht liegenden Bücher hängen fingerbreite Zettel, an den Kopfen Stichworte, Kennworte mit Bleistift, Kugelschreiber, Filzstift; keine Zahlen, keine Chiffren, denn O'Shaugnessy führt keinen Katalog. (SO, 8-9)

This description of his apartment, which consists of little more than a series of short notes and lists of objects, reveals the second-hand construction of O'Shaugnessy's knowledge and interest in the Middle East. From his New York apartment, he has fabricated a personal space for himself that is a completely medialized representation of an other world.¹⁵ That is to say,

¹⁵ In his analysis of Kühn's novel, Paul Michael Lützeler defines the process of medialization as such: "Die Forschung zur Medialisierung beschreibt und analysiert den Prozess, wie die Medien ins Zentrum sozialer Prozesse rücken, wie Kenntnisse über wirtschaftliche und politische Zusammenhänge von der Präsentation

all O'Shaugnessy knows about the Middle East comes from these pieces of data that literally line the walls and cover the floor of his apartment and not from any direct experience. His apartment becomes a space of knowledge about the Middle East, all the details and intricacies collapsed into one living quarter that he fashions as a virtual, medialized, epistemological representation of this other world. For him, the Middle East is little more than an intricate latticework of facts and figures that transports itself and fits easily into his small abode mirroring the time-space compression of other worlds through the speed with which information travels and is consumed. At the same time, and most important for the stakes of this dissertation, it reveals the implicit contradiction in which the text itself is engaged. Kühn's novel, as Lützeler notes, "[spielt] mit offenen Karten."¹⁶ That is, it is aware that it, too, is taking part in the creation of the other world that it simultaneously seeks to represent.

O'Shaugnessy's curiosity with the Middle East is, to be sure, the result of his occupation. As an employee of an oil company, it is his job to familiarize himself with the other countries where oil is to be found. To a large extent, this necessitates a familiarity with maps. In Vienna, the first stop on his world-wide PR tour, O'Shaugnessy stumbles across a map store and purchases a geological map of Kuwait:

Montag morgen, das Frisch gebohnerte Geschäft, die Verkäufer kramen sich zurecht; die Karte wird nicht aus dem Schaufenster geholt, offenbar noch weitere Exemplare auf Lager, es wird auch eine politische Karte von Kuwait angeboten, nein, nur die geologische Karte mit den roten Linien der Ölpipelines, den blauen der Grundwasserpipelines, Sand mittelfein bis grobkörnig, Waadi-Segmente, auch sind Straßen, Flugplätze, Städte markiert. (SO, 26)

durch die Medien abhängen." Lützeler, *Bürgerkrieg Global* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2009), p. 175.

¹⁶ See Lützeler, *Bürgerkrieg Global*, pp. 174-5, 182, as well as Walter Olma, "'Und der Sultan von Oman': John Coltrane, das Morgenland und andere Subversionspotentiale," in *Dieter Kühn*, Werner Klüppelholz und Helmut Scheuer, eds. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), pp. 128-143, pp. 131-132.

He is not interested in the political maps, but rather those which show in detail the lay of the land down to the type of sand and the infrastructure. Moreover, he wants to know the location of the oil pipelines. For O'Shaugnessy, these pipelines divide up the Middle East irrespective of sovereign political borders: "‘Wenn das Öl erst mal entdeckt ist, sieht man es nie wieder.’ Sprengen eines ‘Christbaums’, einer Pipeline: dann erst würde Rohöl Realität für die Augen, Realität für die Nase, Realität für Tastorgane – einen Zeigefinger hineinstippen (SO, 103). The flow of oil and essentially capital not only transcends the established political borders of Middle Eastern countries, but redraws them in the form of pipelines represented on a map. The pipelines and the corresponding cartographic markers carve up the map of the Middle East; they are the only thing that makes it real for O'Shaugnessy.

On the one hand, this division of geopolitical space solely regarding the interests of capital and the West echoes Edward Said's analysis in *Orientalism* [1978]:

It is quite common to hear high officials in Washington and elsewhere speak of changing the map of the Middle East, as if ancient societies and myriad peoples can be shaken up like so many peanuts in a jar. But this has often happened with the "Orient," that semi-mythical construct which since Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in the late eighteenth century has been made and re-made countless times by power acting through an expedient form of knowledge to assert that this is the Orient's nature, and we must deal with it accordingly.¹⁷

Published only a year before Kühn's novel, Said's description of the redrawing of the map of the Middle East guided by knowledge and a pursuit of capital is mirrored precisely in *Und der Sultan von Oman*. In this way, Kühn's novel not only responds to and knows of theory, here the rise of postcolonialism, but engages in it through literature as well. On the other hand, O'Shaugnessy's emphasis on the reality of the map and the pipeline also erases the physical reality of these other worlds, which are reduced to cartographical representations.

¹⁷ Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), p. xlv.

O'Shaugnessy's surprise at his first sight of Bedouins is indicative of the predominance of this cartographic reality: "[...] ein Nomadenzelt! Jawohl, ein Nomadenzelt, weit ab von der Straße, originalgetreu in der Wüste" (SO, 209). The road which leads through the desert is, indeed, on the map, but the Bedouins are not. The only reality O'Shaugnessy is aware of comes from the map and anything outside thereof elicits amazement. Kühn's description of the reality of maps precedes what Jean Baudrillard two years later describes as the emergence of the simulacrum. Baudrillard describes the process of simulation by recounting a fable by Jorge Luis Borges in which the "cartographers of the Empire draw up a map so detailed that it ends up covering the territory exactly" such that "the decline of the Empire witnesses the fraying of this map."¹⁸ While the map simulated the space of the Empire, Baudrillard argues that this is no longer the case:

Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory—*procession of simulacra*—that engenders the territory.¹⁹

In *Und der Sultan von Oman*, the map that precedes any real territory reflects

O'Shaugnessy's cartographic knowledge devoid of any experience with preexisting reality.

Accordingly, any contact with the real territory seems astoundingly imaginary. Kühn's novel thus not only reflects the time-space compression of other worlds, but is representative of a spatial turn in West German literature of the 1970s, in which the time of modernity is no longer the central concern. Instead it is space, in general, and, in this case, geopolitical and

¹⁸ Baudrillard, *Simulation and Simulacrum*, Sheila Faria Glaser, trans. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 1.

¹⁹ Ibid.

cartographic other spaces that drive the narrative.²⁰

This shift in interest from time to space does not mean, however, that time is of no importance. Indeed, the 1970s witnessed a compression of both time and space, as Harvey has argued in his seminar analysis. *Und der Sultan von Oman* is testament to this as well. While geopolitical space is collapsed into the simulacrum of the map through the neo-colonial conquests of capital, time is a raw material as well in O'Shaugnessy's world:

Er lernt verstehen, weshalb sich so viele Experten und Fachbücher mit dem Zeit-Management von Spitzenkräften beschäftigen. Da wird Zeit definiert als besonderer Rohstoff, der weder im Vorgriff genutzt, noch für die Zukunft gelagert werden kann; da wird gemahnt zur effektiven und nicht bloß effizienten Nutzung von Zeit; da werden Zeitmessungen nun auch bei Spitzenmanagern durchgeführt [...]. Und: es werden besondere Zeit-Feinde aufgelistet – das Telefon, das Erledigen von Post, Besprechungen mit langatmigen Egotrips und so weiter bis auf Ziffer zehn: Familie. (SO, 129)

Time for O'Shaugnessy differs little from the world of information and oil. The only distinction is its inherent ephemerality, its inability to be stored for later use like oil. It is, therefore, necessary to make an effective and efficient use of time by not wasting this resource on menial tasks or spending time with family. The world of oil companies is predicated on the new contours of time-space compression. The pipelines not only reduce the geographical space of the Middle East, connecting it with Western exporters through a series of tubes that transcend and collapse borders, but also enables production, refinement, and shipping time to be drastically sped up, increasing the flow and time of capital.

O'Shaugnessy is not, however, willingly subservient to the time-space compression

²⁰ See for example Lützel, *Schriftsteller und "Dritte Welt:" Studien zum postkolonialen Blick* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1998), p. 20, 28; Ulla Biernat, *Ich bin nicht der erste Fremde hier: Zur deutschsprachigen Reiseliteratur nach 1945* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004), pp. 73-75, p. 99; Arlene Teraoka, *East, West, and Others: The Third World in Postwar German Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), pp. 41-42; Doris Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns: Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften* (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2006), pp. 284ff.

dictated by capital and the oil company for which he works. He wants to revolt against it. We catch our first glimpse of this from one of the many notes littering his apartment on which is written “*Lehre von der gemäßigten Geschwindigkeit*” (SO, 10, author’s italics). The narrator later divulges the influence and meaning behind O’Shaugnessy’s fragment:

James O’Shaugnessy hat einige Thesen von Ivan Illich übernommen und für den (ausschließlich) privaten Gebrauch modifiziert zur *Lehre von der gemäßigten Geschwindigkeit*. Hier ist beispielsweise der Überbau zu seiner Vorliebe für das Radfahren, an Wochenenden, und zur Anregung des Kreislaufs bei gutem Wetter auch an Werktagen, frühmorgens hinauf zu den Cloisters. Einen der Sätze von Illich kann er auswendig: “Produktive Sozialbeziehungen unter freien Menschen bleiben auf das Fahrradtempo beschränkt.” (SO, 165).

Ivan Illich serves as the inspiration for O’Shaugnessy’s desire for a moderated tempo of life. Not to be confused with Tolstoy’s eponymous protagonist, Illich was an Austrian-American philosopher and theologian whose work in the 1970s centered on the energy crisis, the acceleration of time and the collapse of space, prefiguring Harvey’s analysis by two decades. As he argues in his 1973 essay “Convivial Reconstruction:” “Speed is one of the means by which an efficiency-oriented society is stratified” and one of the main causes for imperial expansion, “the pernicious spread of one country beyond its boundaries.”²¹ Further, Illich links this incessant acceleration to the energy crisis. “The energy crisis,” he argues, “cannot be overwhelmed by more energy input. It can only be dissolved, along with the illusion that well-being depends on the number of energy slaves a man has at his command.”²² These “energy slaves” are transportation systems, from cars and ships to and trains, which require increasingly more energy thereby perpetuating the crises they cause. In order to subvert this tendency and bring about what he calls a convivial society, Illich states:

²¹ Illich, “Convivial Reconstruction,” in *Tools for Conviviality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), pp. 10-45, p. 38, 43.

²² Illich, “The Energy Crisis,” in *Energy and Equity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), pp. 3-12, p. 10.

High speed is the critical factor which makes transportation socially destructive. A true choice among political systems and of desirable social relations is possible only where speed is restrained. Participatory democracy demands low energy technology, and free people must travel the road to productive social relations at the speed of a bicycle.²³

In short, Illich's plan for a better, utopian society founded on conviviality demands a slow-down in time and with it a stop to the economic imperialism that collapses other worlds.

It is Illich's proposed slow-down that is the foundation of O'Shaugnessy's revolutionary, utopian vision of the Omani province of Dhofar and another instantiation of literature knowing about and responding to theory. During his free time, O'Shaugnessy dedicates himself to the construction of his Dhofar-Scenario:

Sobald O'Shaugnessy Zeit dazu hat, eine halbe Stunde, eine viertel, breitet er seine Middle-East-Karte aus, eins zu drei Millionen. Und er schaut auf das Gebiet zwischen der Volksrepublik Jemen und den Vereinigten Arabischen Emirate: das Sultanat von Oman. [...] Schraffiert hat O'Shaugnessy im Sultanat Oman die Süd-Provinz Dhofar: das Gebiet, in dem die Befreiungsarmee kämpft, bis hin zur "roten Linie." Einen Pfeil hat James von der Volksrepublik Jemen hinüber nach Dhofar gezogen: Unterstützung der Partisanen. Aus dieser Konstellation entwickelt O'Shaugnessy sein Dhofar-Szenarium. (SO, 38)

Dhofar is both the site of a contemporary liberation movement and O'Shaugnessy's utopian society based on a temporal awareness other than that of profit driven oil companies.

Was O'Shaugnessy selbstverständlich nicht will: ein Beduinen-Reservat. Aber doch dies: ein Land, in dem man es nicht eilig hat; ein Land Ohne efficiency, dies vor allem; ein Land, das sich nicht die Zukunft zerstört, indem es seine Vergangenheit auslöscht. Ein Land also, das es nicht nötig hat, übermäßig viele Straßen zu bauen, ein Land, das Fernsehen einfach nicht braucht, weil die Phantasie noch nicht korruptiert ist; ein Land, noch selbstbewußter in seiner geographischen Sonderposition! (SO, 134)

O'Shaugnessy's planned revolution is the springboard to a new "*Modell Oman*" in "*der Zeit nach dem Öl*" (SO, 229, author's italics). Oman, in his conception, would become a land in which time is no longer subject to the temporal, efficient demands of capital, and one which

²³ Illich, "The Energy Crisis," p. 12.

does not destroy its unique past in order to participate in global, international business. Further, this slow-down in time would enable it to overcome the flattening, homogenizing force of the time-space compression globalization.

O'Shaugnessy's worldview is, then, dominated not only by a medialized knowledge of the Middle East, based on hard facts and maps serving the interests of international capital, but also by a revolutionary, utopian desire to overturn this order. At the same time, however, this utopian desire to take part in the revolutions of other worlds displays a colonial contradiction. Kühn's novel ends not with a grandiose conclusion of O'Shaugnessy's PR trip or his "Dhofar-Szenarium," but rather with a fairytale: "Die Stadt aus Stein" (SO, 231).²⁴ As the title of the fairytale suggests, this is a petrified city; people, buildings, animals, and insects are all transfixed in a permanent, fossilized state. O'Shaugnessy wanders this stone city and finds the last flesh-and-blood occupant of the city, a "märchenhaft schöne[s] Mädchen" reading from a scroll (SO, 235). Readers would likely expect the typical fairytale ending whereby the hero or prince breaks the spell with the help of the girl and brings the city once again to life. But this is not a typical fairytale and James is not a typical hero. After touching the girl's skin, James leaves the city of stone unchanged (SO, 235). This final scene is not only that of an anti-fairytale, as Lützeler correctly reads it, but it is also representative of the fate of the revolutionary, utopian aspirations of 1968.²⁵ The Westerner is not the savior of other worlds, but the very precondition for their collapse. Rather than recognizing the inherent contradictions of his plan, that his knowledge of this other world takes part in its creation, O'Shaugnessy falsely reconciles them and in doing so petrifies the world he wishes

²⁴ Paul Michael Lützeler traces Kühn's possible inspiration for this fairytale to the 1975 German publication of the Azerbaijani fairytale collection *Die versteinerte Stadt* which contains a quite similar story to Kühn's titled "Das Geheimnis der Stadt Benadisch" which Kühn possibly read. Lützeler, *Bürgerkrieg Global*, p. 181.

²⁵ Ibid.

to change.

Kühn's novel, however, accomplishes precisely the opposite. It lays all of its cards on the table, displaying the contradictory construction of other worlds and refusing to reconcile them. In this way, his work not only critiques the utopian interest in other worlds in the 1960s, but creates out of these contradictions a literary space in which they can be exposed. Kühn's novel therewith illustrates four pivotal points of my dissertation: 1) in the course of four chapters, I demonstrate the continued interest in other worlds as sites of revolutionary alternatives; 2) I show that the collapse of spaces and other worlds is, in part, predicated on a desire for knowledge about them, from the cartographic and economic to the revolutionary and fantastic; 3) I account for new political and aesthetic theories (Said and postcolonialism, Baudrillard and simulacra, Illich and Harvey and the effects of time-space compression) manifest in literary texts of the seventies and; 4) I show how the utopian in literary works is founded on contradiction and paradox concerning the other worlds that it seeks to represent. *Und der Sultan von Oman* illustrates all of these premises and provides us with an exemplar for an under-appreciated turning point in post-1968 West German literature. 1973 witnessed not only the rise of "Neue Subjektivität" but also a transposition and exploration of the utopias that seemingly flourished in the previous decade and that purportedly vanished with the demise of the student movement.

After Adorno: Aesthetic Theory and The Return of Utopia in the Seventies

The seventies in West Germany were not only a time of increased literary production, but also a time of new aesthetic and literary theories. During this period, literature regained a critical, social force that was denied to it in the previous decade. In order to understand this

reevaluation of literature it is necessary to look both at the theories that shaped it in the sixties and at the newly-emerging theories of the seventies that paralleled the return of literature as a space of experimentation and discovery as well as utopia. In the 1960s, literature and literary theory was trapped between politicization and the death of literature as fiction, on the one hand, and its relegation to a realm of negativity, incommunicable to a mass audience, on the other. Hans Magnus Enzensberger was representative of the former position and Theodor Adorno the latter. As Hans Magnus Enzensberger proclaims in his 1968 essay “Gemeinplätze, die Neueste Literatur betreffend,” “wenn [die intelligentesten Köpfe zwischen zwanzig und dreißig] lieber Faktographien benutzen als Schelmenromane; wenn sie darauf pfeifen, Belletristik zu machen und zu kaufen.”²⁶ While not announcing the death of literature as is often ascribed to him, Enzensberger, as Alo Allkemper summarizes, “hatte [...] der Literatur in der gegenwärtigen Gesellschaft jede substantielle Bedeutung abgesprochen.”²⁷ That is, Enzensberger did not announce the death knell of all literature, but rather a certain type of non- or apolitical fiction. For Enzensberger, it is only through a “politische Alphabetisierung” enacted through the documentary and the reportage that literature can still claim an operative function.²⁸ Literature itself is thus not dead, but literature as art is no longer warranted: “Wer Literatur als Kunst macht, ist damit nicht widerlegt, er kann aber auch nicht mehr gerechtfertigt werden.”²⁹ Such was Enzensberger’s

²⁶ Enzensberger, “Gemeinplätze, die Neueste Literatur betreffend,” *Kursbuch* 15, ed. Hans Magnus Enzensberger (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1968), pp. 187-197, p. 189.

²⁷ Allkemper, “‘Warum sollte ich mich nicht in Widersprüche verwickeln?’: Nicolas Borns Probleme mit der Utopie,” *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* (103:1), eds., Werner Besch, Hugo Moser, Hartmut Steinecke, and Benno von Wiese (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1984), pp. 576-603, p. 577. Allkemper understands this correctly as the end of art in the Hegelian sense in that literature itself is not dead, but rather its relevance for life.

²⁸ Enzensberger, “Gemeinplätze, die Neueste Literatur betreffend,” p. 195.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

proclaimed fate and future of literature in 1968, that reduced it to the gathering and recording of facts. The value of literature was to be based on its correct political positioning and rendered little more than a manual for political education. Literature was secondary to the primacy of political action that was to change society.

Adorno's position was diametrically opposed to Enzensberger's espousal of a politically committed literature. For Adorno, it is only literature's distance from empirical reality that forms its opposition to and protest against it. The belief that literature, especially Enzensberger's proposed committed literature in the service of political education, should correspond to reality is, in Adorno's estimation, a sign of regression. As he outlines in his posthumously published *Aesthetic Theory* [1970]:

any form of direct artistic commitment to ideological or educational values regresses behind enlightenment. Unaware of the reality of aesthetic images, the notion of commitment levels down the antithesis between art and reality by integrating it lock, stock and barrel in reality. Only those works of art are enlightened which manifest true consciousness while doggedly keeping their distance from empirical reality.³⁰

Literature's oppositional character lies, then, in its refusal to be integrated into reality. Where Enzensberger demands a documentary literature that directly represents social conditions through which it gains a functional political and social force, for Adorno, this merely places it within the affirmative realm of the culture industry. "It combines," he contends, "a slavish respect for empirical details and illusory photographic attachment to them with ideological manipulation based on the utilization of those elements. What is social about art is not its political stance, but its immanent dynamic in opposition to society."³¹ In short, literature can only be negative, not surrendering to an immediate collapse of art and reality in the service of

³⁰ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. C. Lenhardt (London: Routledge, 1972), p. 128.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

politics. At the same time, however, the social, oppositional quality of literature attained through its negativity separates it from communication to a mass audience: “One decisive reason why art works, at least those that refuse to surrender to propaganda, are lacking in social impact is that they have to give up the use of those communicative means that would make them palatable to a larger public.”³² Thus, critical, negative literature must sacrifice its connection to a mass audience and, as Pauline Johnson states, “it is left to the philosopher-critic to expose this transfiguring, subversive relation.”³³

The two theories sketched above also greatly affected the relationship between literature and utopia. For Enzensberger, literature was ostracized as a realm of utopia. Not only did utopia as a fictional, non-existent world have no place in his factual, political documentary literature, but the possibility of a real existing utopia in the form of dramatic social change was to take place through political action induced by though ultimately external to literature. For Adorno, literature did contain a utopian element, though only in its depiction of “the absolute negativity of the world,” cordoned off from the larger public and relegated to the interpretive skills of the philosopher critic.³⁴ Thus, as literary theory in the sixties oscillated between critical negativity and direct politicization, utopia was either expelled from literature altogether or made the sole province of literature necessarily divorced from and inaccessible to the public. In the following decade, however, all of this was challenged. Literature became at once the site of emancipatory potential that challenged the preconceptions and the accepted reality of its readers and the space of utopian possibility.

³² Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 344.

³³ Pauline Johnson, “An Aesthetics of Negativity/An Aesthetics of Reception: Jauss’s Dispute with Adorno,” *New German Critique*, No. 42 (Autumn, 1987), pp. 51-70, p. 58.

³⁴ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 48.

Before turning to the theoretical reevaluation of literature and utopia, we must first assess the changing relationship between audience and literature.

In the wake of sixties, new aesthetic theories came to the fore that were very much a product of this decade and attempted not only to fill the void left after Adorno's death, but in many ways argue against the radical negativity he attributes to the realm of art and literature. Predominant among the aesthetic theories to really take hold around this time was reception, or reader-response theory as popularized by the Constance School, namely Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauß. Reception Theory begins already in 1967 with Jauß's inaugural address at the University of Constance titled, "Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft," which was published in 1969/70 with a collection of essays. The language in the title alone is testament to the radical nature of Jauß's undertaking. Further, Robert Holub ties the emergence of Reception Theory to the larger societal upheaval of the 1960s:

In fact, the University of Constance, where both Iser and Jauß taught beginning in the late sixties, was founded at the time as an alternative to the rigid, restrictive system of higher education at most German universities. [...] With student protests demanding a total restructuring and rethinking of institutional standards and the emergence of a generation of young scholars willing to undertake such sweeping reforms [...] several alternative methods became popular. [...] This was the intellectual climate into which reception theory was born, and when the birth occurred, it was not quietly announced in the appropriate section of the local newspaper, but brashly proclaimed on the front page in bold headlines.³⁵

While the radicalness and novelty of this literary/aesthetic theory was challenged by many abroad, including Paul de Man and Stanley Fish, in West Germany the announcement of this "provocative" method was explosive. In fact, as Holub notes: "Just a decade after Jauß' address, Gunter Grimm was able to cite over four hundred entries in one section of a

³⁵ Holub, *Crossing Borders: Reception Theory, Poststructuralism, Deconstruction* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), p. 8.

bibliography.”³⁶ Though (post)structuralism was able to find a slight toehold in Germany in the 1970s through such theorists as Manfred Frank and Peter Szondi, it was the Constance School and reception theory that largely dominated the theoretical/aesthetic discourse.

Jauß, as Pauline Johnson argues, claimed to have developed an “account of art as an emancipatory force in modernity. According to Jauss [sic], Adorno’s inability to construct an account of the democratic, radicalizing impact of art comes from his typically Platonic preoccupation with the specific truth value of the aesthetic object and his neglect of the emancipatory possibilities embedded in a primary aesthetic experience.”³⁷ While Iser was initially influenced by Adorno’s theory of aesthetic negativity, he too departed from Adorno’s model. “In the attempt to make literature politically relevant,” Winfried Fluck states regarding Iser’s work, “the student movement had initially revived critical theory and its project of a ‘negative aesthetics,’ but had eventually watered it down to a form of explicit political criticism that would leave only a choice between ‘affirmation’ or ‘negation’ as possible functions of literature.”³⁸ In contrast to this affirmative negativity and to Jauß’s concept of aesthetic experience, Iser sought to resuscitate a concept of literary negativity that points to something that is absent and thereby “transform the search for distance from a figure of self-defense to a source of creative self-extension.”³⁹ In this way, Iser’s and Jauß’s reception/reader response theories provided a new role for literature as a means of producing potentially emancipatory aesthetic experiences that does not have to abandon “every

³⁶ Ibid., p. 4

³⁷ Johnson, “An Aesthetics of Negativity/An Aesthetics of Reception: Jauss’s Dispute with Adorno,” *New German Critique*, No. 42 (Autumn, 1987), pp. 51-70, p. 51-52.

³⁸ Fluck, “The Search for Distance: Negation and Negativity in Wolfgang Iser’s Literary Theory,” *New Literary History*, 31:1 (Winter, 2000), pp. 175-210, p. 186-187.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 187.

commitment to the world,” to speak with Adorno.⁴⁰

Reception theory, as the name aptly suggests, deals with reader or the audience in contrast to the author and the production of the work. Jauß clearly defines his approach in comparison to both Marxist and Russian formalist literary theory. His goal is, however, not too different from the latter, but his method is what sets them apart. Jauß seeks to bridge the gap between literature and history, as well as between historic and aesthetic awareness (*Erkenntnis*) without limiting his approach to either an aesthetic of production or representation (*Produktions-und Darstellungsästhetik*).⁴¹ Rather, he wants to include what he feels the others have left out or ignored:

Leser, Zuhörer, und Zuschauer, kurzum: der Faktor des Publikums spielt in beiden Literaturtheorien eine äußerst beschränkte Rolle. Die orthodoxe Ästhetik des Marxismus behandelt den Leser - wenn überhaupt - nicht anders als den Autor: sie fragt nach seiner sozialen Stellung, oder sie sucht ihn in der Schichtung einer dargestellten Gesellschaft widerzuerkennen. Die formalistische Schule benötigt den Leser nur als wahrnehmendes Subjekt, das, den Anweisungen des Textes folgend, die Unterscheidung der Form oder die Aufdeckung des Verfahrens zu leisten hat. Sie mutet dem Leser das theoretische Verständnis des Philologen zu [...].⁴²

The focus on the reader as promoted by Jauß is by no means merely a passive act on the part of the recipient nor does it limit literary theory to only the text and audience. Rather, reception theory posits the active role of the reader and constellates author, work, and history (the history of the work as well as the history of the reader and his knowledge of the canon):

Das geschichtliche Leben des literarischen Werks ist ohne den aktiven Anteil seines Adressanten nicht denkbar. Denn erst durch seine Vermittlung tritt das Werk in den sich wandenden *Erfahrungshorizont* einer Kontinuität, in der sich die ständige Umsetzung von einfacher Aufnahme in kritisches Verstehen, von passiver in aktive Rezeption, von anerkannten ästhetischen Normen in neue, sie übersteigende Produktion vollzieht. [...] Die ästhetische Implikation liegt darin, dass schon die

⁴⁰ Adorno, “Commitment,” in *Aesthetics and Politics* (New York: Verso, 1977), pp. 177-195, p. 191.

⁴¹ Jauß, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 168.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 168.

primäre Aufnahme eines Werkes durch den Leser eine *Erprobung* des ästhetischen Wertes im Vergleich mit schon gelesenen Werken einschließt.⁴³ (169-170, my italics)

This is not only a productive act, but entails involvement from the reader in the aesthetic act through investigating and probing the aesthetic landscape. What this amounts to is a sort of dialogue with the reader, which expands the horizon of experience as well the horizon of expectation.

Reception theory, moreover, posits a socially productive act bolstered by the aforementioned aesthetically productive act. “Such an account of literary development would, according to Jauß, be completed by investigating one further aspect of the whole process, the effect that literary works may have on society, via their aesthetic form,” Margot Zutshi contends.⁴⁴ This assumes, as Jauß admits, as certain untimely quality of the work.

That is, the public for which the work is intended is not yet present, but anticipated by it:

Die Soziologie der Literatur sieht ihren Gegenstand nicht dialektisch genug, wenn sie den Kreis von Schriftsteller, Werk und Publikum so einseitig determiniert. Die Determination ist umkehrbar: es gibt Werke, die im Augenblick ihres Erscheinens noch auf kein spezifisches Publikum zu beziehen sind, sondern den vertrauten Horizont literarischer Erwartungen so völlig durchbrechen, dass ein Publikum für sie erst allmählich heranbilden kann.⁴⁵

The work of literature is not locked within its hermetically sealed historical time, simply reflecting in a vulgar Marxist sense production relationships and societal conditions, but rather breaks out of this constraint and produces the audience for which it is intended.

Reception Theory thus allocates an active role both to the reader and to the work in its relation to society and the ability to change the latter.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 169-170, my italics.

⁴⁴ Zutshi, *Literary theory in Germany: A Study of Genre and Evaluation Theories 1945-1965* (Las Vegas: P. Lang, 1981), p. 99.

⁴⁵ Jauß, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation*, p. 180.

Wolfgang Iser, perhaps the most internationally well-known member of the Constance School, echoes Jauß's commitment to the reader and the work as a socially productive relationship. In one of his earliest and most influential works, *The Implied Reader* (*Der implizite Leser*) [1972], Iser establishes a similar link between the active reader, the work, and both social and historical conditions:

Normen sind gesellschaftliche Regulative, deren Transponierung in den Roman zunächst ihre Entpragmatisierung zur Folge hat. Sie rücken in einen neuen Kontext ein, der insofern ihre Funktion verändert, als sie nun nicht mehr – wie im gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhang – als Regulative wirken, sondern selbst thematisch werden.⁴⁶

Iser grants a certain amount of reflection in relation to societal norms in the novel, but at the same time, holds that this reflection already alters said norms. That they no longer contain the same regulative function as before is due to both their aestheticization and, moreover, the response of the reader.⁴⁷ The negation of the societal norms contains a positive in which the reader goes beyond his trusted, socially implemented bounds:

Diese Negation aber hat einen imperativischen Charakter; sie fordert dazu auf, das "Positive" anderswo als im Umkreis des unmittelbar Vertrauten zu suchen. Diese implizite Aufforderung der negation ergeht natürlich zunächst an den, für den die negierten Normen das Vertraute sind. Das aber ist der Leser des Romans, dessen Aktivität insoweit beansprucht wird, als er die vom bekannten Horizont sich abkehrende Zielrichtung des Romans als dessen Sinn konstituieren muss.⁴⁸

The reader takes active part in the construction of meaning, in recognizing the intention of the novel as demanding one to go beyond socially regulative norms; pushing the envelope, so

⁴⁶ Iser, *Der implizite Leser* (München: Fink, 1972), p. 8.

⁴⁷ In contrast to Jauß, whose literary theory is based on the reception of the work, it is possible to speak of Iser's as a reader response theory, one interested not so much in gauging the value of the work on its reception, but by the response (*Wirkung*) it induces. This shift from reception to response is partially what made him more palatable to international scholars (primarily American), as it was seen as having an affinity to New Criticism with its emphasis on meaning and production of meaning and away from significance on a sociological and historical level. See Holub, *Crossing Borders*, pp. 17-18.

⁴⁸ Iser, *Der implizite Leser*, p. 8

to speak, of what is expected and allowed and therefore changing and challenging both the reader and society itself. Reading, for Iser, this becomes a form of discovery and of uncovering meaning. This is the basis of his aesthetic theory and this act of discovery, moreover, brings a sense of enjoyment:

Immerhin ließe sich sagen, dass Entdeckung eine Kategorie ästhetischen Vergnügens darstellt. Denn sie bietet zwei elementare Chancen: mündet der Akt der Sinnkonstitution in eine Entdeckung, so ist durch diese zugleich ein Freiheitsgrad gewährt, sich [...] von dem zu lösen, der man ist, bzw. das zu übersteigen, woran man im sozialen Leben gebunden bleibt. Darüber hinaus aber beansprucht die Entdeckung unsere Vergnügen, ja vielleicht immer mehrere zugleich, in der Regel die emotionalen und die kognitiven. (9)

The aesthetic pleasure of discovery safeguards a degree of freedom in overstepping boundaries, of becoming more than what is socially demanded of the reader and this entails a further emotional as well as cognitive element. Iser's response theory, as with Jauß, views the work on an aesthetic level, but one that is neither divorced from the active reading subject nor its larger social implications. Though Iser's "implied reader" postulates an "ideal reader," both in the sense of the author's ideal as well as Iser's, the important aspect to keep in mind for both Jauß and Iser, is the return to literature as form.⁴⁹ That is, it is not by virtue of its politicization that literature can bring about a social effect, but rather in the awareness of the force of literature itself as a space of experimentation and discovery.

As Jauß's and Iser's reception/response theories challenged the relationship between literature, audience, and societal positing the productive force of literature and the aesthetic realm, others emerged in the wake of the student movement proposing a new relationship between literature and utopia. The 1970s are, to be sure, hardly known as a utopian decade. A survey of the scholarly landscape, indeed, results in the overall impression that utopia did not

⁴⁹ Holub, *Crossing Borders*, p. 15.

survive the downfall of the student movement.⁵⁰ The void in post-1968 utopian literature and theory in current research is all the more surprising when compared to the ubiquity of utopian thinking during the following decade. In 1973, the same year in which New Subjectivity is said to begin, Karl Heinz Bohrer published *Der Lauf des Freitag: Die lädierte Utopie und die Dichter*. In this work Bohrer definitively states:

Aber: Es gibt noch Utopien. Nur nicht mehr in der Form von Entwürfen, nicht mehr als Metaphysik, nicht mehr im System, nicht mehr als Ansprache an die philosophischen Geister der Nation. Die Schlächtereien haben die große Festung namens Utopie zerstört, aber über Nacht entstanden Widerstandsnester, zerstreut, weniger prächtig bestückt und von weniger Überlebenden gehört. In ihnen sitzen keine Philosophen mehr, die Brücken schlagen, sondern Poeten, die wagen, über das Eis zu reiten.⁵¹

In Bohrer's account, not only does literature reappear in the seventies, but it becomes the exclusive realm, not philosophy, in which utopia reemerges. According to Bohrer, the literature of the 1970s, whether aware or not, is tied to Friedrich Schiller's concept of the "ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen:" "Die Utopie, die sich entwickeln wird zur ästhetischen Utopie, fungiert stellvertretend für alle anderen Sektionen menschlicher Bedürfnisse."⁵² For Bohrer, as for Schiller, it is within the aesthetic realm, in general, and literature, in particular, that utopia is not only expressed, but realized through its very literarization, taking part in the shaping and molding of society.⁵³

⁵⁰ See for example Ingeborg Gerlach, *Abschied der Revolte: Studien zur deutschsprachigen Literatur der siebziger Jahre* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1994). Works focusing on German utopian literature after 1945 such as Götz Müller's *Gegenwelten: Die Utopie in der deutschen Literatur* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche, 1989) and Joanna Jablkowska's *Literatur ohne Hoffnung: Die Krise der Utopie in der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur* (Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitäts-Verlag, 1993) noticeably lack anything from the 1970s in their treatments of individual works and authors.

⁵¹ Bohrer, *Der Lauf des Freitag* (München: Hanser, 1973), p. 10.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁵³ Bohrer is referencing the last letter in Schiller's *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* [1795] in which he writes: "Hier also in dem Reiche des schönen Scheins wird das Ideal der Gleichheit erfüllt, welches der Schwärmer so gern auch dem Wesen nach realisiert sehen möchte." See: Friedrich Schiller, *Über die*

Two years after the publication of Bohrer's treatise, another work appeared that challenges the notion of the end of utopia in the seventies. In 1975, the third volume of the newly-founded *Literaturmagazin* was published titled "Die Phantasie an die Macht: Literatur als Utopie."⁵⁴ The slogan "all power to the imagination," graffitied on walls and proclaimed in protest banners across Western Europe and the United States during the 1960s, is teleported into the seventies, a specter of the student movement. At the same time, this motto appears to reach back and resurrect the energies of the recent past, the subtitle points to something quite different. In other words, the title of this volume alone asserts that the utopian aspirations of the student movement moved into literature. Moreover, it proclaims, as does Bohrer, literature itself as utopia. The editor of this volume was Nicolas Born and in the introduction he outlines the idea of literature and utopia. Born sums up the status of literature following the student movement thusly:

Funktionalität und Effizienz haben sich als Werte im wirtschaftlichen Moloch verselbständigt. Auch ein Teil der Literatur (ich denke an gefriergetrocknete Realismen, [...] an Agitprop und an einige besonders sklavisches Dokumentarliteraturen) hat sich von kritischen Außensteuerern auf Funktion reduzieren lassen. Dabei muß sie ihre ureigenste, aus gutem Grund unausgesprochene Funktion verlieren, nämlich den sowohl zerstörischen wie auch aufbauenden, auf jeden Fall aber erschütternden Zusammenprall der Imagination mit dem Faktischen darzustellen bzw. dieser Zusammenprall selber zu sein.⁵⁵

For Born, the reduction of literature to functionality and efficiency as witnessed by the shifts from realism to documentary literature, championed as literature's only mode of

ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2000), p. 123. Bohrer's assessment mirrors, moreover, later theories of utopia, primarily Darko Suvin's, which posit utopia first and foremost as a literary enterprise. See Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, p. 39.

⁵⁴ *Literaturmagazin 3. Die Phantasie an die Macht: Literatur als Utopie*, Nicolas Born, ed. (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1975). *Literaturmagazin* was first published in 1973 and consists of various essay, prose and poetry contributions. Aside from Nicolas Born, Hans Christoph Buch, Jürgen Theobaldy and Hermann Peter Piwitt were editors of the publication in the 1970s. *Literaturmagazin* ceased publication in 2001.

⁵⁵ Born, "Vorbermerkung," in *Literaturmagazin 3. "Die Phantasie an die Macht: Literatur als Utopie"*, ed. Nicolas Born (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1975), pp. 9-12, p. 9-10.

politicization by Enzensberger, results in the loss of its function, namely as a utopian space of contradiction and dialectical collisions.⁵⁶ The literature Born describes simply mirrors what he terms elsewhere the “Wahnsystem Realität” that is founded on “der Verzicht auf Widersprüche und das Verbot von Widerspruch.”⁵⁷ To be sure, Born admits that a return to a utopia that is the good or best place, is, in a sense, impossible:

Die Utopie ist zerplatzt wie eine Panoramascheibe. Sie ist imperialistisch geworden, hat sich in raubende und mordende Armeen verwandelt. [...] In den Scherben der zerplatzten Utopie erkennen wir unsere eigene Zersplitterung. Im Schweiß unserer Angesichter sammeln wir sie auf und wickeln sie ein in die eigene Haut.⁵⁸

As with Bohrer, Born is aware that utopia has been carried out in the name of imperialism and on the backs of armies, it has led to slaughters. But this downfall is the very precondition for the renewal of utopian literature. “Wo ist der harte Kern der Imagination,” Born asks, “Wo liegen die inneren Kontinente? (Ich meine in diesem Fall nicht ‘Flucht in die Innerlichkeit.’)”⁵⁹ Born is not after New Subjectivity or New Inwardness, but rather a new utopian literature that does not take part in the imperialism of external or internal reality. In Born’s assessment, this utopian literature acts counter to the utopia carried out in deed. It is the space of contradiction and conflict between the imagination and the factual that shows

⁵⁶ See Enzensberger, “Gemeinplätze, die Neueste Literatur betreffend,” pp. 187-197.

⁵⁷ Born, “Ist die Literatur auf die Misere abonniert? Bemerkungen zu Gesellschaftskritik und Utopie in der Literatur,” *Die Welt der Maschine: Aufsätze und Reden*, ed. Rolf Haufs (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1980), pp. 47-54, p. 52; Born, “Vorbermerkung”, p. 12.

⁵⁸ Born, “Vorbermerkung”, p. 10.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.11.

this reality for what it really is and creates a literary realm counter to it.⁶⁰

The theoretical outline sketched above is not necessarily meant as a road map suggesting that this dissertation culminates in Iser, Jauß, or Bohrer. Rather, it is a brief history of theory's reassessment of the role of literature as well as its connection to utopia as an aesthetic concern. It demonstrates the ways in which literature and theory after sixty-eight were thinking the same problem, namely the fate of the idea of utopia. The utopian literature of the 1970s arose alongside a reevaluation and reassessment of the function of literature in the wake of the student movement and after the death of Adorno. In this way, my work echoes Judith Ryan's recent book *The Novel After Theory* in which she argues, albeit within the realm of French postmodern literature, "In the last third of the twentieth century [...], an entire array of novels had appeared that might be said to 'know about' literary and cultural theory."⁶¹ The revitalization of literary theory during this period is thus evidence as well of the return of literature and, moreover, of the literary utopia. Aesthetic theory that had once placed literature in the sole service of the political and resigned to realism and documentary, on the one hand, and Adorno's critical negativity that removed it from the realm of a committed political stance, on the other hand, began to query and offer new models of what literature is and can do. For Hans Robert Jauß and Wolfgang Iser, literature plays a crucial

⁶⁰ See for example Born, "Das Auge des Entdeckers," an afterward to the poetry collection *Das Auge des Entdeckers* [1972], *Die Welt der Maschine*, p. 86. It is worthwhile noting the similarity between Born's assessment and the Critical Theory of Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse. Peter Stein summarizes the differences, however, as follows: "So wird von Marcuse das Konstrukt der Eindimensionalität und Repressivität übernommen, nicht aber die Hoffnung auf konkrete Befreiung durch neue revolutionäre Subjekte. Von Adorno übernimmt Born die Konstatierung des universalen Verblendungszusammenhangs einer kulturindustriellen Welt sowie die Kritik an der instrumentellen Vernunft, nicht aber das Insistieren auf die Widerstandskraft erkenntniskritischer Philosophie [...]." Stein, "Nicolas Born und die 'Neue Subjektivität'—ein Misverständnis? Zu einigen Widersprüchen in der Rezeption und im Werk Nicolas Borns," *Nicolas Born und die politische Literatur, 1967-1982*, Sven Kramer and Martin Schierbaum, eds. (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2010), pp. 75-85, p. 82.

⁶¹ Ryan, *The Novel After Theory* (New York: Columbia UP, 2012), p. 1.

role in aesthetic experience that challenges the reader's worldview, contains an emancipatory potential, and fosters creative experimentation and self-discovery. At the same time, Bohrer and Born propose a fundamental relationship between literature and utopia. For Bohrer, literature during the seventies reflects a change in the concept of utopia that places it back again in the realm of literature from whence it originally emerged. Further, as the title to the 1975 volume of *Literaturmagazin* suggests and Born's introduction confirms, literature after sixty-eight strove to become a space of utopia, a realm in which the contradictions and conflicts of reality are not falsely reconciled, but rather find their place.

As both Bohrer and Born suggest, this utopian literature no longer portrays the best of all possible places—a totality at it were—but is rather a critical literary space of contradiction and contestation. As W. Martin Lüdke argues at the end of the decade: “Die Barrikaden der Studentenbewegung haben [...] die Straße versperrt, aber einen Weg eröffnet. Sie haben, anders gesagt, den utopischen Horizont wieder aufgerissen.”⁶² That utopian literature of the seventies has been largely overlooked or ruled out of literary history as nonexistent is not the result of an actual void, but rather the product of a series of redefinitions of literature, utopia, and utopian literature. Moreover, as these theories were determining a new role for literature, literature that itself theorizes fell to the wayside. That is, the utopian horizon torn open in the 1960s brought forth both new aesthetic theories as well as new literatures that not only engage with, but also do theory. Two places to begin reassessing this utopian legacy are two unlikely kindred spirits, literary spaces that seemingly have nothing in common. Upon closer inspection, we will begin to see how West German postcolonial literature and science-fiction were, in fact, prime venues to work through and theorize utopia as other literary spaces.

⁶² W. Martin Lüdke, “Bilder des Glücks oder Die Frage nach dem Verlust der Utopie,” in *Nach dem Protest: Literatur im Umbruch*, W. Martin Lüdke, ed. (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1979), pp. 185-196, p. 186.

The Utopian Horizon: Postcolonialism and Science Fiction

As I demonstrated in Dieter Kühn's *Und der Sultan von Oman* and outlined above, literature and theory in the seventies underwent dramatic changes that challenge the way we view this decade as well as the legacy of 1968. In the 1970s, both postcolonialism and science fiction, as with the new aesthetic theories of Jauß, Iser, Bohrer, and Born, were burgeoning literary terrains just beginning to come into their own and provide a different dimension to the literary and intellectual history of the seventies as one mired in a private, albeit political subjectivity. This dissertation maintains that the utopias of the seventies were principally concerned with other worlds, spaces of alterity to Germany and Western Europe, and this in turn is reflected in the terrain so common to postcolonialism and science fiction. Moreover, both genres represent the shift from a concept of utopia as the good or perfect place to a literary space of contradiction. In a word, these utopias are non-places.

There are, to be sure, socio-cultural precedents for the emergence of these new genres. In comparison to the previous decade, the 1970s witnessed a boom in international travel. As Ulla Biernat notes, by 1973 West Germany had not only surpassed the USA in travel spending, but the places travelled to were further away.⁶³ Where in 1968 travel destinations were mainly Scandinavia, Great Britain and the Mediterranean, by the 1970s this had mushroomed to include Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.⁶⁴ At the same time this

⁶³ Ulla Biernat, *Ich bin nicht der erste Fremde hier: Zur deutschsprachigen Reiseliteratur nach 1945* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004), pp. 68, 99.

⁶⁴ Ibid. Paul Michael Lützeler also stresses this in *Bürgerkrieg Global: Menschenrechtsethos und deutschsprachiger Gegenwartsroman* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2009), p. 28.

increased travel brought Germans into contact with other worlds, advances in space flight and explorations of outer space also reached a new stage in this decade. In 1969, the U.S. became the first nation to land on the moon and in the following decade would launch satellites further into the outer reaches of space. Further, in 1975 U.S. together with the Soviet Union established and met aboard the first space station. Thus, on two fronts the 1970s were a time of space exploration, both terrestrial and extraterrestrial. Postcolonialism and science fiction take part in this increased spatial awareness as representatives of a literature of spatial alterity. At first glance, as Gerald Gaylard notes, while these two genres “might appear to be worlds apart” they indeed center on the same issues: “the two terms are related because both are centrally concerned with issues of travel, migration, alterity, other cultures, colonization, empire, power and alternatives to imperialism.”⁶⁵ Postcolonial and science-fiction literature of the 1970s thus reflect both the history of this decade as one of spatial expansion and exploration as well as the continued military, scientific, and economic imperialism that go hand in hand with it.

The rise of these two genres in the seventies is indicative of a new interest and examination of space. As Arlene Teraoka points out, during the West German seventies, literature began to shift its focus from time to space.⁶⁶ This literary move was echoed as well in new theoretical approaches, most notably by the French Marxist theorist Henri Lefebvre. In 1974, Lefebvre published *The Production of Space*, which, he states, is “concerned with logico-epistemological space, the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory

⁶⁵ Gaylard, “Postcolonial Science Fiction: The Desert Planet,” in *Science Fiction, Imperialism and the Third World: Essays on Postcolonial Literature and Film*, Ericka Hoagland and Reema Sarwal, eds. (Jefferson: McFarland, 2010), pp. 21-36, p. 22.

⁶⁶ Arlene Teraoka, *East, West, and Others: The Third World in Postwar German Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), pp. 41-42.

phenomena, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and utopias.”⁶⁷ For Lefebvre, the dictates of a “science of space” founded on an ideology of “disinterested knowledge” both carves out and divides space “*in order* to control it,” much as Said describes the process of the colonial control of space and maps quoted above.⁶⁸

Lefebvre proposes three types of space that provide possible alternatives to this spatial hegemony: 1) spatial practice, which includes “production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation;” 2) representations of space, which is the “conceptualized space [of] scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers;” and 3) representational spaces that “embody[] complex symbolism’s” and are linked to “art (which may come to be defined less as a code of space than as a code of representational spaces.”⁶⁹ What is of concern for this project is the last register of space, the representational spaces of art and literature. The representational space of literature, to be sure, contains elements of the other two; it is founded on the “‘real,’ material” spaces of spatial practice as well as the conceptualized knowledge of these spaces.⁷⁰ It is within the representational space of literature that, as Lefebvre argues, the alternatives to a scientific, epistemological spatial hegemony arise; those “conceptions of space that tend to form in dreams, in imaginings, in utopias or in science fiction.”⁷¹ In short, it is within the space of literature that, to speak with Edward Soja,

⁶⁷ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, David Nicholson-Smith, trans. (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1991), pp. 11-12.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 9, 321.

⁶⁹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 33, 39.

⁷⁰ See Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1996), p. 6, 10.

⁷¹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 357.

a “critical spatial awareness takes place.”⁷² The postcolonial and science fiction literatures of the seventies are precisely such spaces. In Lefebvre’s terms, they are indicative of an effort to describe space and “aspire to do more than describe,” to create a representational space.⁷³ These works not only reflect and critique the epistemological foundations and control of space, but in so doing create the utopian space of literature.

As with the core topic of this dissertation—utopia—both postcolonialism and science fiction do not traditionally find themselves on the literary map of the West German 1970s. Again, this can be attributed to their status as outsiders within the general literary scholarship on this decade that is principally dedicated, somewhat myopically, to New Subjectivity. Let us begin with postcolonialism. Indeed, to speak of a postcolonial German literature is in many ways complicated and has only begun to develop in recent years. “In the strictest sense of the term,” Sara Lennox asserts, “Germany is not rich in postcolonial literature, and that is a consequence of its brief colonial history.”⁷⁴ Though Germany’s colonial projects were not as extensive as their Western European neighbors’, they were nonetheless very real. Paul Michael Lützeler, in his study on the Third World and postcolonialism in German literature, emphasizes Germany’s colonial aspirations from the time of Bismarck and the “scramble for Africa” to Hitler’s own colonial politics to regain lands in Eastern Europe.⁷⁵ Further, he

⁷² Soja, *Thirdspace*, p. 10.

⁷³ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 39.

⁷⁴ Lennox, “Postcolonial writing in Germany,” in *The Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature*, vol. 1, Ato Quayson, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011), pp. 620-648, p. 620.

⁷⁵ Paul Michael Lützeler, “Postkolonialer Diskurs und deutsche Literatur,” in *Schriftsteller und „Dritte Welt“: Studien zum postkolonialen Blick*, Paul Michael Lützeler, ed. (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1998), pp. 7-30, pp. 22ff. In the introduction to their edited volume, Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Susanne Zantop also document Germany’s “actual” colonial history. *The Imperialist Imagination*, Friedrichsmeyer, Lennox, and Zantop, eds. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 7-18. Similarly, Michael Perraudin and Jürgen Zimmerer’s recent volume *German Colonialism and National Identity* deals with, as they state in their introduction, “Germany’s biased and troubled relationship with its colonial future, present and past over a

traces the development of what can be termed German postcolonialism back to the 1960s:

In der Studentenbewegung wurde aber nicht nur die kolonialistische und faschistische Vergangenheit zu bewältigen versucht; man entwickelte – ganz im Sinne dessen, was man ein Vierteljahrhundert später das postkoloniale Projekt nennen wird – auch ein Gespür für neo-kolonialistische Zwänge im Verhältnis zwischen “Dritter” und “Erster Welt.”⁷⁶

Thus, postcolonialism, was only beginning to germinate during the student movement, arrived on the West German literary stage after the sixties. Moreover, in light of Germany’s limited colonial expansion, to compare German postcolonial literature to the larger and richer traditions of the former colonies of France, England, Portugal, and Spain will not bring the discussion much further. As Lennox suggests, however, “it is possible to understand the designation ‘postcolonial literature in Germany’ in a somewhat broader sense than simply writing in German by authors from countries Germany formerly colonized.”⁷⁷ To talk of German postcolonialism is also to speak of an engagement by German authors with postcolonial countries and, moreover, with the colonial legacy of literature. As Lützeler writes:

Im Zentrum des Interesses der postcolonial orientierten Literaturwissenschaft steht aber einerseits nach wie vor die Auseinandersetzung mit der Dichtung des kolonialistischen Zeitalters und andererseits die Diskussion um jene Literatur, in der es um das (neokoloniale oder nach-koloniale) Verhältnis zwischen “Dritter” und “Erster Welt” geht.⁷⁸

Accordingly, my dissertation focuses on the literature of German authors coming out of the student movement who began to write postcolonial literature in the sense of a literature that

century and a half.” *German Colonialism and National Identity*, Michael Perraudin and Jürgen Zimmerer, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 2.

⁷⁶ Lützeler, “Postkolonialer Diskurs und deutsche Literatur,” p. 27.

⁷⁷ Lennox, “Postcolonial writing in Germany,” p. 621.

⁷⁸ Lützeler, “Postkolonialer Diskurs und deutsche Literatur,” p. 17.

interrogates the continued colonial and imperial pursuits of the present.⁷⁹ At the same time, I demonstrate that this critical, postcolonial literature also provides an alternative other world through the utopian literary space of the text. In other words, as a representational space it not only describes these spaces and the colonization thereof, but in doing so creates a literary space of contradiction that is critically aware that it too is part of a larger literary and epistemological colonial history. To speak with Born, where utopia has become imperialistic, only a literature based on spatial contradiction rather than an affirmation can resuscitate literature as utopia.

Just as postcolonialism is an outlier on the literary radar of the seventies, so too is science fiction. Curiously, the publication of German science fiction reached its pinnacle in the 1960s. Manfred Nagl notes in 1972 that at the beginning of 1967, science-fiction literature dominated twenty percent of the “Heftroman- und Taschenbuchgeschäft,” most notable the *Perry Rhodan* series that first appeared in 1961.⁸⁰ Indeed, it was only this series that survived the initial boom and the subsequent shrinkage of science-fiction publications after 1967.⁸¹ Nagl’s analysis of science fiction is, however, symptomatic of the general suspicion harbored against the genre both in the sixties and seventies. For him, science fiction, in general, and German science fiction, in particular, is representative of “die Bagatellisierung und Rechtfertigung von Kriegen, die Entlastung von Kriegsschuld und

⁷⁹ My focus on the contemporary imbrications of the so-called First and Third World in the 1970s thus knowingly excludes other post-colonial literatures in this decade that investigate the colonial past. Works as Uwe Timm’s *Morenga* [1978], which explores the history of Germany’s colony in South-West Africa, and Hans Christoph Buch’s *Die Scheidung von San Domingo: wie die Negersklaven von Haiti Robespierre beim Wort nahmen* [1976], which deals with the Haitian revolution and foundation of an independent Haiti between 1791-1804, while crucial German postcolonial works, do not fit into my investigation of present postcolonialism and the continuation of colonial pursuits.

⁸⁰ Nagl, *Science Fiction in Deutschland* (Tübingen: Tübinger Vereinigung für Volkskunde, 1972), p. 205.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Verantwortung.”⁸² In his comprehensive analysis of German science fiction, Hans-Edwin Friedrich confirms such damning assessments of the genre in the sixties. Science fiction during this time was viewed, especially by the student movement, as a portrayal of “mit faschistischen Zügen ausgestatteten *Superhelden*” that carries on the tradition of imperialism, feudalism, and militarism in service of maintaining the status quo.⁸³ In the 1970s, the attitude toward science fiction slowly began to change. As Friedrich notes, during this decade attempts were made to view science fiction in a critical, positive light; the seventies were a time of “good” science fiction.⁸⁴ Science fiction, he argues, was presented as providing “Alternativen zum Gegebenen in einer raumunabhängigen möglichen Situation.”⁸⁵ Three harbingers of the potential of science fiction were Dieter Wellershoff, Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt.

In 1969, Wellershoff develops concept of literature taken from space travel that, like Jauß, Iser, Bohrer, and Born, challenges the pure functionality and politicization of literature. “Ich möchte deshalb einen Begriff vorschlagen,” he asserts, “der den scheinbaren Widerspruch von autonomer und realitätsbezogener Literatur in einen funktionalen Zusammenhang umdeutet: Literatur ist in meinem Verständnis eine Simulationstechnik.”⁸⁶ Like simulating weightlessness or lunar terrains for astronauts, literature for Wellershoff

ist ein der Lebenspraxis beigeordneter Simulationsraum, Spielfeld für fiktives Handeln, in dem man als Autor und als Leser die Grenzen seiner praktischen

⁸² Ibid., p. 195.

⁸³ Friedrich, *Science Fiction in der deutschsprachigen Literatur: Ein Referat zur Forschung bis 1993* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1995), p. 42.

⁸⁴ Friedrich, *Science Fiction in der deutschsprachigen Literatur*, p. 43.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 44.

⁸⁶ Wellershoff, “Fiktion und Praxis,” in *Literatur und Veränderung: Versuche zu einer Metakritik der Literatur*, (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1969), p. 21.

Erfahrungen und Routinen überschreitet, ohne ein wirkliches Risiko dabei einzugehen. [...] [Die Literatur] macht [dem Leser] das scheinbar Bekannte unvertraut, das Eindeutige vieldeutig, das Unbewußte bewußt und öffnet ihm so neue Erfahrungsmöglichkeiten. Die Simulationstechnik der Literatur erlaubt es ihm, fremde Verhaltens- und Denkweisen in seinen Erfahrungsspielraum mit einzubeziehen, also weniger borniert zu sein, und in bezug auf den gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhang weniger normenkonform.⁸⁷

Literature as science fiction is not only simulation, but represents what Darko Suvin later terms the “cognitively estranged,” that with which one is both familiar and unfamiliar.⁸⁸

Moreover, it brings the conflicts and contradictions of reality to the fore and presents new and different ways of thinking about and dealing with them. Similarly, in *Public Sphere and Experience* [1972] Negt and Kluge address the potential of science fiction to critique rather than merely confirm the status quo. They state:

Tatsächlich vermag gerade dieses Genre auf die Erfahrungsweise der im Arbeits- und Sozialisationsprozeß zurückgedrängten Phantasie zu realisieren. Nur soweit sich dieser Science-Fiction-Film wiederum von der Phantasie-, Traum-, Angst-, Wunscherfahrung loslöst und anfängt ‘zu spinnen’ oder sich technologisch verselbständigt, stößt er an seine Grenzen.⁸⁹

For Negt and Kluge, science fiction is directly related to the repressed fantasies that occur in the process of labor and socialization and only when it digresses from this does it cease to be critical. Thus, where science fiction in the sixties was deemed conformist, at best, and fascist, at worst, in the 1970s it began to gain a critical currency. Though science fiction was no longer taboo, it was nevertheless just beginning to emerge from its popular, serialized form into the realm of “serious” literature. My dissertation focuses on two instantiations of this new, “good” or “serious” science fiction in the seventies. Like postcolonialism, I argue that

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 22-23.

⁸⁸ Suvin *The Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, p. 4.

⁸⁹ Negt and Kluge, *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung: Zur Organisationsanalyse von bürgerlicher und proletarischer Öffentlichkeit*, in *Der unterschätzte Mensch. Gemeinsame Philosophie in zwei Bänden, Band I* (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 2001), p. 466, footnote 11.

science-fiction literature deals primarily with other worlds as spaces of alterity that, while projecting economic and imperial expansion into the future and outer space, is founded on the contradictions between this world and other worlds. In this respect, the other, representational space of postcolonialism literature becomes a relative of the outer space of science fiction.

This investigation of postcolonial and science-fiction literature is not designed to provide an all-inclusive, definitive account of utopia in the seventies. By delving into the mostly unexplored realm of these literatures in the seventies, however, I demonstrate that utopia was not a fated endeavor after 1968, but rather underwent a paradigm shift that leaves much ground to be covered. Utopia as a really existing other world *in literature* is in both instances exposed as a colonial, imperial project that is invested in appropriating and exploiting other worlds. Rather the postcolonial and science-fiction literatures of the seventies return to the origins of utopia as a literary endeavor that recognizes and displays the contradiction that in knowing and writing about other worlds, they are taking part in their construction. That is, the ambiguity of utopia, as the no-place (“ou-topia”) and the good place (“eu-topia”), is reestablished in the utopian literature of the 1970s as a space of contradiction.⁹⁰ Postcolonialism and science-fiction are representations of spatial alterity, literature as utopia.

This dissertation is divided into two sections, the first on postcolonialism and the second on science fiction. These two parts not only share a concern with both spaces of alterity and knowledge of these spaces, but are also related dialectically as a pair of engagements with the idea of utopia. The first section on postcolonialism centers on

⁹⁰ See Frank E. and Fritz P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1979), p. 1; Louis Marin, *Utopics*, pp. xv-xvi.

empirical, self-reflexive epistemologies that draw the limits of knowledge about other worlds. Here, postcolonial critique of the knowledge and aesthetic representation of other worlds is the means to creating the utopian space of the text. The following section on science fiction, by contrast, begins with the utopias of science fiction and ends in a critique of the spaces and knowledges of other worlds. Where postcolonialism engages in an empirical epistemology of space, science fiction imparts a speculative, self-reflexive epistemology to the exploration of imaginary worlds in outer space. In short, part one investigates critique as a means to utopia where part two poses utopia as a means to critique. These two sections are subsequently divided into two chapters that also relate dialectically to one another. The first chapters on postcolonialism and science fiction, respectively, not only establish the parameters of the discussion, but also set the proverbial stage for the second text. That is, my dialectical approach to knowledge and space reflected in the two parts also necessitates a second work within each section that illuminates the other side of this dialectic that one text alone cannot achieve.

The first chapter deals with the epistemological structure underlying the creation of spaces of alterity by journalists in Nicolas Born's *Die Fälschung* [*The Forgery*] [1979]. This chapter demonstrates the paradox of knowing other worlds—that the desires to know and represent other spaces are responsible for creating the very subject of knowledge they seek to describe—and the work of the text in exposing this contradiction. Born's work wrestles with both journalism and photojournalism's creation of knowledge—a prominent constituent of the public sphere—and with it colonial power vis-à-vis reporting on other spaces. I contrast Born's work and his critique of journalism with Hans Magnus Enzensberger's essay "Gemeinplätze, die Neueste Literatur betreffend," his proclaimed death of literature and his

espousal of the documentary and the reportage as political literature. Further, I outline the ways in which Born's novel responds to and elucidates Edward Said's analysis of colonialism in *Orientalism* [1978] and in many ways prefigures Homi Bhabha's reevaluation of Said's work in *The Location of Culture* [1994]. With respect to his incorporation of photography, I bring *Die Fälschung* into dialogue with Susan Sontag's *On Photography* [1977] and Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* [1981] in order to historicize Born's novel and Sontag's theory and to demonstrate the ways in which it anticipates Baudrillard. Born's text exposes the colonial culpability of accumulating journalistic knowledge at any cost and proposes literature as a space of contradiction that is flattened by journalistic explorations of other worlds.

The second chapter continues the investigation of colonial and postcolonial epistemologies in Hubert Fichte and Leonore Mau's *Xango* [1976]. For Fichte, the stakes are the same though his focus is ethnology and the ethnography and their promulgation of knowledge about other worlds. This chapter centers on his travel writings on and Mau's photography of Haiti. Further, I examine Fichte's polemic against Claude Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques* [1955] and bring Fichte's work into dialogue with Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* [1973] as well as Jauß's post-Adornian theories on reader reception and aesthetic experience. Fichte's work establishes a reciprocal relationship between the reader of ethnographies/viewer of ethnographic photography and the other spaces depicted therein and argues for the limits of epistemological constructions. These limits are imposed both by the structure of colonial systems of knowledge as well as the other world that has agency in divulging or restraining knowledge and power. Thus, while Born's work ends with the limits of knowledge and the role of literature, Fichte and Mau's begins

therewith and argues for such limitations as the very precondition for writing about or photographing other worlds. Such an approach imbues this joint work with a reciprocity not to be found in Born's *Die Fälschung*.

In the second half of this project, I shift from postcolonial spaces to outer space and examine two science fiction works. The third chapter looks at epistemologies of the future in Alexander Kluge's *Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang* [*Learning Processes with a Deadly Outcome*] [1973]. In this chapter, I argue that Kluge's science fiction provides a spatial representation of the future of capital as the displaced present of capital. At the same time, I propose reading Kluge's text as an allegory that counters the spatialized future of capital in outer space by representing the spatialized past of its terrestrial ruins. My examination of this work entails reading this work through the lens of Walter Benjamin's *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* [*The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*] [1928], Darko Suvin's *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* [1979], and Seo-Young Chu's recent work on science fiction, *Do Metaphors Dream of Literal Sleep?* [2010]. I examine three spaces of extraterrestrial capital in Kluge's *Lernprozesse*: 1) buildings and outposts; 2) terraformed planets and; 3) spaceships. I demonstrate that as capital moves through outer space each of these spaces of capital produces knowledge of its own allegorical past that it must continually outrun. Kluge's text not only captures these moments, but through both the juxtaposition of the past and future of capital as well as the narratives and images that document its interstellar travels creates a space of contradiction that stages a critique of capital. In this way, the text itself becomes the allegorical other of and the space of alterity to the time and space of capital.

The final chapter of my dissertation deals with the legacy of Marxism after sixty-

eight by examining the anonymous cult writer P.M.'s *Weltgeist Superstar* [1980]. With the waning of the critical importance of Western Marxism, most notably the Frankfurt School, as a theory of revolution and utopia, the status of Marxism in the 1970s was rendered almost untenable. P.M.'s novel interrogates this fate by projecting Marxism and Marx himself into outer space. After sixty-eight, *Weltgeist Superstar* heretically posits Marx as the arbiter of extraterrestrial capital in the service of an extraterrestrial race intent on utilizing the extreme emotional vitality on Earth as an energy source. P.M.'s novel is, on the one hand, an exercise in negotiating literary spaces and epistemologies. It is at once an epistolary novel, science fiction, postcolonial, hard-boiled detective fiction, passion play, and classical utopia. On the other hand, as the title suggests, it also interrogates theory, namely the Hegelian legacy of Marxism that is posed as the source of the affirmative, capitalist Marx as well as Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialektik der Aufklärung* [1947]. In *Weltgeist Superstar*, Marx and Marxism have become a commodity of capital in the service of the culture industry that neutralizes the revolutionary potential of Marxism. Similar to the relationship between the chapters on Born and Fichte, where Kluge's science fiction terminates in a critique of the outer spaces of capital, P.M.'s ends with the very impossibility of a sustained Marxist critique of capital that is, at once, the precondition for a renewed utopian literature. In P.M.'s novel, the revolutionary, utopian promises of theory in general and Marxism in particular are proclaimed dead. At the same time, however, the death of Marxism and the survival of capital secure, in contrast to Kluge's text, literature as a critical, self-reflexive space in which utopia survives.

Thus, this dissertation comes full circle in that the postcolonial critique as a means to utopia and the utopia of science fiction as a means to critique culminate in each case with the

espousal of the medium of literature as an aestheticization of utopian spaces of alterity. The idea of utopia survives the downfall of the student movement in a literature that is capable of both responding to and doing theory. This is the idea of utopia as contradiction and paradox that is elucidated through the above texts. Not only does each section establish the dialectic of knowledge and space, the epistemologies that inform and construct the representations of other worlds, but each chapter with the sections dialectically completes the other. These works expose the paradox of utopia in that they are, at every turn, self-aware of their participation in this dialectical creation of other worlds out of the knowledges about them and nevertheless take part in this productive, aesthetic act. While postcolonial and science-fiction literature, to be sure, engage utopia in different ways, either as a means to critique or the result thereof, by placing them side by side this dissertation endeavors to reconstruct the idea of utopia after sixty-eight as a multifaceted investigation of the epistemologies of spaces of alterity.

Chapter 1

Knowing Other Worlds: Wittgenstein's Paradox in Nicolas Born's *Die Fälschung*

Postcolonial Utopia: A Paradox Revealed

During the West German student movement, a great deal of energy was invested in creating other worlds—social utopias to be borne out of revolution. On the streets as well as in literature, the protest movement turned its gaze outward to the revolutions abroad with which they sought solidarity. And yet solidarity in the streets eventually came undone in the revolt's attendant debates and aesthetic practices.¹ As Rudi Dutschke, the charismatic leader of the Berlin-based student movement, claimed in 1967: “Der Begriff der Revolution ist heute auch nur noch international zu begreifen. Es wird keine deutsche Revolution geben. Es wird aber einen weltweiten Prozess der Emanzipation in einem langen Sinne geben. Völker kämpfen schon.”² This call for internationalization is echoed in myriad literary works such as

¹ Cf. Quinn Slobodian, *Foreign Front: Third World Politics in Sixties West Germany* (Durham: Duke UP, 2012). Slobodian's new and groundbreaking historical work sheds much needed light on the actual presence and agency of the Third World in West Germany in the 1960s mostly through international students (from Africa, Asia, and the Americas) and other forms of collaboration that crossed international borders. While this work challenges the notion of a simplistic solidarity with the Third World founded on imagination and projection, I still contend that West German literature at this time nevertheless clung to a naïve solidarity that failed to take into consideration broader historical and geographic differences.

² Rudi Dutschke, *Mein langer Marsch: Reden, Schriften und Tagebücher aus zwanzig Jahren*, eds., Gretchen Dutschke-Klotz, Helmut Gollwitzer and Jürgen Miermeister (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1980), p. 15.

Erich Fried's poetry collection *und Vietnam und* [1966] and Peter Weiss's *Der Gesang vom Lusitanischen Popanz* [1967] and *Viet Nam Diskurs* [1968].³ In his 1968 play, Weiss aims, for example, at nothing short of encapsulating two thousand years of Vietnamese history and the struggle for freedom. Weiss's solidarity rests on his firm belief in Enlightenment principles, his faith in progress through reason and rationality, and the didacticism of his work in presenting universal lessons of exploitation and resistance to be gleaned from the specific historical development of Vietnam.⁴ In spite of its noble intentions, this aesthetico-political solidarity with the revolutions of the so-called Third World so typical of the 1960s effectively collapsed the distinctions between other worlds. The issue of solidarity and the utopian aspiration of a global, collective revolutionary movement in Dutschke's assertion that the movements are essentially the same as well as Weiss's Eurocentric claim to speak for other worlds through the application of Western European Enlightenment ideals flattened all historical, spatial, and ideological specificity and difference.⁵ In both instances, solidarity rested on the universalization and internationalization of knowledge of the other in search of

³ In addition, Third World issues became a main focus of the literary magazine *Kursbuch*, especially in the third volume from 1965 and ninth from 1967, in which Martin Walser claims regarding, "Das ist unser Krieg." Martin Walser, "Praktiker, Weltfremde und Vietnam," *Kursbuch* 9, ed. Hans Magnus Enzensberger (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), p. 171.

⁴ As Arlene Teraoka notes, the full title of the play, *Diskurs über die Vorgeschichte und den Verlauf des lang andauernden Befreiungskrieges in Viet Nam als Beispiel für die Notwendigkeit des bewaffneten Kampfes der Unterdrückten gegen ihre Unterdrücker sowie über die Versuche der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika die Grundlagen der Revolution zu vernichten*, "borrow[s] from and appeal[s] to the Enlightenment tradition, proclaim[ing] that there is a lesson to be demonstrated in the ensuing text." Arlene Teraoka, *East, West, and Others: The Third World in Postwar German Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), p. 42. Teraoka's work discusses at length the issues surrounding the depiction of the Third World in the 1960s through the debates between Peter Weiss and Hans Magnus Enzensberger that took place beginning with the third volume of *Kursbuch* [1965] that was dedicated to the Third World.

⁵ In the "Vorbermerkung" Weiss states: "Wir schildern Figuren in einer Einheit mit dem historischen Prozeß, auch dann, wenn es sich um Entwicklungsstufen handelt, in denen die Betroffenen selbst diese Einheit nicht sehen können." His faith that his all-encompassing undertaking is able to represent that which the Vietnamese are unaware of betrays the idea that they are unable to speak for themselves. Peter Weiss, *Viet Nam Diskurs* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968), p. 5

revolution, a solidarity that effectively spoke in the name of the other in the hope of realizing a utopia that bridged the First and Third Worlds, fusing them into a seamless network.

The matter of international solidarity in the Federal Republic of Germany was, however, not entirely blind to the other. For example, Hans Magnus Enzensberger took such positions to task in his 1965 essay “Europäische Peripherie.”⁶ As the title of his essay suggests, Europe is not the center but rather the periphery of the world. Acts of supposed solidarity such as Weiss’s are indicative of the false view of the centrality of Europe out of which alone solidarity is possible. For Enzensberger such positions are mere posturing. “Alle diese Haltungen,” Enzensberger asserts, “stellen gescheiterte Versuche zur Schau sich mit dem Los der Armen Welt zu solidarisieren. Am wenigsten ernst zu nehmen ist die Attitüde der Liberalen. Sie reduziert das Problem auf eine Frage der Manieren: es handelt sich nicht darum, Armut und Ausbeutung zu beseitigen, sondern darum, den Schein zu wahren.”⁷ Enzensberger’s differentiation is, however, one of bearing rather than method. With Weiss he values an objective aesthetic that claims to be able to represent other worlds without subjective bias.⁸ His demand for the rejection of belletristic in favor of “Faktographien,” in the essay “Gemeinplätze, die Neueste Literatur betreffend” mirrors Weiss’s stripped down, objective aesthetic, from his stage directions which correspond to the compass to his wardrobe directives that clothe the Vietnamese and black and the colonial powers in white—

⁶ Hans Magnus Enzensberger, “Europäische Peripherie,” *Deutschland, Deutschland unter anderm. Äußerungen zur Politik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967). First published in *Kursbuch* 2, 1965.

⁷ Hans Magnus Enzensberger, “Europäische Peripherie,” p. 172.

⁸ It should be noted that at the time of writing *Vietnam Diskurs* and “Europäische Peripherie,” neither Weiss nor Enzensberger had visited the countries about which they wrote. Weiss went to Vietnam only after the publication of his work and, as Arlene Teraoka states, was “filled with shame” and reflected on the need to describe all the “sickness, fear, and inner sense of loss” that he experienced there, qualities notably lacking from his play. Teraoka similarly argues that, while Enzensberger did live in Cuba for a year in 1968, “it is doubtful whether he lived the life other than the privileged intellectual.” Teraoka, *East, West and Others*, p. 31, 47.

attempting to literally depict the issue in black and white terms.⁹ Thus, while the two pivotal authors disagree on the issue of solidarity, they are of one mind on the aesthetic depiction of other worlds and the transmission of knowledge about them—through as objective a lens as possible. Moreover, both authors are symptomatic of the dialectic of ignorance and awareness of the limits of speaking about other worlds prevalent during the 1960s.

In the wake of the student revolts and the concomitant push to articulate solidarity, the seventies were dominated, by contrast, by Wittgenstein's paradox: "Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen."¹⁰ Ludwig Wittgenstein's prohibition, which is meant to foreclose any discussion of metaphysics, is a paradoxical proposition in that, as Slavoj Žižek states, it "prohibits something which is already in itself impossible."¹¹ It is a problem of both impossible knowledge as well as ethical representation. How is it possible to know that which is fundamentally different and write about it without concocting the self-serving conditions for its existence? This same paradox extends, however, beyond the realm of metaphysics. As will be argued over the course of this chapter, Wittgenstein's paradox governs the recovery and writing of both utopias and the postcolonial in the 1970s—both of which are attempts to know about and depict other worlds—as a response to and outgrowth of the aesthetic and political debates of the 1960s. Indeed as, Hubert Fichte laments in

⁹ Weiss's use of black clothing for the Vietnamese and Chinese and white for the colonial powers is, to be sure, a critique of colonialism with its simplistic and patriarchal view of natives in need of Western civilization—the colonial powers are the good and the natives the bad. Weiss's "ascetic" approach to his play, however, also strips Vietnam of any "local color." As Teraoka states: "the staging of the play suggests that political alliances can be abandoned or exchanged according to a shift in physical (as a cipher for ideological) viewpoint [...] without regard to differences of race, class, culture, or nationality." Teraoka, *East, West, and Others*, p. 43. See Weiss, *Viet Nam Diskurs*, p. 6. Enzensberger, "Gemeinplätze, die Neueste Literatur betreffend," *Kursbuch* 15, ed. Hans Magnus Enzensberger (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968), pp. 187-197, p. 189-195.

¹⁰ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (New York: Barnes & Nobel, 2003 [1922]), p. 156.

¹¹ Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (New York: Verso, 2012), p. 24.

Xango, his ethnographic travelogue in South America and the Caribbean, were there only a way around the “Wittgenstein’sche[] Schweigen.”¹² Whereas attempts to depict and disseminate knowledge about other worlds in the 1960s ran aground on the shores of colonialist assumptions about knowing the other, the 1970s were a time of heightened critical and aesthetic awareness of the contradictions involved in writing about other worlds. Rather than renouncing and falling silent about that which the first world cannot know, the postcolonial work in the 1970s tackled these contradictions head-on. They exposed the contradictions subtending the debates of the 1960s—the core of which was the myth of the mutual inclusivity of solidarity and objectivity—and in their place argued for the power of the space of literature where paradox became the very condition of possibility of a postcolonial utopia.

The literary link between utopia and postcolonialism was established on a longstanding contradiction. Utopia, the island at the center of Sir Thomas More’s eponymous work, incorporates this contradiction into the very concept. “Outopos, Outopia is a paradoxical, even giddy toponym,” Louis Marin argues, “since as a term it negates with its name the very place it is naming.”¹³ This is not to say, he continues, that utopia is merely a figment of More’s imagination, but rather a “no-place [...] the ‘other’ of any place.”¹⁴ This “other” place is that which lies outside the known and the knowable and is the space examined by West German postcolonial literature of the seventies. For Marin, utopia is “the book in which the book has been deconstructed by showing the processes that constituted

¹² Hubert Fichte, *Xango. Die afroamerikanischen Religionen: Bahia, Haiti, Trinidad II* (Frankfurt a/M: S. Fischer, 1976), p. 119.

¹³ Louis Marin, “Frontiers of Utopia: Past and Present,” *Critical Inquiry* 19:3 (Spring, 1993), pp. 397-420, p. 411.

¹⁴ Ibid.

it.”¹⁵ That is, utopian literatures are reflexive and reflective texts that foreground their own contradictions; they seek to describe what cannot be described, an other world that is beyond anything that can be known. German postcolonial literature of the seventies confronts this very contradiction. As with the colonialism of its European neighbors, German colonialism involved both the physical conquest of other worlds, in particular South-West Africa, as well as a concomitant constitution of first-world focused knowledge about it, knowledge ranging from scientific and scholarly reports to fictions and fantasies.¹⁶ As such, it exhibits, to speak with Edward Said, “a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world.”¹⁷ Accordingly, German postcolonialism is haunted by the ghosts of its own colonial contradiction, namely that to understand what is “manifestly different,” “alternative” and “novel” is to exact control and power over other worlds and therewith destroy their otherness. Contrary to its colonial origins, however, the German postcolonial work exposes this contradiction at the core of the colonial will to knowledge and casts at glance at the conditions of its own creations. Like More’s *Utopia*, the literature of the seventies reveals the paradox that constitutes it. This tension created by contradiction—the exposure of Wittgenstein’s paradox—comprises the utopian space of West German postcolonialial

¹⁵ Louis Marin, *Utopics: The Semiological Play of Textual Spaces*, trans. Robert A. Vollrath (New York: Humanity, 1984), p. 65.

¹⁶ Key literary texts concerning German colonialism include Wilhelm Raabe’s *Stopfkuchen* [1890], Gustav Frenssen’s *Peter Moors Fahrt nach Südwest* [1906], Hans Grimm’s *Südafrikanische Novellen* [1913] and *Der Leutnant und der Hottentott und andere afrikanische Erzählungen* [1913]. To these literary works we must add the *Deutsches Kolonialblatt* [1890-1918] that dealt solely with the state of Germany’s colonial territories, most notably in the reports from Hans Dominik, the leader of Germany’s colonial troops in Southwest Africa. These include, for example, *Die Zustände auf der Station Yaúnde und im Gebiet des oberen Sannaga* [1895] and *Bericht des Premierlieutenants Dominik über seinen Zug gegen den Häuptling Ngila* [1898]. It should be noted that in 1967, members of the SDS (Sozialistischer Deutscher Studenten Bund) tore down Dominik’s statue that stood in front of the University of Hamburg.

¹⁷ Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), p. 12.

literature. It is, as Marin states, “the gap between two frontiers or two continents, the old and the new worlds; [...] between two edges that will never join together as an identical line.”¹⁸ This is the gap eliminated by the solidarity and objectivity of the 1960s that again finds its place in the postcolonial literature of the 1970s.

This chapter explores the contradictions that form the basis of Nicolas Born’s *Die Fälschung* [1979]. This work, I contend, turns on the same pivotal question, namely: how can a text know another world such that the knowledge produced knows of the impossibility of this knowledge acquisition? For Born, the medium of this crisis and paradox of postcolonial knowledge is journalism. Journalism, which constitutes popular knowledge, reflects Weiss’s and Enzensberger’s insistence on an objective aesthetic while at the same time taking this objectivity to task. Further, by focusing on journalism I demonstrate how the paradox of knowledge and representation of other worlds is accounted for differently across disciplinary divides, here journalism and fiction, which are themselves part of colonial formations. I turn first to Born’s novel on the Lebanese Civil War to set up the problem of knowledge of other worlds and the terms of engagement. I bring this text into dialogue with Said’s *Orientalism* [1978] as well as the West German aesthetic debate surrounding Hans Magnus Enzensberger’s analysis of the fate of literature after 1968. This work does not merely reflect the theoretical backgrounds against which it is produced—the aesthetic and political debates on objectivity and solidarity in the 1960s—but also respond to them. That is, it is highly reflexive, querying and exposing the methods of its production as well as the limits of what it are able to achieve—the representation and transmission of knowledge of other worlds that always already takes part in their creation. Ultimately, this work neither aims nor claims to

¹⁸ Louis Marin, “Frontiers of Utopia: Past and Present,” p. 411.

resolve Wittgenstein's paradox. It pushes this contradiction to the fore and in doing so argues for literature as a postcolonial and utopian space.

Die Fälschung and the Desire for Other Worlds

Born's novel *Die Fälschung* revolves around the journalist Georg Laschen, who, together with the photographer Hoffmann, is sent to Lebanon in the winter of 1976 to report on the Lebanese civil war.¹⁹ Laschen is not only a respected figure in the ranks of the Hamburg magazine for which he works, but also a seasoned war reporter having covered the Czechoslovakian uprisings in 1968, the coup d'état against Salvador Allende in Chile, and the outbreak of the war in Lebanon six weeks before the present trip. In spite of the breadth of his journalistic pursuits, however, Laschen has never really known the other "worlds" he has visited and on which he is tasked to report. While his work revolves around war and crisis, he nevertheless laments: "Nie hatte er eine andere Welt kennengelernt; er besuchte sie nur, haftete jeweils ein paar Tage an ihrer Außenschale, das war alles."²⁰ The question at the center of *Die Fälschung* is thus how knowledge about other worlds is acquired and disseminated—a knowledge that in Laschen's journalism centers on conflict thus reducing other worlds to sites of struggle and war. Born's novel interrogates the ways in which

¹⁹ The prototype for his protagonist was Kai Hermann, reporter for the magazine *Stern*, who published articles for the magazine on the 1976 Damur massacre in Lebanon. Born not only interviewed Hermann for the novel, but travelled to Lebanon to familiarize himself with the situation and the surroundings. Paul Michael Lützeler, *Bürgerkrieg Global: Menschenrechtsethos und deutschsprachiger Gegenwartsroman* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2009), p. 187. See also Heinrich Bosse and Ulrich A. Lampen, *Das Hineinspringen in die Totschlägerreihe: Nicolas Borns Roman "Die Fälschung"* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1991), pp. 11-12. Bosse and Lampen also note that in 1979, after the publication of the novel, the critically ill Born asked Hermann to present his work at the Frankfurt Buchmesse (12).

²⁰ Nicolas Born, *Die Fälschung* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1979), p.18. From here on cited as "DF."

representations of other worlds, here reportage and photographic realism, create the very realities they aim to represent through the promulgation of knowledge as information. In contrast to other West German authors during the 1970s who, as Paul Michael Lützeler states, “participate in the international postcolonial discourse through their travel reports” thereby “wish[ing] to raise their readers’ as well as their own awareness of the dilemma facing the Third World,” Born questions the very process of this transmission by highlighting the fiction behind the facts.²¹ Born emphasizes the contradictions that inevitably arise in realistic representations of other worlds; the paradox that any representation thereof potentially participates in their continued colonization.²²

To understand Laschen’s urge to know and experience an other world we need to first query his relation to that world from where he comes, namely West Germany. Laschen lives together with his wife Greta, a photographer, and three kids in the pastoral town of Elbholz outside of Hamburg. While their move from the city to the country initially offered the promise of “eine andere Zukunft,” a bucolic life of gardens and meadows, idyllically gathering mushrooms with wife and children, Laschen and Greta grow further apart, leading each eventually into the arms of other lovers (*DF*, 93-96). His increasing discontent with his life at home manifests itself in violent outbursts directed at others. Before he leaves for

²¹ Paul Michael Lützeler, “The Post-colonial View: Writers from the German-speaking Countries Report from the Third World,” *World Literature Today* 69:3 (Summer, 1995), pp. 539-546, p. 540.

²² As Edward Said argues in *Orientalism*: “The exteriority of the representation is always governed by some version of the truism that if the Orient could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job, for the West, and *faute de mieux*, for the poor Orient. ‘Sie können sich nicht vertreten, sie müssen vertreten werden,’ as Marx wrote in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.” Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), p. 21. Even under the best intentions, attempts to represent the postcolonial from a Western point of view inevitably strip it of its own voice. Hans Magnus Enzensberger points to this paradox as well as early as 1965: “Keinen ihrer Namen und keine ihrer Losungen hat die Arme Welt selbst hervorgebracht.” Hans Magnus Enzensberger, “Europäische Peripherie,” *Deutschland, Deutschland unter anderm. Äußerungen zur Politik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), p. 163. First published in *Kursbuch* 2, 1965.

Lebanon, Laschen calls a repairman to fix the heating lines to his house. In a moment of irritation and impatience with the plumber, Laschen “nahm Wolfs Kopf in die Hände und stieß ihn gegen den Kessel” (*DF*, 13). In order to exert control over a life in which he feels it slipping from his hands, Laschen resorts to violence to reestablish his patriarchal and “manly” prowess.²³ Such violent impulses are aimed as well against Greta and her extramarital dealings:

Die Gier war noch da und sogar stärker, die Gewalt war noch da, mit der er sie niederzwingen, wenn er wollte, auch erwürgen könnte, mit der er sie auch nur, wenn er wollte, bedrohen, erpressen könnte, wenn er eines davon wirklich nur noch gewollt und damit gekonnt hätte. (*DF*, 33)

If he wanted to, he could, Laschen believes, restore order to his marital relationship if not by sheer physicality (“niederzwingen,” “erwürgen”), then by threats and extortion. Though he does not act on his various desires to subjugate his wife, Laschen emphasizes the force and violence, in the dual meaning of “Gewalt,” that he thinks he can exercise over her. That his loss of control is violently enacted and therewith reestablished in surrogate on the unsuspecting repairman signals the extent to which his hierarchical dominance at home is itself a sham.

The desire to experience an other world directly reflects his unrest at home. Just as his move to the countryside brought with it the promise of a fresh start, Lebanon offers Laschen a similar opportunity. In Lebanon he creates for himself an illusory world, a “Fälschung,” in which he imagines himself living:

In solch einer Fälschung kann ich gut weiterleben, nicht schlechter als andere. Ich lebe hier, in Beirut, lebe schon lange hier, bin Kaufmann, nein, bin Inhaber einer Agentur, seit Jahren, braun gebrannt, noch immer nicht vierzig. Mit meinem Geschäft

²³ Arnd Bohm’s essay deals at length with the issue of gender and “manliness” in Born’s novel. Arnd Bohm, “The Quest Past Manhood and Nicolas Born’s *Die Fälschung*,” *Modern Language Studies* 18:3 (Summer 1988), pp. 30-37.

in Deutschland habe ich Konkurs gemacht. Was Deutschland anbetrifft, da bin ich pleite, da kann ich nicht hin zurück. (*DF*, 89)

In contrast to West Germany where he views himself a failure, in Lebanon he has another chance at succeeding in asserting his authority. To complete the forgery, however, Laschen needs a replacement for his German wife. This he finds in Ariane Nasser, a former contact at the German embassy in Lebanon whose husband, a Lebanese Christian, has passed away from a brain tumor. Laschen envisions himself as Ariane's suitor and in the ultimate act of their potential yet illusory and elusive union, Laschen accompanies Ariane to a cloister where she hopes to adopt a child. With the prospect of a child, the father-mother-child trinity seems to loom on the horizon with Laschen in his renewed patriarchal position.

Laschen's desire to begin anew in Lebanon is, however, more than an attempted escapism. His infatuation with Ariane and the fantasy that he constructs around it is a means to regain the control he has lost at home and simultaneously establish hegemony over the Other. As both German and Lebanese, albeit through marriage, Ariane represents a hybrid figure. She moves seamlessly between the two worlds of the German embassy and Lebanon, where she has made a life for herself, refusing to leave even as her colleagues have long since fled (*DF*, 46). She is thus both a self-proclaimed "Araber" and representative of Germany abroad (*DF*, 131). It is through Ariane that Laschen is offered the possibility of experiencing the Other that has previously eluded him in his hermetically sealed world of hotel rooms and bars, and further mediated through various contacts who provide him with his journalistic fodder. Laschen's longed-for union with Ariane and the experience of an other world that she promises betrays itself, however, as an extension of his need to regain dominance and authority. As Arnd Bohm states, "At first, it appears to Laschen and the readers as if [Ariane's] role will be that of the heroine who is to be rescued from a dangerous

situation, as if the knight has come to rescue the damsel in distress.”²⁴ This dangerous situation is that of the single woman in the midst of a war zone to which Laschen is the solution as both hero and husband. This articulates the continuous view of the foreign, as Said states, in “its feminine penetrability [...] requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption.”²⁵ His wish to experience the Other and with it an other world becomes an act of reestablishing his patriarchal hierarchy and power over both. Laschen hopes not only to redeem himself as the virile German, a position he has lost at home, but also to assert himself as the colonizing Westerner saving the East from itself.

The nature of Ariane’s hybridity is not only opportunistic for Laschen, enabling him to regain his lost authority as well as experience and control the Other. It is also a threat. Hybridity, as Homi Bhabha notes, “resists the binary oppositions of racial and cultural groups” at the same time it elicits moments of “panic” and confrontation.²⁶ Thus, as Ariane suggests to Laschen that he “bleib hier [...] werde Araber wie ich,” he laughs, “war aber doch erschrocken” (*DF*, 131). Registering this moment of shock in which he breaks out in sweat, Ariane states, “Du mußt dich nicht ängstigen [...] ich würde dich nie festhalten” (*DF*, 131). In this instant the tables are turned and it is the Other which threatens to intrude upon Laschen, to take hold of him. The moment of panic is exposed as colonial impotence in the face of hybridity which fails to conform to a simplistic polarity, the “fixity” of otherness and the “rigidity” of an “unchanging order” upon which colonial power rests.²⁷ As Laschen

²⁴ Arnd Bohm, “The Quest Past Manhood and Nicolas Born’s ‘Die Fälschung’,” p. 35.

²⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1977), p. 206.

²⁶ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 296.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

admits, “Er glaubte, all seine Mühe bestünde darin, sich das, was verständlich war, verständlich zu erhalten. Es ging nicht mehr darum, nach und nach immer mehr zu verstehen” (*DF*, 77). Laschen’s desire to experience an other world through the Other is nothing more than an attempt to uphold previous experiences and knowledges and in essence to control them. Greta is merely exchanged for Ariane, one family for another. No difference is allowed in unless it is already familiar. Said best explains this paradoxical process:

Something patently foreign and distant acquires, for one reason or another, a status more rather than less familiar. One tends to stop judging things either as completely novel or as completely well known; a new median category emerges, a category that allows one to see new things, things seen for the first time, as versions of a previously known thing. In essence such a category is not so much a way of receiving new information as it is a method of controlling what seems to be a threat to some established view of things.²⁸

The novelty of hybridity, its ability to produce new experiences and challenge previously held conceptions precisely through, as Bhabha asserts, “a traumatic moment of [...] the indeterminate or the unknowable,” here diffuses the colonial process of rendering the new as always the same.²⁹ As if catching Laschen red-handed, Ariane remarks, “und du willst im Grunde nichts von mir wissen, willst sogar in meiner Gesellschaft für dich sein” (*DF*, 131). Her revelation, confronting the perpetrator with his planned deed, weakens Laschen’s control and ultimately results in another familiar act in which he will attempt to neutralize the threat and again regain his dominance.

On his way to visit Ariane one evening unannounced, Laschen glimpses another man leaving Ariane’s apartment. He observes them from afar as she sees him off, embracing and kissing, as jealousy overwhelms him. Not only has he been seemingly betrayed by Ariane,

²⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 58-9.

²⁹ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 296.

but also replaced by an “Araber,” rendered useless on two fronts, as a lover and husband and as the colonizing hero in yet another familiarly different circumstance that mirrors the extramarital affairs at home (*DF*, 249). Unable to accept his fate as the vanquished conqueror, Laschen decides he will confront Ariane:

Am Dienstag, nahm er sich vor, bleibe ich, bis der andere Freund gegangen ist. Er würde Deutsch reden mit ihr, kein Wort Englisch oder Französisch. Aber: wie lächerlich, blöder Nichtsnutz, du taube Nuß, die du bist, du alberner herumtanzender und –beißender Deutscher. Sie war Araber geworden, da hatte sie recht. Weder ergriff sie irgendwie richtig Partei, noch war sie deshalb gleich eine Unparteiische. Sie kannte solche deutschen Gegensätze nicht mehr, hatte jedes Entweder-Oder verlernt. (*DF*, 250)

His plan initially rests on the reassertion of linguistic authority, speaking only German with her in a country that, as with Ariane, is not regulated by a fixed semantic authority. However, precisely because of her hybridity that dismantles the “German” either-or, Laschen again comes face to face with his powerlessness, here in the form of speechlessness and empty gestures, as the “herumtanzender und –beißender Deutscher.” As with his inability to speak with Greta, both at home and through the various letters he writes to her from Lebanon but never mails, the different in Lebanon attains the characteristics of the familiar, though in this instance not as a colonial control mechanism, but as its opposite, as a sign of colonial impotence and postcolonial resistance. To the extent that hybridity here gains an enunciatory force, one which Laschen does not possess, it is, as Bhabha argues, an “intervention” that “challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing unifying force.”³⁰ The ambivalence of hybridity refuses Laschen’s attempt to impose his control on Ariane through the linguistic, homogenous, cultural code of the German that she has shed.

Unable to control her through language, Laschen repeats the misogynist fantasy once

³⁰ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 54.

directed at Greta, perceiving her as a “Puppe, die geschüttelt wird, um sie ‘zur Vernunft zu bringen’” (*DF*, 250). His imagined masculinity reappears when he forces her, as a passive and, moreover, mute puppet, to come to her senses. Ultimately, however, Ariane is anything but the submissive woman in need of Laschen’s saving. She requires him neither to attain the child that she so desires nor to fill the empty patriarchal position in which Laschen would like to envision himself. On both accounts, he is proven impotent and if anything it is Ariane who gains the upper hand by, as Bohm states, “foil[ing] Laschen’s plan in which he would be confirmed in a patriarchal dominion, enacting in the colonized space of the Middle East an authority which had eluded him in Europe.”³¹ She is thus more than the strong feminine figure, but the representation of what Jean Baudrillard terms the “radical alterity” of the Other.³² As he argues, this Other is that “which does not miss me, of that which can exist very well without me” and at the same time that which “we want to share and destroy in its perfection and impunity.”³³ The dialectic of the desire for the Other, to both preserve and destroy it, that *Die Fälschung* highlights is the core of Laschen’s own desire—to attain that which does not need him and simultaneously extinguish it (to bring Ariane “zur Vernunft”). That he does not succeed in this with Ariane, however, does not mean that he ceases his pursuit of control and authority, in the end completing the violent circle of destruction of the Other.

Just as the imagined violence to Greta ended in its real projection onto another, so too does his fantasy of subjugating Ariane. During a battle near the American hotel in Lebanon,

³¹ Bohm, “The Quest Past Manhood and Nicolas Born’s ‘Die Fälschung’,” p. 36.

³² Jean Baudrillard and Marc Guillaume, *Radical Alterity*, Ames Hodges, trans. (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2008), p. 148.

³³ Ibid.

Laschen seeks shelter in the basement of a building with other Lebanese. Here more than ever the threat of the Other and his desire to subdue it rears its head. “Das Grauen, mit diesen Fremden ein gemeinsames Grab zu finden in einem so fremden arabischen Nichts [...]” leads to another moment of panic in which he unsheathes the knife that he carries strapped to his leg and stabs wildly until it finally sticks “tief im Fleisch” (*DF*, 268-272). The impetus for this violent act lies not with the physical threat from those with whom he is sheltered and who even offer him food, but rather from the peril of being entombed “mit diesen Fremdgläubigen, Fremdsprechenenden,” literally subjugated by and with the Other (*DF*, 268). Rather than viewing this potential murder as “einen Anlaß gar, abzureisen,” Laschen experiences “Momente händereibender Genugtuung über seine ‘Einmischung’” and “ausgekochte Freude darüber [...] endlich heimlich dazuzugehören, eingemischt zu sein” (*DF*, 275). Although it seems that in this moment Laschen achieves that which eluded him with Ariane—to both share in and destroy the Other—in fact the opposite is the case.

As Bohm notes, the knife “links [Laschen] to the armed soldiers and he wears it token of his participation in traditional male rituals of killing.”³⁴ What he neglects to mention is that Laschen has quite literally brought a knife to a gunfight, to a warzone in which rifles, tanks, and artillery are the order of the day and hand-to-hand combat has been replaced by combatants who “vielmehr [...] allesamt zu Heckenschützen [würden]” (*DF*, 88). The knife is more than a symbol or a “parody” of that “which might have once been a rite of passage to manhood,” but rather a stereotype of precisely those “male rituals” which he believes ties him to the Other through the destruction its destruction.³⁵ Taking his cue from Said’s

³⁴ Bohm, “The Quest Past Manhood,” p. 35.

³⁵ Ibid.

“median category” which aims to control the threat of the new by recasting it as the familiar, Bhabha expands this process of simultaneous recognition and disavowal of difference as stereotype and fetishism. Bhabha contends that the stereotype mirrors Freud’s concept of the fetish in its “normalization of that difference and disturbance” at the site of the mother’s missing penis through which the fetish object becomes a replacement and guarantee against the threat of castration.³⁶ The fetish then becomes a triumph over and memorial to castration and further a means to retain male dominance.³⁷ Similarly, the stereotype functions to neutralize difference in the face of the identification of it. As such, the knife for Laschen and the penetrating deed committed therewith are both stereotypical and fetishistic. It not only stereotypes the violence around him as the experience of the Other—of finally “eingemischt zu sein”—as well as the stereotypical image of the “feminine penetrability” of the Other, but also becomes a substitute for his lack of power over Ariane. The parody that Bohm attributes to the act and the knife itself should be understood then both as the subversion of Laschen’s “heroic” and “macho” qualities as well as the colonial stereotype and fetish which is exposed as latent impotence and fear. The stereotype is not merely dismissed or displaced “on the basis of a prior political normativity,” as Bhabha states, but rather is engaged with its “effectivity” which is here presented as absurd and pusillanimous as it is futile.³⁸

Laschen’s desire to experience the foreign not only reflects his loss of power at home and his efforts to regain it abroad, but moreover displays the degree to which this is enacted over and against that which he longs for, the Other and other worlds. Recalling the title to

³⁶ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 106.

³⁷ Sigmund Freud, “Fetishism,” *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume XXI 1927-1931* (London: Hogarth, 1964), pp. 152-157.

³⁸ Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 95.

Born's previous novel, *Die Fälschung* represents "die erdabgewandte Seite" of attempts to both experience and know ("kennenlernen") the Other that ultimately repeats colonial appropriation.³⁹ Yet, while the novel highlights what Said terms the "latent Orientalism" at work in Laschen's relation to the Other, that is an "unconscious (and certainly an untouchable) positivity" with which he upholds colonial superiority, it equally and forcefully negates this dominance at precisely those sites where it most often manifests: in the patriarchal, masculine, sexual, stereotypical, and fetishistic matrices that connote colonial power.⁴⁰ If these represent the "systems" or "regime[s]" of truth that Said and Bhabha respectively attribute to colonialism, then part of the forgery upon which *Die Fälschung* rests is exposing of the illusion behind them.⁴¹ In this way, Laschen's desire for the Other, that is simultaneously a desire to devour and undo it, reveals the "productive ambivalence" of colonialism that when confronted with its own "truths," as Bhabha argues, "reveals the boundaries of colonial discourse and [...] enables a transgression of these limits from the space of that otherness."⁴² Each of Laschen's attempts to subjugate the Other through his personal experiences, his "latent" internalized colonialism, is exposed as a moment of impotence in which the very "boundaries" and "limits" he seeks to uphold dissolve.

Reporting from Other Worlds

³⁹ *Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte* [1976] was Born's second novel and belongs paradigmatically to the genre of New Subjectivity.

⁴⁰ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 206.

⁴¹ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 204 and Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 96. Said indeed understands truth in the Nietzschean sense whereby "truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are." Quoted in *Orientalism*, p. 203. The original quote is from Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press, 1954), pp. 46-7.

⁴² Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 96.

Laschen's vain attempts to exert his control over the Other, his latent colonialism that expresses itself through his relation with Ariane, are but one side of the same coin. *Die Fälschung* goes beyond the depiction of one individual's encounters with the foreign and his desires for the Other and other worlds by querying both the representation as well as the *mode* of representing. As a reporter, it is Laschen's job to convey his experiences abroad as objective, factual knowledge to his readers back in West Germany. This move from experience to the transmission of knowledge as value-free information requires we bring Laschen's latent colonialism into dialogue with its "manifest" materialization. The latent aspects refer to long-held, unconscious expressions of colonial dominance and superiority. In contrast, "manifest Orientalism," according to Said, concerns the "various stated views about Oriental society, languages, literatures, history, sociology, and so forth" which underscore its "systems" and "regimes" of truth through the authority of knowledge.⁴³ Accordingly, "manifest" and "latent Orientalism" enjoy a reciprocal exchange whereby the former seeks to ground the latter in "'scientific' validity" and "disinterested objectivity" thereby confirming the presuppositions of the latter.⁴⁴ In *Die Fälschung* the locus of this "manifest Orientalism" is journalism and, mirroring Laschen's latent colonialism, its efforts to control the Other and other worlds through the promulgation of information.

That journalism figures prominently as the target of criticism in *Die Fälschung* is no mere coincidence or simple matter of plot or character development. Rather, the issue of journalism and reportage places *Die Fälschung* simultaneously within the debates around

⁴³ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 206.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 206, 148.

literary aesthetics after 1968 as well as the increased interest with the Third World in West Germany during the 1970s. On the one hand, the novel is a response to Hans Magnus Enzensberger's pronouncement of the death of literature and his demand for "Faktographien" in the form of documentaries and journalism along the lines of the work done by Günter Wallraff, Erika Runge, and Ulrike Meinhoff, all of whom called for a triumph over the dominion of "Belletristik."⁴⁵ It is, according to Enzensberger, only through a "politische Alphabetisierung" provided by such works, that literature can still claim an operative function.⁴⁶ Such is the proclaimed fate and future of literature after 1968; reduced to the gathering and recording of facts. On the other hand, as Lützeler notes, the West German media in the 1970s turned more of its attention to coverage of foreign countries due, in part, to the rise in travel to distant locales, increased contact with foreigners in West Germany, and the beginnings of a globalization of German businesses drawn to the "Billiglohn" of other countries.⁴⁷ Born's criticism of journalism is thus two-pronged, tackling both the fate of literature in the wake of 1968 and representations of the Third World and the lingering traits of colonialism. Although *Die Fälschung* is not alone in its attack on journalism—it finds

⁴⁵ Enzensberger, "Gemeinplätze, die Neueste Literatur betreffend," *Kursbuch* 15, ed. Hans Magnus Enzensberger (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968), pp. 187-197, p. 189-195. See also, Alo Allkemper, "'Warum sollte ich mich nicht in Widersprüche verwickeln?': Nicolas Borns Probleme mit der Utopie," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* (103:1), eds., Werner Besch, Hugo Moser, Hartmut Steinecke, and Benno von Wiese (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1984), pp. 576-603, p. 577. Allkemper understands this correctly as the end of art in the Hegelian sense in that literature itself is not dead, but rather its relevance for life. Jörg Eggerts as well understands Born's work as a reaction to Enzensberger's thesis. Jörg Eggerts, *Langsam kehrten die Farben zurück: Zur Subjektivität im Romanwerk, im lyrischen und literaturtheoretischen Werk Nicolas Borns* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2002), pp. 167-168.

⁴⁶ Enzensberger, "Gemeinplätze, die Neueste Literatur betreffend," p. 195.

⁴⁷ Paul Michael Lützeler, *Schriftsteller und "Dritte Welt": Studien zum postkolonialen Blick* (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1998), p. 28. See also Lützeler, "The Post-colonial View: Writers from the German-speaking Countries Report from the Third World," p. 540. See also Ulla Biernat, *Ich bin nicht der erste Fremde hier: Zur deutschsprachigen Reiseliteratur nach 1945* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004), pp. 68, 99. Lützeler also stresses this in *Bürgerkrieg Global: Menschenrechtsethos und deutschsprachiger Gegenwartsroman* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2009), p. 28.

good company with Heinrich Böll's *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum* [1974] for example—it is nonetheless singular in bringing attention to the journalistic portrayal of the Third World and the power relations that lurk beneath it.⁴⁸

In both instances, the main issue is a reliance on an instrumental realism typical of journalism, one cobbled together by various facts and figures, interviews and documents or, in short, information. Rather than critiquing or informing, information reverts to its opposite, that is, an affirmation of the very reality it claims to re-present. As Laschen reflects toward the beginning of the novel:

Greta betrachtete sicher wieder ihre Fotos von arbeitslosen Werftarbeiter, oder war das Thema längst abgeschlossen? Was war an den Fotos von arbeitslosen Werftarbeitern nicht in Ordnung? Das Problem Arbeitslosigkeit? Schön, Arbeitslosigkeit war nicht in Ordnung. Vielleicht waren alle Fotos von der Wirklichkeit nicht in Ordnung, falsch, alle Sätze über die Wirklichkeit falsch. Es passierte dabei etwas mit der Wirklichkeit, mit den Gesichtern der Arbeitslosen, mit dem falschen Auge, dem verdrehten, das die Bilder aufnahm, mit den bösen verdrehenden Beschreibungswörtern, die etwas herstellten, wie sie damit etwas verschlimmerten und auch verbesserten, nebenbei andeuteten, ob und wie noch Geschäfte zu machen seien in jener (jener!) Wirklichkeit. (DF, 53)

In what is a clear allusion to the works of Günter Wallraff and Erika Runge and their reportages on factory workers as well as Enzensberger's "politische Alphabetisierung," *Die Fälschung* highlights the extent to which realistic and factual representations, in both word and image, conform and indeed encourage assimilation to the reality they critique. According to Born, they are "kritische[] Partner der Macht."⁴⁹ As Born states in the afterward to his poetry collection *Das Auge des Entdeckers*, "Vorläufig machen die Macher die Realität, und

⁴⁸ Iman O. Khalil remarks on the relationship between Böll's and Born's work in "Writing Civil War: The Lebanese Experience in Jusuf Naoum's German Short Stories," *The German Quarterly* 67: 4 (Autumn, 1994), pp. 549-560, p. 555. It is also worth noting that both works were subsequently adapted to film by Volker Schlöndorff in 1975 and 1981 respectively.

⁴⁹ Born, "Ist die Literatur auf die Misere abonniert?" in *Die Welt der Maschine*, p. 48.

die Literatur liefert den passenden Realismus dazu.”⁵⁰ The photographs and accompanying written descriptions about the plight of the unemployed accomplish little more than the replication of a harsh reality. Rather than exposing it as iniquitous, they take part in its perpetuation. Before turning our sights to the role of photography in *Die Fälschung*, let us begin with its own performance of reportage.

Born’s concern with journalism and the media precedes *Die Fälschung*. As he states in his 1977 essay “Die Welt der Maschine,” media, “die Schaltstellen unseres öffentlichen Lebens,” are responsible for both producing and conveying “eine Scheinwirklichkeit.”⁵¹ This “zweite Wirklichkeit,” not only hides “eine tatsächliche Wirklichkeit” but threatens to overcome the latter to the point where the “Täuschung” produced by the former becomes a “Welt-Surrogat,” more real than the reality it conceals.⁵² Thus, in addition to its conciliatory, affirmative qualities vis-à-vis established reality journalism is complicit in *creating* the reality it purportedly re-presents. The creation of such a substitute reality is reflected at the outset of *Die Fälschung*:

Er schrieb über die Ursachen, die zu dem aktuellen Palästinenserproblem geführt hatten, die Palästinakriege, über das traditionell gute Verhältnis von Muslims und Christen im Libanon. Damit *fütterte* er die aktuellen Ereignisse. Woran lag es aber, dass es nie gewesen war? Entweder griffen die Sätze nicht, erhielten kein bestimmtes Gewicht, oder alles klang nach unverschämt launig vorgetragenen Anekdoten. Es erschien alles erfunden. (DF, 14)

In merely supplementing or “feeding” the current events in Lebanon, Laschen realizes that he is fabricating a reality, weaving together disparate facts into a “Lügendewebe” (DF, 54). As Thomas Wegmann argues in his essay on the novel, “Wirklichkeit ist demnach nichts, was

⁵⁰ Born, “Das Auge des Entdeckers,” in *Die Welt der Maschine: Aufsätze und Reden*, ed. Rolf Haufs (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1980), p. 88.

⁵¹ Born, “Die Welt der Maschine,” in *Die Welt der Maschine*, p. 16.

⁵² Ibid.

den Texten vorausgeht, sondern durch Textsorten wie Reportage oder Bericht allererst erschaffen wird, in dem eben diese durch bestimmte Schreibtechniken eine ungeschriebene Wirklichkeit suggerieren. Minutiös zeigt der Roman, wie solche Texte generiert werden [...].”⁵³ While some scholars have drawn the comparison between *Die Fälschung* and what Jean Baudrillard analyzes two years later under the concept of the “simulacrum,” that is “a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal,” Born’s novel does not yet delve into such postmodern territory.⁵⁴ As Laschen admits, “seine Schwierigkeit sei es oft, das Geschriebene anzuerkennen angesichts der immer ungeschriebenen Realität der Ereignisse” (*DF*, 239). Thus, in line with Born’s proposed second reality, there exists a reality beneath the created journalistic, textual one. The original still lies lurking beneath the sheen of journalistic realism. The problem of this created reality then cannot be reduced to Baudrillard’s simulacrum that “liquidates all referentials” and “threatens the difference between ‘true’ and ‘false,’ the ‘real’ and the ‘imaginary.’”⁵⁵ To do so would be to relegate representations of the Third World to the realm of the purely imaginative and ideational and ignore the power that is exerted by the created reality over the “ungeschriebene Realität.”

Journalism’s creation of reality should rather be understood in its relation to knowledge, information, and power. Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, Edward Said states, “such texts [purporting to contain knowledge about something actual] can *create* not

⁵³ Thomas Wegmann, “Von der Fälschung zur Simulation. Datenarbeit in großen Städten: Nicolas Born und Bodo Morshäuser,” Walter Delbar and Erhard Schütz, eds. *Deutschsprachige Literatur der 70er und 80er Jahre: Autoren, Tendenzen, Gattungen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997), pp. 130-153, p. 138.

⁵⁴ Baudrillard, *Simulation and Simulacrum*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), pp. 2-6. See also Rudolf Stegers, “‘Aber eines Tages werden alle Bilder wahr’: Über Nicolas Born und seine Romane,” *Literatur Magazin 21: Nicolas Born zum Gedenken, Heinrich Mann, heute*, eds. Martin Lüdke and Delf Schmidt (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1988), p. 158 and Thomas Wegmann, “Von der Fälschung zur Simulation. Datenarbeit in großen Städten: Nicolas Born und Bodo Morshäuser,” p. 138.

⁵⁵ Baudrillard, *Simulation and Simulacrum*, pp. 2-6.

only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe.”⁵⁶ It is in this simultaneous creation of knowledge and reality from which colonialism as a discourse draws and exercises its power, for as Foucault states, “it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together.”⁵⁷ Accordingly, Said argues “[...] it would be wrong to conclude that the Orient was *essentially* an idea, or a creation with no corresponding reality [...],” to which he adds, “To believe that the Orient was created [...] and to believe that such things happen simply as a necessity of imagination, is to be disingenuous. The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination of varying degrees, of a complex hegemony [...].”⁵⁸ The reality created by the discourse of colonialism is thus not a creation of the Orient proper, but rather an extension of the means of power through the control of the knowledge and information disseminated about it. In this way, *Die Fälschung* interrogates the continuing colonial appropriation of other worlds through journalism that rather than increasing political awareness, “Alphabetisierung,” or understanding of these worlds creates and reinforces colonial hierarchies.

The colonial production of knowledge and resultant reality is founded on converting that which is new and ultimately different into the familiar. This transformation from novelty into the known aims to neutralize difference and thereby maintains colonial control. As Said explains:

Something patently foreign and distant acquires, for one reason or another, a status more rather than less familiar. One tends to stop judging things either as completely novel or as completely well known; a new median category emerges, a category that

⁵⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 94.

⁵⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume One: Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Allen Lane, 1978), p. 100. For more on Foucault, colonialism, and Said see Robert J.C. Young, “Foucault on Race and Colonialism,” *New Formations* 25 (1995): pp. 57-65.

⁵⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 5.

allows one to see new things, things seen for the first time, as versions of a previously known thing. In essence such a category is not so much a way of receiving new information as it is a method of controlling what seems to be a threat to some established view of things.⁵⁹

Accordingly, Laschen admits, “Er glaubte, all seine Mühe bestünde darin, sich das, was verständlich war, verständlich zu erhalten. Es ging nicht mehr darum, nach und nach immer mehr zu verstehen” (*DF*, 77). He is therefore not invested in providing new information or knowledge so much as upholding the known and the familiar. This is reflected most clearly in his interview with “Exzellenz Tony,” son of the “Staatspräsident” and leader of a private army fighting against the Palestinians.

Laschen’s construction, or better reconstruction, of his interview with Tony from his notes is guided by his wish that “jemand wie Tony solle bald sein Ende finden” and “Tony fertigzumachen” (*DF*, 122-124). While he confesses to Tony that he sympathizes more with the Palestinians “weil sie die Schwächeren sind,” his desire to portray Tony in a negative light stems not from his will to help the Palestinian cause over Tony’s, but from the threat of the new that challenges the “established view of things” (*DF*, 112).⁶⁰ “Vielleicht kämpfen wir hier für Deutschland, für Italien, Frankreich,” Tony states, “vielleicht sind wir die einzigen, denen etwas liegt an der Substanz der Freiheit. Vielleicht hat der Westen insgesamt schon aufgegeben” (*DF*, 109). Tony’s revelation that he is continuing that which the West has given up on shifts the emphasis to what Enzensberger terms the “europäische Peripherie.”⁶¹ Against the threat of a new constellation of power in which the West has ceased to be the center of an ever-expanding socio-political world stage, Laschen flexes his

⁵⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 58-9.

⁶⁰ Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 58-9.

⁶¹ Hans Magnus Enzensberger, “Europäische Peripherie,” *Deutschland, Deutschland unter anderm. Äußerungen zur Politik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1967), p. 172. First published in *Kursbuch* 2, 1965.

journalistic muscle to depict Tony as a callous armchair “Killer:” “Er schrieb, Tony werde massiert von einem seiner Gorillas und lese Comics dabei, Sergeant Peng Peng” (*DF*, 124). As Heinrich Bosse and Ulrich Lampen are quick to note, “als Laschen da war, wurde Tony *nicht* massiert und er las auch *nicht* Comics.”⁶² That his depiction is an obvious lie, however, does not detract from the power behind it and the control enacted through disarming the new as the familiar in order to maintain an established hierarchy:

Mit dem Verständnis andererseits ließ sich ohnehin nichts machen, nichts schreiben. Es ging um Kontraste, immer noch, immer noch um “Gut und Böse”, obwohl beides nichts mehr bedeutete, da alle nur noch verrückt in den Kategorien der Verrücktheit staken. (*DF*, 123)

By transforming the threat of the new into a familiar binary of “good versus evil,” Laschen simultaneously enacts his own control over the powerful Tony and propagates this new information under the banner of the known.

On the other hand, the journalistic modification of his interview with Tony emerges from his realization of the parallels between his work and that of someone like Tony. It becomes possible then to speak of Laschen’s conscience and sense of ethics vis-à-vis the other, a self-reflexivity prevalent not only in the novel itself, but in the very character of Laschen, one that materializes in this interview. Laschen wonders, as the narrator states, “Warum er für diesen Pseudo-Feldherrn so schnell die Formulierung finden [konnte]? Vielleicht verabscheute er diese Existenz nur deshalb, weil er sie so gut verstand” (*DF*, 123). He is able to understand Tony and to write about him in part because they are both engaged in the business of war, conflict, and death. This is then another impetus for Laschen’s embellishment as well as his awareness of his will to knowledge and power through

⁶² Heinrich Bosse and Ulrich A. Lampen, *Das Hineinspringen in die Totschlägerreihe: Nicolas Borns Roman “Die Fälschung”* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1991), p. 35.

journalism. “Er war froh,” the narrator continues, “mit Tony nicht mehr gesessen zu haben, weil er dann hätte Angst haben müssen vor seinem eigentlichen Interesse—an einem Killer, vor seiner Sympathie womöglich” (DF, 124). The lie that he constructs out of his interview with Exzellenz Tony is a way of countering his bad conscience that he and Tony are essentially the same and the fear of his sympathy with such figures that essentially drives his journalism. We should, however, be careful in ascribing to Laschen an ethical standpoint that makes him a sympathetic anti-hero. For while the careful reader of the novel is aware of his lie, the eponymous falsity and forgery of the novel, Laschen’s readers are not. The liberty Laschen takes with his reportage is driven more by the demands of the readers than by the pangs of his colonial conscience.

It is not simply a matter of Laschen’s own desire as a journalist to maintain the familiar but to deliver “einen *noch heißen Artikel*,” something original and fresh, to his readers reaffirming their preconceptions as well as their own power over the foreign (DF, 64). At the beginning of the novel, before he is sent for a second time to Lebanon, Laschen reflects on the nature of war reporting: “Andererseits hatte er bemerkt, wie denen in Hamburg der andauernde Krieg auch schon langweilig wurde, ein untrügliches Zeichen für die Langeweile der Leser. Andauernde Kampfhandlungen hatten etwas so Einschläferndes wie keine Kampfhandlungen” (DF, 32). Laschen is then tasked with keeping the readers interested in his product, providing them something new. Indeed, Laschen is tethered to his readers, ensuring that they constantly receive that which they desire, their “Gier nach den Schrecken” (DF, 218). The “[unersättliche] Nachfrage” of his readers who “*immer mehr wissen [wollen] über ihren eigenen Stellvertreterkrieg*” demands that Laschen repetitively reproduce the new as the same (DF, 187). In this way, no new information is provided, no

knowledge gained, that is not already predetermined. As the narrator states:

Dagegen kannte Laschen zu gut das dominierende deutsche Echo (er persönlich *differenzierte* ja), die libanesischen Christen schlugen endlich zurück, und, was die Palästinenser anbetraf: die siegrichen Israelis in der Bundesrepublik, die es, nachdem sie ihnen gezeigt, es anderen zeigten. (DF, 91)

While the narrator places Laschen's own "differentiation" in doubt, there is little reservation that the public sees this as their war, albeit fought for them by others representing their interests. In contrast to Enzensberger's notion that the documentary and reportage produce a "kritische Wechselwirkung, ein feedback zwischen Leser und Schreiber" that through "Widerstände, Beschimpfungen, Gegegenbeweise" yields "Folgen," in *Die Fälschung* this feedback becomes an incessant loop.⁶³ "There is a rather complex dialectic of reinforcement," Said argues, "by which the experiences of readers in reality are determined by what they have read, and this in turn influences writers to take up subjects defined in advance by readers' experiences."⁶⁴ Although Said refers here to the "experience" of readers, what he proposes is equally true of knowledge. The information that Laschen provides confirms the readers' knowledge of these other worlds as perpetual sites of a conflict in which the readers can continue the colonial war of "us" against "them" even if by proxy. Thus even as he states that "Die unerhörten Berichten sollten in die Bundesrepublik hineinfahren, in die Glieder der Bundesrepublik, nicht zum Vergnügen" his declaration that "Ich mach [sic] euch euren Realismus, mühelos mörderisch" merely conforms to that which his readers want (DF, 92, 218). Laschen as well as his reporting become a mere sounding board that possesses an "unbegrenzte Fähigkeit [...], *Erlebnisse* aufzunehmen, zu speichern, wiederzugeben" delivering the "deutsche Echo" nothing more than the sound of its own

⁶³ Enzensberger, "Gemeinplätze, die Neueste Literatur betreffend," p. 197.

⁶⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 94.

voice and the repetition of familiar information that reinforces its hegemony over other parts of the globe (*DF*, 65).

Through the production of knowledge and reinforcement of the new as the known and familiar, *Die Fälschung* demonstrates how journalism and realistic representations of other worlds are complicit in the creation of the very reality they aim to describe. Rather than informing or contributing to an understanding of other worlds, such attempts are imbued with an incessant circularity that ultimately reproduces colonial control mechanisms and hierarchical power structures as well as the reality to which they are tied. Journalism contributes to the construction of a “Weltgeschichte” and a “Welt-Unterhaltungsprogramm” geared towards a “Verträglichkeit” that ensures that everything will remain as it is, a state of war in which colonial interests are continually maintained (*DF*, 299-302):

Die Weltberichte waren notwendig, wenn sie auch mit ihrem Echo die Schlächtereien beflügelten: die Schriften gingen fortlaufend in Erfüllung, wurden oft noch übererfüllt. Und alles sollte berichtet werden, erst dann war es endgültige Vernichtung, und darauf konnte alles erneut sich ereignen, besser, weil gewußter, geplanter und berichteter. (*DF*, 241)

The reportage is thus not only responsible for fanning the flames of war—here again through the echo of predetermined information—but also sets the stage for renewed and improved colonial conquests. In the place of a realism whose “Maßstab” is, according to Born, a “Realität, die doch abgeschafft werden soll,” journalism is bound to the dissemination of information that both constructs and maintains a reality that even in its moments of destruction, provides a blueprint for a (re)new(ed) reality that is nevertheless always the same.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Born, “Die Welt der Maschine,” p. 26.

Photography and the Colonial Gaze

Laschen is not alone in the creation and promulgation of a reality that seeks to maintain colonial control. His journalism is, in fact, supported by photographic accompaniment that becomes the visual accomplice to his writing. Just as the focus on journalism in *Die Fälschung* is a product of a particular moment in West Germany, the post-1968 aesthetic crisis and the rise in media reports from abroad, photography figures as well into a broader German context. In the case of photography, however, we have to turn our sights further backward in history. In *After Images*, Eric Downing examines in part the connection between Germany's archaeological interest in the Mediterranean and the rise of photography in the nineteenth century together with Germany's colonial aspirations. Echoing Said's contention that "the German Orient was almost exclusively a scholarly, or at least a classical, Orient: it was made the subject of lyrics, fantasies, and even novels, but it was never actual," Downing argues:

Unlike the majority of its powerful European neighbors, Germany was more or less excluded from the extensive imperialist enterprise of colonization of Africa, Asia, and the Americas during the nineteenth century. In its stead, through its immense investment (both financial and cultural) in archaeology, the Germans opted, as it were, to colonize the past—the Mediterranean past—and in the process to ride as roughshod over the culture of the present inhabitants as their European neighbors were doing in more concrete and conspicuous a fashion.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 19. Eric Downing, *After Images: Photography, Archaeology and Psychoanalysis and the Tradition of Bildung* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2006), p. 10. Cf. Paul Michael Lützeler, "Postkolonialer Diskurs und deutsche Literatur," *Schriftsteller und „Dritte Welt“: Studien zum postkolonialen Blick*, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1998), pp. 7-30, pp. 22ff. Paul Michael Lützeler, in his study on the Third World and postcolonialism in German literature, emphasizes Germany's colonial aspirations from the time of Bismarck and the "scramble for Africa" to Hitler's own colonial politics to regain lands in Eastern Europe. In the introduction to their edited volume, Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Susanne Zantop also document Germany's "actual" colonial history. Friedrichsmeyer, Lennox, and Zantop, eds. *The Imperialist Imagination* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), pp. 7-18. Similarly, Michael Perraudin and Jürgen Zimmerer's recent volume *German Colonialism and National Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2011) deals with, as they state in their introduction, "Germany's biased and troubled relationship with its colonial future, present and past over a century and a half," p. 2.

Where Germany's archaeological pursuits substituted for its lack of colonial expansion, photography filled the void of imperial booty through, as Downing contends, its "capacity [...] to steal images, to take them away from their original context and, in a quasi-imperialistic way, traffic in them as virtual artifacts, as appropriated trophies."⁶⁷ Both archaeology and photography then produced and propagated evidence so as to confirm Germany's classical heritage and simultaneously take part in larger colonial pursuits.

In *Die Fälschung*, photography becomes simultaneously the replacement for and reinforcement of West German culture's (neo)colonial aspirations. Where archaeology and photography previously conspired to "colonize the past," Born's novel interrogates photography's continued colonization of the present. Together with Laschen's journalism, photography establishes a foothold in the here and now by creating and proliferating a reality over and through which it has control. It is an archaeology of the present that trades in the trowel for a camera and photographic evidence of buried artifacts for that of an extant reality that it claims to capture passively. If archaeology once produced artifacts for which photography supplied the proof, photography in *Die Fälschung* is both production and product. The logic of the photograph functions thus on a different register than that of journalism. The image in *Die Fälschung* verges on the postmodern of Baudrillard's simulacra whereas print journalism does not. In this way, the photograph becomes the objective seal of approval for Laschen's journalism. It is, then, photography that explicates journalism rather than vice versa. Laschen simply forges the captions to the images ("Bildunterschriften fälschte") such that it is the photograph that connects his writing to reality, albeit reality as a simulacrum (*DF*, 89). The novel focuses on both the photograph as

⁶⁷ Downing, *After Images*, p. 11.

well as the *act* of photographing, although the absence of photographs in the work clearly points to the importance placed on the latter. In both instances, however, photography is queried as a colonial apparatus that functions under the same triumvirate as journalism—knowledge, reality, and control. In contrast to the latter, however, there is no recourse to a different reality—the photograph becomes both object and proof in which Born’s “zweite Wirklichkeit” collapses in on the first coming dangerously close to a pure simulacrum.

Die Fälschung thus asserts both one genre over another, the novel over reportage, and stakes a claim with respect to the medium as well, the word versus the image.⁶⁸ This distinction is also prevalent between the two characters themselves. Whereas the narrator depicts the moral and occupational complexity of Laschen through his constant self-reflection, Hoffmann is decisively flat: “Hoffmann in seiner Stärke und unmißverständlichen Anwesenheit war eigentlich nicht rätselhaft. Wahrscheinlich hatter er es nötig, jede Gefühlsäußerung, auch jeden Gedanken, der über das knapp Notwendig hinausging, zu verachten” (*DF*, 22). Unlike his journalistic counterpart, Hoffmann displays an objective callousness and obstinacy that seldom if ever goes beyond his duty as a photographer: “Als Fotograf war [Hoffmann] mehr am Fotografieren interessiert, wechselte Filme und Objektive aus. So gab es selten etwas Gedachtes oder Ausgedachtes von ihm zu hören, wenn, dann hörte es sich endgültig an, wie eine Aufforderung an alle, zu schweigen” (*DF*, 22). While Laschen struggles to voice the horrors of the war and come to grips with the type of knowledge and reality he is culpable of producing, the photographer demands silence. For Laschen, Hoffmann’s lack of reflection, his photographic reticence, is indicative of his desire to remain safely within the boundaries of his own knowledge, never seeking more than that

⁶⁸ Wegmann, “Von der Fälschung zur Simulation,” p. 140.

which he already knows. “Laschen war es aufgefallen,” the narrator states, “daß Hoffmann nur selten Fragen stellte und offenbar es gut aushalten konnte, nicht zu wissen, was er nicht schon wußte, und das eigentlich Wörtliche anderer, ihre Weise zu sprechen und damit etwas sagen zu wollen, interessierten ihn nicht [...]” (DF, 23). Hoffmann’s character traits, however, go beyond narrative significance imbuing his photographic product with the same objectivity, coldness, and epistemological apathy that contributes to their colonial complicity.

Before the photograph comes into existence, the very act of photographing enables one to establish a position vis-à-vis the world as it appears through the view-finder. As Susan Sontag states at the beginning of her work *On Photography*, “To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means to put oneself into a certain relation with the world that feels like knowledge—and, therefore, like power.”⁶⁹ In *Die Fälschung* the relation formed by the photographer Hoffmann is precisely one of knowledge and power. “Und welche erstaunlichen Bestimmungen stecken erst in diesem Hoffmann,” Laschen ponders, “welch eine triumphale Neutralität des Blicks durch den Sucher, welch eine brutale Zivilisiertheit” (DF, 186)? The civilized gaze imposed by Hoffmann places him in a position of authority over that which is on the opposite side of the lens. If, as Sontag asserts, through photographic acquisition “something becomes part of a system of information, fitted into schemes of classification and storage [...],” then Hoffmann’s participation in this systematic categorization is part of a predetermined classification.⁷⁰ In this way, Hoffmann is part of what Terry Smith terms the visual regime of colonization central to which is the practice of “calibration.”⁷¹ Together with mapping and measurement, Smith argues, the “surveillance of

⁶⁹ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: RosettaBooks, 2005 [1973]), p. 2.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Terry Smith, “Visual Regimes of Colonization: Aboriginal seeing and European vision in Australia,” in *The*

peoples” is part of a system of calibration that is more than an act of pure observation, but rather a process of “continuous refinement, of exacting control, of maintaining order” that “require[s] nothing less than this constantly reflexive watchfulness.”⁷² Hoffmann’s colonial gaze is likewise a means of maintaining order that both reflexively assures him of his civilized status and simultaneously reduces the observed, the photographed, to the realm of the inferior in need of this civilizing control.

That Hoffmann’s “triumphale Neutralität” and “brutale Zivilisiertheit” are both one in the same is not paradoxical. Indeed, as Said argues, at the heart of colonial discourse is the idea that “Orientalists [...] are [objective], by definition, by training, by the mere fact of their Westernness” which renders any information provided *ipso facto* objective and neutral even as it supports preconceived colonial hierarchies.⁷³ In contrast to Laschen’s reporting, however, photography is presented as colonial objectivity par excellence. Where Laschen’s blatantly manipulated interview with Exzellenz Tony is passed off as objective journalism, Hoffmann as well as his photographs are always already neutral, albeit triumphantly so. This is, in fact, one of photography’s defining characteristics, which, as Sontag states, “is essentially an act of non-intervention.”⁷⁴ It is in this way that Said’s analysis of orientalism parallels Sontag’s discussion of photography. Both are founded on claims of an a priori neutrality and objectivity that ultimately aims to maintain the status quo through the production and simultaneous control of knowledge and information. As Sontag argues:

Visual Culture Reader (New York: Routledge, 1998) ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff, pp.483-494, p. 483.

⁷² Terry Smith, “Visual Regimes of Colonization,” p. 483. For Sontag, one of the primary characteristics of photography is surveillance and control. *On Photography*, p. 3, 122.

⁷³ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 319.

⁷⁴ Sontag, *On Photography*, p. 8.

Although the camera is an observation station, the act of photographing is more than passive observing. Like sexual voyeurism, it is a way of at least tacitly, often explicitly, encouraging whatever is going on to keep on happening. To take a picture is to have an interest in things as they are, in the status quo remaining unchanged [...], to be in complicity with whatever makes a subject interesting, worth photographing—including, when that is the interest in another person's pain or misfortune.⁷⁵

The neutrality and objectivity of both colonial discourse and photography is thus not to be confused with passivity. Just as the production of colonial knowledge contributes to the perpetuation of colonialism itself, to photograph is to acquire and disseminate information in order to ensure that everything remains the same. Hoffman's ruthless "Zivilisiertheit" and his conquering "Neutralität" are then two sides of the same coin allotted to him as a photographer and as a civilized colonial power.

The photographic information provided by Hoffmann is, moreover, responsible for the creation of a second reality, or what Sontag terms an "image-world."⁷⁶ As the narrator states:

Ein Panzer stand schief in ein Gebäude hineingedrängt, festgefahren, und hatte eine Ladenfront eingedrückt. Einen kleinen Mann in grauem Kaftan sahen sie mit ausgebreiteten Armen vor dem Haus stehen und klagen. Es war ein Foto, schon bevor Hoffmann die Kamera hob. (DF, 55-6)

It is not reality that is captured here through photography, but the image itself that precedes and becomes a stand-in for the real. Here the photograph has progressed from Baudrillard's third to fourth, and final, phase of the image in which "it has no relation to reality whatsoever."⁷⁷ In the third phase, he states, the image "plays at being an appearance," a form of sorcery, whereas in the last stage it is "no longer of the order of appearances, but of

⁷⁵ Sontag, *On Photography*, pp. 8-9.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 131.

⁷⁷ Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, p. 6.

simulation.”⁷⁸ This shift is further reflected in Sontag’s argument that “the primitive notion of the efficacy of images presumes that images possess the qualities of real things, but our inclination is to attribute to real things the qualities of images.”⁷⁹ The reduction of reality to a standing reserve of images and information to be taken and subsequently categorized is not without its consequences. Photographs, Sontag further claims, redefine reality “as an item for exhibition, as a record for scrutiny, as a target for surveillance” that “provid[es] possibilities of control that could not even be dreamed of under the earlier system of recording information: writing.”⁸⁰ In the passage above, the precedence of the image relegates the reality of other worlds as such to the status of an exhibition that is as central to photography as it is to colonial discourse. As Timothy Mitchell argues: “The consolidation of the global hegemony of the West [...] can be connected not just to the imagery of Orientalism but to all the new machinery for rendering up and laying out the meaning of the world, so characteristic of the imperial age.”⁸¹ Among the museum, world exhibitions, and tourism, photography certainly belongs to the “new machinery” that in Mitchell’s analysis creates the “world-as-exhibition” in which the world is not so much exhibited as “organized and grasped as though it were an exhibition” in turn creating the reality of the very world it displays.⁸² For Hoffmann, as for Laschen, the reality of this other world is consigned to an incessant exhibitionary staging, “einen *Kriegsschauplatz*,” that is created, organized, and reproduced

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Sontag, *On Photography*, p. 123.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 122.

⁸¹ Timothy Mitchell, “Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order,” in *The Visual Culture Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1998) ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff, pp. 495-505, p. 495. Originally published as “The World as Exhibition,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31:2 (April, 1989), pp. 217-236.

⁸² Ibid., 500.

for their readers/viewers (*DF*, 217).

As with Hoffmann's "civilized" photographic gaze, the creation of this image-world and world-as-exhibition underscores a hierarchical structure in which the image-world both conforms to and continues the colonization of other worlds. Rather than informing the public or contributing to their knowledge of these worlds, the image-world created by photographs emphasizes that which is already known, or assumed to be known, about them. The photographs that Hoffmann provides are "solche zum Kopfschütteln und besseren Bescheidwissen, dreckige Bilder in sauberen Zimmer anzusehen" (*DF*, 57). The almost obligatory "Kopfschütteln" is not a moment of increased knowledge but a predetermined reaction triggered by that about which the viewer is already certain ("Bescheidwissen"). This information, which is nothing more than the repetition of the known, and the accompanying image-world it produces maintains the distant, civilized gaze that ensures them of difference between 'here' and 'there,' 'us' and 'them,' by contrasting the cleanliness of their world with filth and grime of others. Such images, moreover, secure the viewer's part in the "*Stellvertreterkrieg*" as a neutral and objective accomplice waging a war from the confines of unsoiled living rooms without ever having to know it themselves, thereby ensuring their ersatz control of this image-world.

This neutral, non-interventionist preservation of the status quo is best reflected in Laschen's disgust at Rudnik's, one of Laschen's contacts in Lebanon, reaction to photographs taken by a Syrian photographer. The photos show two men at a "Begrenzungsmauer des Schlachthofs" turning to face "ihre[] Bewachern" as they are shot, their bodies beginning to slide down the wall (*DF*, 166-7). Although he admits that he finds the images disturbing, Rudnik states, "Aber man muß doch allem ins Auge sehen können,

jeder Wahrheit, damit man sieht, was realistisch ist" (DF, 167). It is, however, neither enjoyment nor sadism that Laschen registers in Rudnik's response to the images but rather "die trostlose Sachlichkeit" and "mörderische Objektivität, mit der ein solcher Mensch niemals in Versuchung geriete, sich selbst mit einem Sterbenden oder Toten zu vergleichen, das Nichts und das Niemehr, in das jene hineinstürzt, für sich selbst vorbereitet zu sehen, oder auch nur für einen Moment ein anderer zu sein, fremd dem eigenen Blick" (DF, 167). The neutrality and objectivity that Rudnik displays upon viewing the images, his feeling of immunity, is the ultimate act of non-intervention that delights in the continuation of the status quo and the control and power allotted by the image-world. As Sontag explains: "The feeling of being exempt from calamity stimulates interest in looking at painful pictures, and in looking at them suggests and strengthens the feeling that one is exempt. [...] In the real world, something *is* happening and no one knows what is *going* to happen. In the image-world, it *has* happened, and it *will* forever happen in that way."⁸³ Rudnik is likewise accused of believing himself to be exempt from the circumstances of war and death that for him only exist in the reality of the image-world. The realism he accords to the images and the "Wahrheit" they encapsulate are merely characteristics of the image that, nevertheless, transform into informational constants guaranteeing that everything will remain as it is. War, death and destruction become the property of the Other while civilized, colonial scrutiny maintains its control through the aggressive neutrality and murderous objectivity of photographic realism.

Conclusion

⁸³ Sontag, *On Photography*, p. 131.

Born's third and final novel *Die Fälschung* is founded on contradiction. Through his critique of the reportage and photojournalism, Born's work highlights how the representation of other worlds is always already complicit in their construction. As I have shown, far from simply reflecting and reporting on the reality of Lebanon during the Civil War, *Die Fälschung* lays bare the ways in which journalism, as a means of gathering and transmitting information in words and images qua knowledge, is engaged with the continuation of colonial power structures. By highlighting the very construction of journalistic reports together with realistic photographic evidence, Born's novel demonstrates how both knowledge and reality are created by an organ of the public sphere and thus controlled. Journalistic realism, in both word and image, is indicted as producing a second, substitute reality for consumption by readers always hungry to know more and yet longing to be confirmed of that which they already know thereby upholding (neo)colonial hierarchies and presuppositions. As Alo Allkemper argues, however, *Die Fälschung* may very well expose the fake and forgery to which its title alludes, but this does not mean that the text leads us to the reality behind the journalistic counterfeit.⁸⁴ Rather, the novel suspends the basic contradiction at its core and in doing so makes an argument for the role of literature over the proposed "Faktographien," documentaries, and reportages of Hans Magnus Enzensberger. Where the latter are tasked with and thus restricted to realism and accessing objectivity, which as with colonial discourse flatten the difference between reality and its representation, *Die Fälschung* is an exercise in literary contradiction and reflexivity on the power and limits of literary knowledge. By refusing to reconcile the contradiction at its core in presuming to

⁸⁴ Alo Allkemper, "'Warum sollte ich mich nicht in Widersprüche verwickeln?': Nicolas Borns Probleme mit der Utopie," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* (103:1), eds., Werner Besch, Hugo Moser, Hartmut Steinecke, Benno von Wiese (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1984), pp. 576-603, p. 602.

portray the reality that journalism cannot, or is not willing to, Born's novel casts the glance back at itself and recognizes its own possible colonial collaboration. It is through the openness produced by the tension of contradiction and the reflexivity of literature's own colonial propensities that the novel accomplishes what its documentary, journalistic foil cannot—a critique of reality and (neo)colonial hierarchies that does not revert to their aesthetic affirmation. This reflexivity forms the core of Hubert Fichte and Leonore Mau's exploration of other worlds in *Xango*, which we turn to now.

Chapter 2

Communicating with Other Worlds: Hubert Fichte and Leonore Mau's *Xango*:

Xango [1976] is the first of what constitutes Fichte's decade-long engagement with African-American religions and cultures. In this work, Fichte documents his travels through Brazil, Haiti, and Trinidad together with his longtime partner and photographer Leonore Mau.¹ In *Xango*, in general, and in the chapter on Haiti, in particular, I argue that Fichte and Mau's work strives to put a German audience into dialogue with other worlds and other peoples. Through both writing—namely in the form of interviews as well as allusions to Germany's intellectual heritage—and photography, *Xango* places the reader in the position of the researcher. In doing so, Fichte's work creates a contact zone between two worlds that provides a model for understanding other worlds that does not lead to their continued colonization as was just illustrated in Born's novel *Die Fälschung*.

Fichte's *Xango* appeared at a time when the role of literature as well as the reader's relation to it were undergoing thorough reevaluation. The first shift involved the rise of reception/reader response theory in the works of Hans Robert Jauß and Wolfgang Iser, as

¹*Xango* is divided into two volumes, the first of which contains Mau's photographs and the second Fichte's writings. Both volumes were published during the same year by the same publishing house and are meant to be a "gemeinsame Publikation" and "Buch-Paar." See Peter Braun, "Irmas Kunst: Zu den gemeinsamen Arbeiten von Leonore Mau und Hubert Fichte," *Medium und Maske: Die Literatur Hubert Fichtes zwischen den Kulturen*, eds. Hartmut Böhme and Nikolaus Tiling (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1995), pp. 54-86, p. 74. Mau also provides the photographs for *Petersilie*, which also precede Fichte's work. Accordingly her photography volumes are numbered I (*Xango*) and III (*Petersilie*) where Fichte's works are II (*Xango*) and IV (*Petersilie*).

already discussed at length in the introduction to this dissertation. The second was an increased interest in ethnology as a form of knowledge of other worlds and the reevaluation of the boundaries between ethnography and literature. A child of the student movement, reception theory began already in 1967 with Jauß' inaugural address at the University of Constance titled, "Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft," which was published in 1969/70.² As the name suggests, reception theory deals with the reader, who, Jauß feels, has been largely left out or ignored by other theories, namely Marxist and Russian formalist literary theories that dominated the late sixties and early seventies.³ Similarly, Iser's reader response theory, beginning with his 1972 *Der implizite Leser (The Implied Reader)*, is focused on the relation between work and reader.⁴ This new approach to the literary work stands, moreover, in stark contrast to that of Adorno, whose work is largely the impetus for Jauß' reassessment. "To [Jauß], as to Adorno," Pauline Johnson states in her essay on the two theorists, "the social significance of the aesthetic object is measured in accordance with its ability to promote in the receptor a critical, reflective consciousness of

² Jauß, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970). As Robert C. Holub notes, "In fact, the University of Constance, where both Iser and Jauß taught beginning in the late sixties, was founded at the time as an alternative to the rigid, restrictive system of higher education at most German universities. [...] With student protests demanding a total restructuring and rethinking of institutional standards and the emergence of a generation of young scholars willing to undertake such sweeping reforms [...] several alternative methods became popular. [...] This was the intellectual climate into which reception theory was born, and when the birth occurred, it was not quietly announced in the appropriate section of the local newspaper, but brashly proclaimed on the front page in bold headlines." Robert C. Holub, *Crossing Borders: Reception Theory, Poststructuralism, Deconstruction* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), p. 8. In the decade following the student movement, Holub recounts that "Gunter Grimm was able to cite over four hundred entries in one section of a bibliography [...]" Holub, p. 4.

³ Jauß, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation*, p. 168.

⁴ In contrast to Jauß, whose literary theory is based on the reception of the work, it is possible to speak of Iser's as a reader response theory, one interested not so much in gauging the value of the work on its reception, but by the response (*Wirkung*) it induces. This shift from reception to response is partially what made him more palatable to international scholars (primarily American), as it was seen as having an affinity to New Criticism with its emphasis on meaning and production of meaning and away from significance on a sociological and historical level. See Robert C. Holub, *Crossing Borders*, p. 17-18.

the present. The main difference here is that, quite unlike Jauss [sic], Adorno denies the work an ability to communicate its critical negativity to a mass public.”⁵ In both cases, Jauß as well as Iser, reception and reader response theories provides both a receptive/responsive and communicative link between work and audience that fosters critical thinking, a task which Adorno relegates to the realm the philosopher-critic.⁶

At the same time literary theory was turning its attention to the reader and communication, ethnology was beginning to reevaluate its own foundations. In 1973, Clifford Geertz published his seminal work *The Interpretation of Cultures*.⁷ Geertz’s answer to the perhaps not-so-rhetorical question “‘What does the ethnographer do?’” is, quite simply, that “he writes.”⁸ This straightforward claim stood in diametrical opposition to the standard response of “‘He observes, he records, he analyzes’—a kind of *veni, vidi, vici* conception of the matter” and gauges the merit of the ethnographic text not on “uninterpreted data” and “radically thinned descriptions,” but its ability to “bring us into touch with the lives

⁵ Pauline Johnson, “An Aesthetics of Negativity/An Aesthetics of Reception: Jauss’s Dispute with Adorno,” *New German Critique* 42 (Autumn, 1987), pp. 51-70, p. 70. Jauß’ critique of Adorno is published in *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik* (München: Fink, 1977) as the second part of his “Aufriss einer Theorie und Geschichte der Ästhetischen Erfahrung.” The first part is the above quoted “Was heißt ästhetische Erfahrung.”

⁶ As Johnson summarizes: “The truth content of the work is yielded only by the interpretive work of philosophical criticism. By immanent analysis of the forms, the configurations within the work, the philosopher-critic is also one equipped to reveal the antipathy of the work to a false, reified semblance of reconciliation and its allegiance to an image of authentic reconciliation.” Pauline Johnson “An Aesthetics of Negativity/An Aesthetics of Reception,” p. 59.

⁷ This work had a large impact both on the writing of ethnographies as well as on the literary world, West Germany included, not least because of Geertz’s emphasis on the literary strategies involved in writing about cultures over textual objectivity—his technique of “thick description” whereby context is stressed as much as the observed behavior itself. See for example Ulla Biernat, *Ich bin nicht der erste Fremde hier: Zur deutschsprachigen Reiseliteratur nach 1945* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004), p. 108. Christoph Schmitt-Maaß stresses this as well in “Erbrechen oder Einverleiben? Zwischen eigenmotivierter Fremdforschung und Gefährdung des Subjekts: Ethnographie im Spannungsfeld von Wissenschaft, Poesie und Autobiographie,” *Monatshefte*, 100.2 (Summer 2008), pp. 191-212.

⁸ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 19.

of strangers.”⁹ Indeed, Geertz sums up the overarching goal of ethnology itself as a communicative one:

We are not, or at least I am not, seeking either to become natives (a compromised word in any case) or to mimic them. Only romantics or spies would seem to find point in that. We are seeking, in the widened sense of the term in which it encompasses very much more than to talk, to converse with them, a matter a great deal more difficult, and not only with strangers, than is commonly recognized. “If speaking *for* someone else seems to be a mysterious process,” Stanley Cavell has remarked, “that may be because speaking *to* someone does not seem mysterious enough.” Looked at in this way, the aim of anthropology is the enlargement of the universe of human discourse.¹⁰

For Geertz, ethnology is ultimately an exercise in conversation and communication. More than simply talking to someone, it is invested in a dialogic exchange on a scientific (field work) as well as a textual level. Through the text the reader becomes part of the conversation—a participant in Geertz’s proclaimed “enlargement of the universe of human discourse.”

Fichte’s *Xango* takes part in this larger discussion and reexamination of the role of the reader and work. This is, to be sure, a loaded task. As with Born, Fichte is well aware of the colonial proclivities of writing about the foreign and, moreover, of the dissemination of knowledge about it. In what is perhaps the most often quoted passage from *Xango*, Fichte states, “Wir sind die Sieger. Wir treten auf mit der Haltung der Siegreichen. Wissen ist Macht.”¹¹ Fichte’s chapter on Haiti in *Xango* and Born’s novel thus both revolve around the central contradiction that knowledge about and representations of other worlds is complicit in the perpetual colonization thereof. For Fichte, this rests to a large extent on the lack of

⁹ Ibid., p. 16, 20.

¹⁰ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 13-14.

¹¹ Hubert Fichte, *Xango. Die afroamerikanischen Religionen: Bahia, Haiti, Trinidad II* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1976), p. 119. From here on cited as “X.”

communication within both the ethnographic and literary text, which, rather than speaking to or with other worlds, more often commit the act of speaking *for* them and thereby participate in the “Wissen ist Macht” structure of the production of colonial knowledge. On the ethnographic level, this is most evident in Fichte’s polemic against Claude Lévi-Strauss’ *Tristes Tropiques* [1955]. As Fichte points out, although Lévi-Strauss admits that he cannot speak the language of the peoples he studies, claiming that they refused (“verweigern”) to speak to him, this does not prevent him from definitively asserting facts about these tribes upon which his entire work is based.¹² Literature, particularly German literature, is for Fichte similarly limited in its communicative, dialogic efforts. Fichte poses the question in his essay “Elf Übertreibungen: Einführung in ein Lesebuch:”

Deutsche Literatur—gibt es das überhaupt?
 Als ein Netz von Beziehungen—Correspondances?
 [...] Als ein Netz von Beziehungen aus Sprache—über das Innere und über die Welt?
 Deutsche Weltliteratur im doppelten Sinn:
 In der Welt und aus der Welt?¹³

For Fichte, German literature is a hermetically sealed world, barely in communication with itself much less the world writ large. Rather than a “Weltliteratur” in the Goethean sense based on, as Andreas Huyssen states, the “translation and appropriation” of foreign texts that Edward Said notes aided in establishing a “kind of intellectual *authority* over the Orient within Western culture,” Fichte desires a literature in conversation with the world.¹⁴ To overcome the lasting colonial attributes in both ethnology and literature, Fichte’s *Xango*

¹² Fichte, “Das Land des Lächelns: Polemische Anmerkungen zu *Tristes Tropiques* von Claude Lévi-Strauss,” *Homosexualität und Literatur I*, ed. Torsten Teichert (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1986), pp. 319-351, p. 339. It should be noted that Fichte was fluent in numerous languages from Spanish and French to Haitian Creole and Brazilian Portuguese.

¹³ Fichte, “Elf Übertreibungen: Einführung in ein Lesebuch,” *Homosexualität und Literatur I*, ed. Torsten Teichert (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1986), pp. 9-21, p. 10.

¹⁴ Andreas Huyssen, “Geographies of Modernism,” *New German Critique* 100, 64:1 (Winter 2007), pp. 189-207, p. 195. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p. 19.

attempts to bring the implied reader into dialogue both with the work and thereby with other worlds.

Between the Land of Laughter and the Sad Tropics

As with Born and journalism, Fichte accuses ethnographies of upholding colonial power structures through the production of knowledge, reality, and control. While references to the ethnographical works of James Frazer, Michel Leiris, and Bronisław Malinowski occasionally find their way into Fichte's texts and interviews as well most secondary literature on Fichte, the one modern ethnographer that Fichte engages with in detail is Claude Lévi-Strauss.¹⁵ "Der Ethnologe geht siegreich aus der Strukturenanalyse des Indianerstammes hervor," Fichte writes at the beginning of *Xango* (X, 119). Referencing Lévi-Strauss's groundbreaking work *Tristes Tropiques*, Fichte places him among the list of conquerors, those who under the motto of "Wissen ist Macht" emerge as colonial victors from their research expeditions. In his essay "Das Land des Lächelns: Polemische Anmerkungen zu *Tristes Tropiques* von Claude Lévi-Strauss," Fichte locates this victorious colonial mentality already in the title of Lévi-Strauss' work:

Denn wie bei *Africa Addio* steht hinter diesem Titel ja noch ein anderes Sprachverhalten, eine weitere ideologische Auffassung:

¹⁵ The reason for his polemic against Lévi-Strauss's work is often attributed to the similarity of their projects. As David Simo states: "Die poetischen und ideologischen Unterschiede zwischen beiden Autoren sind allerdings unverkennbar, aber Fichtes Abgrenzungswut verrät paradoxerweise das Bewußtsein der Nähe." Simo, *Interkulturalität und ästhetische Erfahrung*, p. 3. Klaus Neumann expands on Simo's sentiment arguing: "The harshness of [Fichte's] critique makes me wonder, though, whether he recognized in Lévi-Strauss' confessions basic premises of anthropology that Fichte himself could not completely evade in his own writings." Neumann, "Fichte as Ethnographer," *Cultural Anthropology*, 6:3 (August, 1991), pp. 263-284, p. 275. Fichte's essay first appeared as the third part of the series *Poetische Anthropologie* broadcast by the Nord- and Süddeutsche Rundfunk. Many of the critiques leveled against Lévi-Strauss in this essay find their first expression in the Haiti chapter in *Xango*.

Die Tropen waren doch sicher nicht immer triste.
Sie sind es ja erst geworden.¹⁶

Tristes Tropiques, *Traurige Tropen*: for Fichte the poetic alliteration of the title is symptomatic of its factual and colonially restorative pretense. “Man hat dem Strukturalismus eine restaurative Tendenz vorgeworfen,” Fichte states, “—mir geht es weniger um die Beurteilung einer Philosophie—mir geht es um Sprachverhalten, um das Transportieren von Fakten.”¹⁷ And further: “Aber selbst wenn ethnographische Dürre hier in den Schatten junger Mädchenblüte hochgerilkt werden sollte—ist es denn auch nur in einem restaurativen Sinn eindrucksvoll, poetisch, schön.”¹⁸ “Reportagen,” Fichte writes in *Xango*, “sind Trophäen aus Hunger, aus Hermaphroditen, aus Hingerichteten” (X, 119).

The colonial reach of ethnographies such as Lévi-Strauss’, to be sure, extends beyond the title of the work. Fichte finds in the very method of ethnographers a colonial comportment that exploits the peoples they attempt to understand. “Die Länder der Dritten Welt,” Fichte asserts in *Xango*, “liefern Rohmaterialien für das aus ihnen konstruierte marxistische, strukturalistische, existenzialistische, naturwissenschaftliche, geisteswissenschaftliche Weltbild” (X, 217). The studied peoples of other worlds become reduced to raw materials and resources to be used up, exploited, and discarded in the name of knowledge and understanding. The underlying destructive, exploitative nature of colonialism that is partly based on a desire to know and understand is, indeed, Fichte’s most damning criticism of Lévi-Strauss and ethnology:

¹⁶ Fichte, “Das Land des Lächelns: Polemische Anmerkungen zu *Tristes Tropiques* von Claude Lévi-Strauss,” *Homosexualität und Literatur I*, ed. Torsten Teichert (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1986), pp. 319-351, p.322. In his essay Fichte references both the original French version as well as the 1960 German translation from Susanne Heintz published by Kiepenheuer & Witsch. *Africa Addio* is an Italian documentary film from 1966 about the decolonization of East Africa.

¹⁷ Fichte, “Das Land des Lächelns,” p. 322.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Die Tortur des französischen Universitätsbetriebs.
Die Tortur der Ethnologie.
Und allen Kolonialismus'.
Wußte Strauss das nicht?
Doch.
Nur eine Seite später finde ich:
Die Ethnologie beruhigt diesen unruhigen und zerstörischen Appetit, von dem ich sprach, indem sie meiner Reflexion ein praktisch unerschöpfliches Material garantiert, welches durch die Verschiedenheit der Sitten, der Gebräuche und der Institutionen geliefert wird.—¹⁹

For Fichte, Lévi-Strauss' "Sprachverhalten" and the manner in which he transports his facts divulge his participation in the destructive appetite of colonialism that reduces human subjects to "unerschöpfliches Material."

Herodotus and Fichte's Poetic Anthropology

"Mein Freund Herodot" is the title of Fichte's essay on Herodotus's *The Histories*.²⁰ Unlike "Das Land des Lächelns," this essay's title is by no means critical or ironic. Rather it is a fan letter to someone whom Fichte considers an intellectual and literary friend. What Fichte finds praiseworthy in Herodotus is precisely opposite of that in Lévi-Strauss:

Herodot, mein Freund.
Herodots Umgetriebensein, nicht still sitzen können.
Was ist hinter der Ecke!
Was ist jenseits der Bergkette!
Nicht: Wissen ist Macht!—sondern: Reisen ist Wissen!²¹

The remaining vestiges of a colonial production and dissemination of knowledge that Fichte

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 331.

²⁰ This was first delivered in the Norddeutsche Rundfunk and appears for the first time in print in *Homosexualität und Literatur I*, ed. Torsten Teichert (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1986), pp. 381-406. Fichte's references Herodotus' *Historien*, ed. Josef Feix (München: Heimeran, 1977).

²¹ Fichte, "Mein Freund Herodot," p. 383.

levels against Lévi-Strauss is turned on its head in Herodotus. The goal is not the knowledge in the service of power, but rather the urge and desire to travel in order to know anything at all. To be sure, the two are closely related and almost indistinguishable. Was it not Lévi-Strauss' own travels that facilitated the knowledge that Fichte criticizes as an extension of colonial power? The difference between knowledge-is-power and travel-is-knowledge for Fichte, however, is two-fold. For one, the latter expresses a curiosity that is not founded on predetermined knowledge that one sets out to prove, as Fichte's analysis of *Tristes Tropiques* claims. Second, this curiosity allows for doubts and uncertainties that are always already absent in the "Wissen ist Macht" mentality.

The characteristic of curiosity for Fichte stands in diametrical opposition to the type of interest and knowledge that appears in Lévi-Strauss. Where Lévi-Strauss' work displays its colonial tendencies in no small part through its confirmation of the already known, in which the sadness of the tropics reflects Said's neutralization of the new through the familiar, Herodotus' work is dominated by a restless inquisitiveness:

Neben dem Selbstbewußtsein wird Herodots Neugier deutlich dokumentiert; es ist jene enzyklopädische Neugier, die vor nichts zurückschreckt, Herodots Neugier umfaßt alles, bündelt es, holt es jedoch, kritisch, ins menschliche Maß zurück.

Es bleibt unfäßlich, daß nach einem so neugierigen Beginn ein so unneugieriges Europa entstand, für das Wissen selten etwas andres war als Macht, die Kolonialgeschichte Europas bleibt die Geschichte der Unempfindlichkeit, die Philosophie Europas unneugieriger Idealismus, Scholastik, Scheuklappen und Gebetsmühlen [...], die Fehler in der praktischen Anschauung füllen Bände Aristoteles, Sartre und Lévi-Strauss.²²

Contrary to the later Western European tradition, Herodotus possessed a genuine curiosity of other worlds. "In wenigen Worten," Torsten Teichert poignantly states, "skizzert Fichte seine Kritik an einer Tradition europäischen Denkens, deren ideologisches Rückgrat nicht die

²² Fichte, "Mein Freund Herodot," p. 396.

Neugier auf die fremde Welt, sondern der Machtanspruch auf Weltbeherrschung und Weltdenkung war [...].”²³ It is, moreover, in curiosity that knowledge or the desire for knowledge renounces the totalizing world views of philosophy, whose raw material is the peoples and cultures of other worlds, and in its place there emerges a recognition of the limits of knowledge in the form of doubt. Fichte highlights the element of doubt in one passage from Herodotus:

Ich staune aber, meine Rede, meine Wörter untersuchten von Anfang an
Nebensachen, Abschweifungen, Anhängsel, Details.
Staunen—das bedeutet auch Zweifeln.
Trotz dieser ein für allemal Empirie, Naturwissenschaft festlegenden Formeln hat
man Herodot der Fälschung, der Flüchtigkeit bezichtigt.²⁴

Herodotus’ astonishment at the irrelevancies and digressions of his work creates a moment of doubt concerning that which he thinks he knows. For Fichte, this should be the foundation for empiricism and natural science, doubt and curiosity rather than a totalizing, all-encompassing view of the world.

It is this curiosity combined with doubt that guides Fichte’s own approach to the representation of other worlds. Echoing Herodotus, he declares in *Xango*

Ich gehe aus Haiti nicht als Sieger hervor.
Meine Aufzeichnungen sind die Aufzeichnungen von Irrtümern, Fehlschlüssen,
Kurzschlussbehandlungen. (X, 119)

It is not just the act of admitting the shortcomings and failures of his venture that allows for Fichte’s position outside the rank and file of the victors, but the exposure thereof throughout the work. As Klaus Neumann argues, “Fichte demands that ethnographies no longer be cleansed of what their authors consider to be irrelevant or false information and that they no

²³ Torsten Teichert, *‘Herzschlag aussen:’ Die Poetische Konstruktion des Fremden und des Eigenen im Werk von Hubert Fichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1987), p. 34.

²⁴ Fichte, “Mein Freund Herodot,” p. 383.

longer be cleansed of the ethnographers' doubts either."²⁵ Lévi-Strauss, to be sure, admits to his own limitations, for instance his inability to speak the language of the Brazilian natives, which Fichte finds to be "eine der wenigen ehrlichen Aussagen Strauss."²⁶ Admitting this weakness, however, is not an exposure thereof, as Lévi-Strauss can nevertheless claim, "Die Frauen denken sich als eine Kollektivität" to which Fichte responds: "Ich möchte die Methode wissen, wie man, ohne eine Sprache zu beherrschen, über Gedanken in diesem Sprachbereich etwas Stichhaltiges äußern kann."²⁷ Lévi-Strauss has no doubts and admitting his flaw does not prevent him from expressing concrete, definitive conclusions about the peoples he studies. For Fichte, as for Herodotus, it is not about the research itself, but the very exposure of the processes behind the research:

Ich muß Forschungen aufdecken, wie jeder Schriftsteller, wie Herodot [...].
Forschung.
Aufdecken.
Es ist ein zerstörerischer Reflex.
Ohne ihn höre ich auf zu existieren.²⁸

The destructive reflex of exposing research is that it dismantles both the steadfast truth claims of said research as well as the colonial, knowledge-is-power world view such research propagates.

The basis of Fichte's poetic anthropology is the triumvirate curiosity, doubt, and exposure through which he believes to avoid the pervasive colonial consequences of ethnology. But what of the poetic side to Fichte's project? For all of Fichte's interest in ethnology, he was not a trained ethnologist and was indeed looked upon with suspicion from

²⁵ Klaus Neumann, "Fichte as Ethnographer," p. 268.

²⁶ Fichte, "Das Land der Lächeln," p. 339.

²⁷ Fichte, "Das Land der Lächeln," p. 339.

²⁸ Fichte, "Mein Freund Herodot," p. 383.

those in academia.²⁹ Fichte was a writer and never claimed any differently. As he asserts in *Xango*:

Ich habe nie gelogen und mich als Doktor oder Professor ausgegeben oder als ein in Afrika oder sonstwo Eingeweihter. Ich habe immer gesagt, dass ich Schriftsteller bin und über den Synkretismus berichten will. (X, 146)

As much as *Xango* is an exercise in rectifying Fichte's perceived wrongs in Lévi-Strauss' *Tristes Tropiques*, it is also an aesthetic one. Among his list of colonial victors, Fichte includes the author: "Der Romanschriftsteller siegt im Roman" (X, 119). The basis for the literary, aesthetic problem is one of language and ultimately communication:

[...] unsere Wörter sind die Franzosen, die die Spanier und die Indianer niedermetzeln.

[...]

Gäbe es zwischen dem Wittgenstein'schen Schweigen und der Sprache unserer Siegeranalysen und Siegersynthesen eine Sprache, in der die Bewegung sich abwechselnder und widersprechender Ansichten deutlich werden könnte, das Dilemma von Empfindlichkeit und Anpassung, Verzweifeln und Praxis – ich würde sie benützen.

Es wäre eine wesentlich andere Sprache.

Vielleicht verfügten die Indianer und die Afrikaner über weniger kolonisierende Ausdrucksweisen. (X, 119)³⁰

What Fichte is searching for, in other words, is a language that goes beyond the colonizing tendencies of language itself, from the "Sprachverhalten" of Lévi-Strauss to that of

²⁹ As Klaus Neumann asserts, "Hubert Fichte had no degree in anthropology. Nor any other academic degree, for that matter. Maybe defining himself in halves (and sometimes as two persons in one) helped him to bear recording the fragmentation of reality and to resist the temptation to construct coherent wholes. Maybe his position outside academia helped him to make do without applying structures and systems to what he observed. (Certainly his position as a renowned writer of novels helped main-stream academia to neglect his work as an ethnographer.) Neumann, "Fichte as Ethnographer," p. 267. Michael Fisch as well points to the "Skepsis" with which Fichte was received upon visiting the "Völkerkundemuseum" in Hamburg to learn more about the African-American religions he encountered after his first visit to Brazil in 1969. Fisch, *Verwörterung der Welt*, pp. 163-4.

³⁰ The reference to Wittgenstein is from *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* in which he states "Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (New York: Barnes & Nobel, 2003 [1922]), p. 156.

“Romanschriftsteller.” This desire for a post- and anti-colonial language remains, however, trapped in the subjunctive.³¹ Moreover, although Fichte was fluent in numerous languages from Spanish and French to Haitian Creole and Brazilian Portuguese, he wrote exclusively in German for a German audience. Without taking away from Fichte’s linguistic concern, I contend that the ultimate goal of *Xango* is to promote communication between two worlds, the world of Fichte and the implied reader and the other world of Haiti.

The importance of communication for Fichte also has its roots in Herodotus. The success of Herodotus’ work lies not only in its foundation of curiosity and doubt, but ultimately in his communication thereof. Fichte sees in Herodotus an attempt at the “Verwörterung der Welt:”³²

Jedoch als Herodot, wohl gegen die Mitte des fünften Jahrhunderts, [...] die Welt in Wörtern neu erstellte und verstellte, bewegte er sich, für uns heute kaum vorstellbar, bereits in einer Welt aus Wörtern, zageren, einzelneren.³³

Herodotus not only participated in the written portrayal of the world, he also moved within a world that was dominated by words. In this way, his work was more than a simple act of depiction. The act of writing for Herodotus is both motile and communicative (“er bewegte sich”) one with and within a world composed of words. Fichte highlights this in his own choice of words. Herodotus “erstellt” and “verstellt” the world anew, both creating and altering it. This is in stark contrast to “erstehen” and “verstehen” in meaning—to acquire and

³¹ For more on Fichte’s concern with language see David Simo, *Interkulturalität und ästhetische Erfahrung: Untersuchungen zum Werk Hubert Fichtes* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1993), pp. 79-96; David Simo, “Die Suche nach einer postkolonialen Sprache. Hubert Fichte: *Psyche*,” *Schriftsteller und “Dritte Welt:” Studien zum postkolonialen Blick*, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler (Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1998), pp. 207-220; Hubert Uerlings, *Poetiken der Interkulturalität: Haiti bei Kleist, Seghers, Müller, Buch und Fichte* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1997), pp. 251-285.

³² Fichte, “Exkurs: Mittelmeer und Golf von Benin. Die Beschreibung afrikanischer und afroamerikanischer Riten bei Herodot,” *Homosexualität und Literatur I*, ed. Torsten Teichert (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1986), pp. 407-422, p. 413.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 410.

understand versus to construct and adjust—and, moreover, morphologically, in which the root “stellen” connotes movement where “stehen” a fixed position. The former, “erstellen” and “verstellen,” expose the movement of a dialogic structure, the back-and-forth of communication and conversation whereby one creates an argument, or position, and alters it accordingly through the course of discussion. Fichte’s work is, like Herodotus’, an attempt to communicate with different worlds, both the other worlds that he visits as well as his own German world.³⁴ The act of “erstellen” and “verstellen” is an aesthetic move that creates the conditions of possibility for communication based not on “Wissen ist Macht” but “Reisen ist Wissen,” a communicative, dialogic movement against the colonial euro-centrism founded on “ver-stehen” and “er-stehen.”

In *Xango*, Fichte proposes the dialogue as a way of presenting knowledge about other worlds that does not participate in their continued colonization. Where the “Wissen ist Macht” characteristic of the colonial production of knowledge is a unidirectional process—one speaks *for* rather than *with* the other world—whereby knowledge is *created* and *appropriated* from other worlds neutralizing the new in favor of the known and familiar, the dialogue is a bidirectional exchange. As Fichte remarks, however, the dialogue can also contain colonial attributes: “Im Gespräch siegen wir auf zwei Fronten: Über das Sujet und über den Partner” (X, 119). The dialogue initiated by Fichte in *Xango* attempts to overcome this victorious, colonial posturing by exposing the very conditions that make the dialogue possible. Moreover, as with Herodotus, this exposure as un-covering research (“Forschung aufdecken”) is a *reflexive* process that casts the glance back at the researcher/writer, reader,

³⁴ As David Simo argues, “Die Bücher Fichtes weisen eine vielschichtige dialogische Struktur auf. Sie organisieren einen Dialog unter den Informanten, zwischen beiden Quellen und eigenen Beobachtungen des Autors. Andererseits sind sie auch eine Auseinandersetzung zwischen den Ichs des Erzählers und den Ichs anderer und zwischen seinen Ichs und dem wir (deutsche bzw. europäische Kultur).” Simo, *Intertextualität und ästhetischer Erfahrung*, p. 113.

and the text itself reminding them of their position within a colonially culpable power structure and challenging the colonial knowledge-is-power worldview. After all, as Fichte states, “*Wir sind die Sieger*” (X, 119, emphasis added). The dialogic structure in *Xango* brings the reader into conversation with other worlds and, at the same time, with their own world and the cultural and historical baggage that comes along with it. The following section looks at the dialogue through the lens of Jauss’ reception theory and breaks it down into the two interrelated processes that constitute it: reception and communication.³⁵ I argue that *Xango* first establishes a communicative element with the reader through the use of allusions which reflexively places him and Fichte’s work within a particularly German context bringing the reader and the work into dialogue—establishing a “Netz von Beziehungen – Correspondances.” Lastly, I turn to the interviews that form the receptive side of the equation. The interview, for Fichte, allows the other world to speak *for* itself *with* the reader through which the latter receives information. This, too, is a reflexive mechanism that exposes the process of interviewing and turns it on its head—the researcher becomes the researched, the reader transforms into that which is read.

Xango: Establishing a Dialogue with Other Worlds

Allusions are, as expressed in the German “Anspielung,” a form of play that is founded on communication. As Sybille Benninghoff-Lühl poignantly remarks on the

³⁵ David Simo as well points to Fichte’s interest in reception. As he states: “Er vertritt den Standpunkt, daß die Literatur gerade dort etwas Exemplarisches hervorbringt, wo sie sich um das Exemplarische nicht kümmert, und plädiert für eine Literaturrezeption aus Neugierde, wo der Leser in Büchern nicht etwas Exemplarisches sucht oder sich wiederzufinden hofft, sondern eine Begegnung mit dem Anderen zustrebt.” Simo, *Interkulturalität und ästhetische Erfahrung*, p. 157.

etymology of allusion in her essay on Fichte: “Alludere: Sich spielend nähern. Leise herankommen, auf etwas anspielen. Ludere heißt spielen, heißt auch täuschen, mit Jemandem sein Spiel treiben.”³⁶ This play is to be understood both in the sense of the tension between distance and proximity, as in the play of a rope or cord, and as a game. On the one hand, the recognition of the allusion draws one nearer (“sich spielend nähern”) to the text. On the other, one is involved in a deceptive game (“mit Jemandem ein Spiel treiben”) that creates a distance from the text as it points to another beyond the confines of the covers. As Benninghoff-Lühl notes, the allusion “genügt sich nicht selbst, sondern verlangt die Aufklärung über ein Anderes, Ähnliches” through which “einmal eingeschlagene Richtungen abgeschnitten [werden].”³⁷ The play initiated by the allusion is thus not a solitary endeavor but a communicative one that presupposes both bi-directionality and an interlocutor—that is, it is in dialogue with that which it alludes as well as with the reader for whom the allusion is intended. The distance and proximity created by the play of the allusion echoes, moreover, Jauß’ concept of the communicative element of aesthetic experience, which, he argues, facilitates “eigentümliche Rollendistanz des Zuschauers” as well as “spielerische Identifikation” with the text.³⁸ Key to this process of identification/nearness and distance is the reader’s familiarity with other texts. “Die ästhetische Implikation liegt darin,” Jauß states, “dass schon die primäre Aufnahme eines Werkes durch den Leser eine *Erprobung* des

³⁶ Sybille Benninghoff-Lühl, “‘Schon irgendeinmal nämlich war ich Knabe und Mädchen und Baum und Raubvogel und auch aus der See ein stummer Fisch.’ Zur Verwendung des Zitats in Hubert Fichtes *Forschungsbericht. Roman*,” *Medium und Maske: Die Literatur Hubert Fichtes zwischen den Kulturen*, eds., Hartmut Böhme and Nikolaus Tiling (Stuttgart: M&P Verlag für Wissenschaft und Forschung, 1995), pp. 143-159, p. 153.

³⁷ Benninghoff-Lühl, “‘Schon irgendeinmal nämlich war ich Knabe und Mädchen und Baum und Raubvogel und auch aus der See ein stummer Fisch,’” p. 154.

³⁸ Hans Robert Jauß, “Aufriss einer Theorie und Geschichte der Ästhetischen Erfahrung,” *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik* (München: Fink, 1977), p. 32.

ästhetischen Wertes im Vergleich mit schon gelesenen Werken einschließt.”³⁹ The text, for Jauß, initiates a dialogue with the reader that is largely based on the knowledge of other texts. This not only entails involvement from the reader in the aesthetic act through investigation and probing of the aesthetic landscape (“Erprobung des ästhetischen Wertes”), but also adds to his critical understanding (“kritisches Verstehen”) of the work.⁴⁰ Allusions create therefore both a critical distance from the text at hand and a sense of nearness and identification with it that is not only active but moreover communicative.

Fichte’s allusions function to communicate with the reader, locating him within a certain historical and cultural tradition and, at the same time, distancing him critically from it. The first of these allusions appears in the opening lines of the Haiti chapter. “Das Unbehagen in der Kultur,” Fichte muses, “ist dem blanken Horror gewichen” (X, 119). Fichte’s reference to Freud’s *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* [1930] could, upon first glance, suggest escapism.⁴¹ For Freud, the discontent with one’s own culture arises from the renunciation of instinct and the sublimation of libidinal desires that make the development of culture possible. This deep-seeded dissatisfaction, however, leads many to seek solace in a primitive state before and beyond culture. As Freud argues:

[Die Behauptung] lautet, einen großen Teil der Schuld an unserem Elend trage unsere sogenannte Kultur; wir wären viel glücklicher, wenn wir sie aufgeben und in primitive Verhältnisse zurückfinden würden. Ich heiße sie erstaunlich, weil — wie immer man den Begriff Kultur bestimmen mag — es doch feststeht, daß alles, womit wir uns gegen die Bedrohung aus den Quellen des Leidens zu schützen versuchen,

³⁹ Jauß, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation*, pp. 169-170, emphasis added.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ It is worth noting Freud’s own interests in anthropology that are prevalent not only in this work, but more so in *Totem und Tabu* [1913]. Freud also decorated his Vienna study with anthropological artifacts from around the world. For more on Freud’s relation to anthropology see Edwin R. Wallace, *Freud and Anthropology: A History and Reappraisal* (New York: International Universities Press, 1983).

eben der nämlichen Kultur zugehört.⁴²

In Freud's account, it is not possible to escape one's culture in search of primordial state in which suffering does not exist. Such a condition, the imagining of a different state of affairs beyond the constraints of civilization, is itself a construct of the culture from which one seeks liberation. In short, everything emanates from this very culture, both cause and sought-after cure. There exists therefore the possibility that the search for something beyond our own civilization only serves the continuation thereof. Escaping from or revolting against this culture contains a conservative element.⁴³ As Freud suggests, such attempts "[kann] so einer weiteren Entwicklung der Kultur günstig werden, mit der Kultur verträglich bleiben."⁴⁴ Fichte's allusion to Freud is not an affirmation of escapism.⁴⁵ Quite to the contrary, it establishes a cultural, intellectual heritage in which both Fichte and the reader are located and initiates a confrontation with and critical inquiry into its own colonial past and present. In the same way Freud's theorized discontent with culture poses both a desired distance from as

⁴²Freud, *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (Wien: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1930), p. 41.

⁴³ These conservative, repressive elements in culture later become the focus of the Frankfurt School's interest in Freud. Herbert Marcuse's concept of "repressive desublimation" and "affirmative culture" as well as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's "culture industry" are based largely on this dilemma posed first by Freud. See, for example, Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon, 1964); Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1969); Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002 [1947]).

⁴⁴ Freud, *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, p. 57.

⁴⁵ Simo as well discounts the idea of escapism in Fichte's ethnographic works. As he argues, Fichte's question : "Ist die afroamerikanische Kultur die Marotte von ein paar Escapisten, die sich in der eigenen Kultur nicht mehr zurechtfinden und deshalb ins Exotische fliehen und ins Puvre?" "richtet sich gegen diejenige Kritik, die hinter jeder Beschäftigung mit der außereuropäischen Kultur eine Flucht vor der eigenen vermutet." Simo, *Interkulturalität und ästhetische Erfahrung*, p. 31. Fichte's quote is from his essay "Mittelmeer und Golf von Benin: Die Beschreibung afrikanischer und afroamerikanischer Riten bei Herodot," *Homosexualität und Literatur I*, ed. Torsten Teichert (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1986), pp. 407-422, p. 407. Yet, in an interview with Rüdiger Wischenbart, Fichte does not necessarily exclude the idea of fleeing and escaping: "Ich schließe nicht aus, daß alle unsere Reisen Erinnerungen an Fluchten sind. Ich bin nicht sicher genug und ich glaube, man kann über so generelle Dinge nicht sicher sein. Ich würde das vielleicht auch nicht als Theorem setzen, aber ich vermute es schon." Wischenbart, "'Ich schreibe, was mir die Wahrheit zu sein scheint': Ein Gespräch mit Hubert Fichte," *Text + Kontext* 72, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold (October 1981), pp. 67-85, p. 73.

well as an identification with it—the need to escape from one’s culture that betrays one’s proximity to it—Fichte’s work establishes an “eigentümliche Rollendistanz” as well as a “spielerische Identifikation” to the work as well as culture in which it exists.⁴⁶ His allusions thus speak to a German audience within a particular cultural tradition and, at the same time, through his alterations rub this tradition against the grain. Discontent has been replaced by the horror of one’s own culture, the horror of being part of the catalogue of colonial victors from which one seeks to distance himself and yet is always already a part of it.

The second primary allusion in *Xango* occurs when Fichte is participating in a voodoo ritual. Fichte is given an elixir to drink by a male priest, or Houngan, at the ceremony. For all of his desire to take part in a Voodoo ritual, Fichte is suddenly overcome with fear and wonders what effects this potion will have: “Ist es ein Gift? Ein Neuroleptikum? Ein Dysleptikum? Werde ich krank davon? Langsam verrückt? Fallen mir die Zähne davon aus? Die Haare? Die Nägel?” (X, 146). Moreover, this fear elicits certain stereotypes: “Verwandle ich mich in einen Zombie? Einen lebenden Leichnam? Ich habe Angst” and, he continues, “Aber jetzt erfinde ich mit der Flasche magischen Hokusfokus” (X, 146). This moment, in which his desire to know the intimate intricacies of a voodoo ceremony and convey this knowledge to his readers reverts to stereotypes of Zombies and Hocus-pocus, triggers an allusion to Nietzsche: “Vollführe ich hier gedrängt die Geburt der Magie aus dem Geist der Angst?” (X, 146). What do Nietzsche and *Die Geburt der Tragödie* [1872] have to do with the walking dead and magic? The key lies in the nature of the stereotype as knowledge that generates the allusion. As I outlined in Chapter 2, Homi Bhabha

⁴⁶ Hans Robert Jauss, “Aufriss einer Theorie und Geschichte der Ästhetischen Erfahrung,” p. 32.

expands Said's process of the simultaneous recognition and disavowal of difference in the colonial production of knowledge to the stereotype as fetishism. For Bhabha, the stereotype mirrors Freud's concept of the fetish that serves to retain dominance in the face of impotence and castration.⁴⁷ It is in the fetish of the stereotype then that colonial knowledge veils its fear of the new and preserves its power over the colonized.

Fichte's allusive "Geburt der Magie aus dem Geist der Angst" functions in the same way. The birth of magic, the stereotype of voodoo, is born out of the fear of the new that elicits recourse to the known—the allusion to Nietzsche. In contrast to Bhabha's stereotype cum fetish, however, Fichte does not cloak this fear, but rather exposes it and the process behind it disclosing his own preconceptions as well as those of the reader. This is the Apollonian moment which, Nietzsche states, consists in both "offenbaren" and "verhüllen" through which the reader/audience desires "zugleich schauen zu müssen und zugleich über das Schauen hinaus sich zu sehnen."⁴⁸ In this way, he tackles what Bhabha terms the "effectivity" of the stereotype, as encountered in the previous chapter, that confronts the stereotype "with the repertoire of positions of power and resistance, domination and dependence that constructs colonial identification subject (both colonizer and colonized)."⁴⁹ The stereotype here has an identificatory and reflexive function that exposes the reader and their knowledge about other worlds within the framework of colonially determined positions of power. Rather than displacing the stereotype, Fichte brings the reader face-to-face with it,

⁴⁷ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 106. Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume XXI 1927-1931* (London: Hogarth, 1964), pp. 152-157.

⁴⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1987), p. 178.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

confronting him both with the way in which he constructs his view of himself and the Other and, moreover, the way he creates this identity vis-à-vis his stereotyped knowledge thereof. Fichte thus turns the stereotype back on itself by placing the reader (and himself) within the “position of power” and “dominance” that it grants and simultaneously defusing it through the reflexivity and identification thereof accorded by the allusion. The Apollonian instant of the “Offenbarung des Schleiers,” lifting the veil of the stereotype/ fetish to expose the very functioning thereof, forces at the same time an identification with it in order to confront it from within.⁵⁰

For the Apollonian, however, we must consider its opposite, the Dionysian, to the “spielerische Identifikation” of aesthetic communication, the “eigentümliche Rollendistanz.” In what is a Dionysian moment, the “das narkotische[] Getränk[],” what Nietzsche also refers to as a “Hexentrunk,” of the eastern god becomes the magical elixir of the voodoo ceremony through which Fichte experiences the “Wollust und Grausamkeit” in the shattering of the “*principii individuationis*.”⁵¹ As with the Apollonian element above, however, the Dionysian turns the stereotype on its head. In this moment Fichte is aware of his very distance from this other world. He is not a “romantic or spy,” to quote Geertz, who seeks to infiltrate and become part of this other world. As Fichte states “Ich habe nie gelogen und mich als Doktor oder Professor ausgegeben oder sonst als ein in Afrika oder sonstwo Eingeweihter” (X, 146). Rather, the instant of the disintegration of individuation creates an idiosyncratic distance for both Fichte and the reader. As Jauß argues, the tension of distance and identification with the text “läßt genießen, was im Leben unerreichbar oder auch schwer erträglich wäre.”⁵² Thus,

⁵⁰ Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, p. 178.

⁵¹ Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, p. 31, 35.

⁵² Jauß, “Aufriss einer Theorie und Geschichte der Ästhetischen Erfahrung,” p. 32.

while identification brings the reader into the text allowing him, in this case, to experience the voodoo ceremony alongside Fichte, it also provides a safe distance from which to enjoy this potentially dangerous activity in the same way the Apollonian “Maß” balances out the Dionysian “Übermaß” and vice versa.⁵³

The critical function of this process lies, as with the reflexivity of identification and exposure of the stereotype and the reader through the allusion, in the reflexivity of the distance created by it.⁵⁴ This is most evident in two scenes in which the dissolving of Fichte’s “*principii individuationis*,” his feeling of belonging, is betrayed as distance. In one instance he writes:

Ich verstehe was es heisst, ein Schwarzer zu sein; wieviele drehen sich nach uns um
und rufen:
-Weisse!
-Blancs! (X, 123)

This is echoed later as he encounters a young “Afrikaner” on the street who is shocked at his appearance: “Ich bin weiss,” writes Fichte, “Er hält mich für einen lebenden Leichnam” (X, 176). The irony of the above statements, the simultaneous claim to belong to and be excluded from this other world, reflexively reveals our distance from it.⁵⁵ This reflexive irony finds its most poignant expression when Fichte queries a voodoo priest about the existence of

⁵³ Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, p. 44-46.

⁵⁴ As Pauline Johnson notes: “Jauss suggests that not only does the aesthetic experience mean the preservation of a common horizon as testing participation in the world of others, but it also promotes in the recipient a critical reflection on the limits of the concrete self. The reflective aesthetic experience permits an imaginative confrontation with the experience of others and hence allows the self-disclosure of the limits of the subject’s own experience.” Pauline Johnson “An Aesthetics of Negativity/An Aesthetics of Reception,” p. 67.

⁵⁵ Jauss as well deals with irony and ironic identification as a method of distance and reflection. “Ironic identification refers to a level of aesthetic reception where an expectable identification is held out to the spectator or reader only to be subsequently refused or ironized. Such procedures or ironizing identification and the destruction of illusion serve to pull the recipient out of his unreflected inadvertence to the aesthetic object and thus prompt his aesthetic and moral reflection.” Jauss, “Interaction Patterns in the Identification of the hero,” *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press, 1982), p. 182. Quoted in Pauline Johnson, “An Aesthetics of Negativity/An Aesthetics of Reception,” p. 66.

zombies to which the latter answers: “-Nein, es gibt keine. Ich war gestern auf dem Markt und wollte welche kaufen. Es waren einfach keine zu haben” (X, 183). In each case, it is not the stereotype that is revealed as truth, but the (colonial) truth is exposed as a stereotype. Zombies and magic are then not displaced as superstitious fantasies and replaced by the rational and scientific; rather they are dismissed as a type of knowledge through the reflexive exposure of their colonial foundations. We are the zombies. We are the stereotypes that we have created. We are the victors. Yet, just as the balance of the Apollonian and Dionysian for Nietzsche allows us to endure the suffering induced by the will, the balance of identification and distance of the allusion, its communicative function enables us to converse *with* other worlds in a way that resists their colonial appropriation. Through the allusion, the colonial production of knowledge as stereotype and fetish turns on itself and reflexively interrogates its own basis.

Fichte’s use of allusions establishes the communicative side of the dialogic makeup of his ethnographic work. Through the play and tension of identification and distance, the allusion puts the reader in touch with the colonial foundation of knowledge of other worlds. At the same time, this play initiates a critical reflection and understanding thereof that refutes the colonial “Wissen ist Macht” structure by reflexively defusing this power at the site where it arises—exposing the processes behind knowledge/power production, confronting it and the reader with their own shadows. We turn now to the receptive side of the equation that, together with the communicative, completes the dialogic circle. For Jauß, the receptive element of the aesthetic experience contains an “entdeckende[] Funktion” that “läßt neu sehen” through opening a door to “andere Welten der Phantasie.”⁵⁶ Fichte’s depiction of

⁵⁶ Jauß, “Aufriss einer Theorie und Geschichte der Ästhetischen Erfahrung,” p. 32.

Haiti in *Xango*, however, adds a twist to this. On the one hand, he relies on the interview to provide the reader an exploratory glimpse into other worlds allowing them to view them anew. On the other, as with the communicative side, the receptive is also a reflexive process that confronts the fantasy of these other worlds with itself. That is, while the reader is granted access to other worlds through the interview—as a way of receiving new information and knowledge—he is also confronted with that which makes this information gathering possible. The fantasy that the other world is divulging its secrets to the readers is exposed as precisely that, a fantasy. Further, this reflexivity puts the reader on display in that he is simultaneously the interviewer and interviewee, the one doing the research and the one being researched.

For Fichte, the interview is a way of accruing and (re)presenting knowledge about other worlds. As Torsten Teichert states concerning Fichte’s work: “Andere kennenzulernen heißt sie zu befragen.”⁵⁷ It is no surprise then that a large portion of *Xango* consists of the interviews Fichte conducts with various informants, from voodoo priests, priestesses, and practitioners to artists. One of the most notable attributes of these interviews is, however, the absence of the interviewer. This is not to say that Fichte disappears from the process (and to this point I shall return below), but rather that questions are left out so that what remains are the answers to a set of questions to which the reader is never privy. That Fichte removes himself from the interviewer position allows for two things. First, it gives the impression that the informants are voluntarily divulging information. When Fichte “sich ganz aus den Texten [zurückzieht],” Teichert argues, “[d]ann führen andere das Wort.”⁵⁸ In this way, then, Fichte attempts to short circuit the colonially victorious procedure of the interview. “Wenn Fichte

⁵⁷ Torsten Teichert, *Herzschlag aussen*, p. 41.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

20 Jahre lang als Vertreter der Ersten Welt und der weißen Rasse vorwiegend Farbigen der Dritten Welt Fragen stellte,” Hartmut Böhme writes, “so darf man sicher sein, daß ihn dabei der Schatten des Kolonialisten begleitete, mit dem identifiziert zu werden sofort den Zusammenbruch jeder ethno-poetischen Forschung herbeiführt.”⁵⁹ The removal of the questions as well as the interviewer then acknowledges at once this colonial heritage and attempts to subvert it by letting the other world speak for itself.

Secondly, and this point is related to the first, this exclusion provides for the reception of knowledge about other worlds. The absence of the questions, David Simo states, turns the “Aussagen” of the informants into “Zitate” that aim “von der Perspektive der dargestellten Kultur aus zu informieren.”⁶⁰ The interview cum quote is then a way of receiving first-hand information and knowledge about other worlds without the potentially colonial commentary guide of the interviewer. This is, indeed, one of the guiding forces at work in Fichte’s text. As he states in his essay of Herodotus: “Herodot trennt auf eine moderne Weise Bericht und Kommentar, zu einem Vorfall zitiert er oft mehrere Zeugenaussagen und überläßt dem Leser das Fazit.”⁶¹ In this way, reception becomes more than a passive act, but an active participation in processing and gathering knowledge and information. Without the questions the statements are merely a loose affiliation of quotes that only gain meaning through the involvement of the reader. “Die Totalität,” Simo contends, “wird erst in dem Bewußtsein des Lesers aus Mosaiksteinen rekonstruiert [...]”⁶² The act of reconstruction, of filling in the

⁵⁹ Hartmut Böhme, *Hubert Fichte: Riten des Autors und Leben der Literatur* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1992), p. 33.

⁶⁰ David Simo, *Interkulturalität und ästhetische Erfahrung*, p. 114-115.

⁶¹ Fichte, “Mein Freund Herodot,” p. 383.

⁶² Simo, *Interkulturalität und ästhetische Erfahrung*, p. 114.

holes left by the missing questions, makes the reader's reception of knowledge about other worlds an active process in which the reader accumulates and interprets information and thereby constructs (or better completes) the text.

The pure reception of knowledge through Fichte's particular use and (re)presentation of the interview, whereby he attempts to strip the dissemination of knowledge of other worlds of its colonial baggage, is, to be sure, idealistic. Fichte, indeed, admits as much in the closing of the Haiti chapter:

Wäre nicht eine andre Welterfahrung denkbar?
Nicht Touropa, Spartakus-Guide und Marcel Mauss—die Magazinierung von
Erlebnissen, das Präpieren von Erfahrungstrophäen—, sondern Warten, in der Mitte
einer Welt und ihres Geschehens, bis das Fremde auf einen zukommt und sich
erschliesst? (X, 217)

Fichte is painfully aware of the difficulties of realizing his ideal—waiting for the foreign to willingly divulge itself thereby negating all the colonial traces of knowledge.⁶³ This does not mean, however, that everything that comes before or after this seemingly resigned conclusion is rendered null and void. Rather, Fichte imbues his interviews with a reflexivity that makes the reader's reception of the information as well as the work as a whole a process of critical reflection and understanding. Fichte relies on the exposure of the methods through which he gets the informants to open up to him and gains access to this other world. First and foremost amongst this list is disclosing his intentions. On his first visit to a voodoo ceremony at a waterfall the participants “empören sich” at the presence of Fichte and Mau, who is photographing at the time (X, 127). “Ich erkläre,” writes Fichte, “dass wir den Vaudou studieren wollen—und dies Bemühen, uns zu erklären, rechtfertigt uns” (X, 127).⁶⁴ Fichte

⁶³ See David Simo, *Interkulturalität und ästhetische Erfahrung*, p. 22.

⁶⁴ This scene both parallels and departs from Geertz' experience at the Balinese cockfight. His presence in the village as an ethnologist is known as well as his intention and interest in visiting a cockfight. Nevertheless, he is

thus never completely fades into the background allowing his informants to simply speak for themselves. Quite to the contrary, even where he appears to be absent, it is clear that he is always there exposing himself and his objectives in order to loosen the tongues of his interviewees. On both the level of form and content Fichte makes his presence evident. Concerning the former, the white spaces that break up the flow of the work signal his presence. “Weiß sind die weggelassenen Fragen in den Interviews,” Rainer Guldin asserts, “weiß die verborgenen Bezüge, weiß der Raum den die Anspielungen schaffen.”⁶⁵ This is mirrored in the content through Fichte’s constant reflection on the whiteness of his skin (see above and below). Thus Fichte not only emphasizes his position as the researcher/writer, but also highlights this as the reflexive “Ethnographie des Ich” that places him under the microscope as the outsider.⁶⁶

This act of self-reflexive exposure, however, is often not enough to grant Fichte open access to his informants. “Die Informanten reden zwar freiwillig,” Simo contends, “aber sie werden öfter durch List, Überrumpelung aber auch durch Bestechung zum Reden gebracht.”⁶⁷ Together then with his self-reflexive exposure, Fichte exposes the often less than friendly and honest methods he uses. There are two main scenes in *Xango* where Fichte turns

looked upon suspiciously by the villagers until a cockfight he is attending one evening is broken up by the police. Everyone flees including Geertz after which the villagers are more than happy to speak with him and allow him into their world. Fichte’s scene at the waterfall mirrors this in that he too does not attempt to hide who he is and why he is there. This is distinguished from Geertz’ situation in that, unlike the latter, the very exposure of who he is grants him access. It is then not through participating to the point of acceptance that Fichte is allowed into the other world of voodoo, but rather through an act of ex- and disclosure. See Geertz, “Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight,” *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973). This essay is, further, the classic example of Geertz’ method of “thick description.”

⁶⁵ Rainer Guldin, “Das Double der Schrift: Photographie und Schreibprozeß,” *Medium und Maske: Die Literatur Hubert Fichtes zwischen den Kulturen*, eds. Hartmut Böhme and Nikolaus Tiling (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1995), pp. 87-103, p. 101.

⁶⁶ Hartmut Böhme, *Herzschlag aussen*, p. 34.

⁶⁷ Simo, *Interkulturalität und ästhetische Erfahrung*, p. 23.

to bribery to facilitate the information exchange of the interview. The first is with his contact at his hotel, the cleaning lady La Merci, who offers him information about the herbs used in voodoo:

Sie versteht etwas von Kräutern und ist bereit, mit mir die Pflanzen meines Herbariums durchzugehen.
Ihr Name ist ihr Zustand:
Sie muss immer—auch hier, in der unabhängigen, schwarzen Republik—“Merci” sagen.
“A la merci” heist “preisgeben.” (X, 129)

La Merci is here less of a voluntary informant than a resource to be used—her name is her function signaling both her status as a “thankful” servant and one who divulges information. This could be read as Fichte’s participation in colonial exploitation about which, he writes: “Die Länder der Dritten Welt liefern Rohmaterialien für das aus ihnen konstruierte marxistische, strukturalistische, existenzialistische, naturwissenschaftliche, geisteswissenschaftliche Weltbild” (X, 217). La Merci, however, turns the tables on Fichte. He believes, for instance, to be able to win her trust by giving her the herbs about which she informs him. This “Trick” does not work, though, and she demands money, making the “internationale Geste für Geld” at which point, Fichte states, “alle meine kleinen Listen, um ihre Zuneigung zu gewinnen, zerstört [sind]. Ich bin der Weisse, den man mit einer verachtungsvollen Geste ausnimmt” (X, 134). In this moment, Fichte and the reader are confronted with the conditions of possibility of the reception of information—this reflexive moment exposes both Fichte and the reader as the outsiders being used by the other world, their own methods being turned against them. This is echoed again when the Houngan requires Fichte to pay ten dollars for his entrance to a voodoo ceremony. Fichte writes:

Und ich begreife, dass all die bewunderten Abhandlungen über den Vaudou, über die Ewe, die Fon und die Yoruba durch solch ein Feilschen entstanden sind.

Warum schreibt das niemand?

Kein liebevoller Austausch von Wissen, kein graziöser Austausch von Freundlichkeit.

Gekaufte Geheimnisse. Gekaufte Analysen. Gekaufte Systeme. Die Studenten der grossen Universitäten werden zum Ankauf von Gesten, Lächeln, Schweiss, Opfern erzogen. (X, 144-5)

The veil is lifted here to expose the foundations of gaining, disseminating, and receiving information about other worlds. Both of the aforementioned scenes are marked by their reflexivity that turns the focus around to both Fichte and the reader. Fichte is always the “white man” willing to pay money to gain access to this other world, the outsider who only belongs by not belonging, by being signaled out. Further, the reader is brought face to face not only with the methods that make the reception of information possible, but with their own position as the outsider who is granted knowledge and access to other worlds through means employed by Fichte. The receptive side of aesthetic experience, that which, Jauß contends, “läßt neu sehen” and “führt in andere Welten,” is exposed as the fantasy of the pure reception of knowledge.⁶⁸ Fichte, however, saturates his text with reflective and reflexive moments that initiate a critical understanding of the production and reception of knowledge about other worlds.

The receptive element of Fichte’s interviews is imbued with a critical self-reflexivity that allows the reader a new look into their own world and their own self. That is, the reader’s reception of knowledge and information about other worlds permits them a glimpse, a new look, behind the scenes of the ethnologic as well as the ethnographic textual process but also produces a moment of critical reflexivity in that they too are being observed and studied by the informants of the other world. This is exemplified during one of Fichte’s visits

⁶⁸ Jauß, “Aufriss einer Theorie und Geschichte der Ästhetischen Erfahrung,” p. 32.

to the artist André. The “Kunsthändler, Botschafter, Sammler” arrive to André’s “schedderige[s] Haus” in their Mercedes where inside André “wieder den Vaudoukaspar spielt, wieder Quasiweisheiten ausstösst vor den peinlich berührten Weissen” (X, 135). In this moment, however, it is not André who is being observed by Fichte. It is rather he and the others who are being observed and read by André who delivers both the physical (the paintings) and the mental goods (knowledge and information).⁶⁹ As Fichte states:

- Ja, das ist noch wirklich Weisheit. Das ist eben das alte, schwarze Afrika. Das ist rein. Das ist tief. Das ist naiv. Das ist unverdorben. So sollte man sein. So sollte man leben. (X, 135)

In what Simo calls the “Dialektik der Beobachtungssituation,” the rolls are reversed whereby the observer becomes the observed—André knows what they want to hear and provides them with it. In this same way, the reader’s own preconceptions are laid bare. He believes to be provided with a new and authentic peek into this other world, when, in fact, he is reflexively confronted with his own world and his own self. As Fichte states, “Auch der Anspruch des echten ist ein touristischer” (X, 138). Even when the tourist, or in this case the reader, encounters the new and authentic, this is always already predetermined by what they want to see, hear, and know. This does not mean that Fichte’s accounts are not real. “Ein Vaudou kann echt sein,” he writes, “auch wenn Touristen gegen Bezahlung daran teilnehmen; wer zweifelt an der Echtheit eines christlichen Gebetes, nur weil der Mann mit dem Klingelbeutel herumgeht?” (X, 138). The fact of the matter is that each case, be it the voodoo ceremony, the artist’s house, or here in the reading of an ethnographic text, is governed to no small extent by what the recipient desires—the fantasy of knowing an other world. Fichte, however, exposes this epistemological desire and thereby turns it around on itself confronting the

⁶⁹ “Der Beobachter,” Simo argues, “dünkt sich der einzige zu sein der beobachtet. Im Grunde wird auch er von dem Beobachtungsobjekt sehr genau beobachtet.” Simo, *Interkulturalität und ästhetische Erfahrung*, p. 19.

receptive reader with himself, his world, and the very production of knowledge that created it vis-à-vis that knowledge which creates his understanding of other worlds.

The communicative and receptive aspects of the Haiti chapter in Fichte's *Xango* thus form a dialogue with other worlds that centers as much on the desire to know them as the limitations of this desire. On the communicative side of the equation, Fichte brings himself and the reader into touch with this other world through the identification with and distance of the allusion allowing both to speak *to* it and simultaneously critically reflect on the colonially imbricated foundations of this process. Through the interview, Fichte facilitates the receptive end in which we gain knowledge *from* the other world in an attempt to see it (a)new by means of bringing us "in andere Welten." Similarly, this is a critically reflective/reflexive process that exposes the means and methods through which we receive this knowledge. The bi-directionality of dialogue reveals the ways in which other worlds are created through exchange; just as the First World creates the knowledge and reality about the Third World, the Third World also creates the First by casting our own gaze back at us. This dialogic process of exchange and (re)casting the colonial gaze is further explored in the photography of *Xango*.

Visual Dialogue and the Postcolonial Gaze

Fichte's *Xango* parallels and complicates Born's *Die Fälschung* not only on the level of the ability to know and represent knowledge of other worlds, but also in the realm of photography. In *Xango*, as in *Die Fälschung*, we have a pair of travelers reporting on other worlds, one a writer, the other a photographer. In contrast to Born's novel, however, Leonore

Mau's photographs in the first volume of *Xango* are characterized by a critical reflexivity that turns the one-sidedness of colonial gaze (Hoffmann's "triumphale Neutralität" and "brutale Zivilisiertheit") into a bi-directional postcolonial one. As with Fichte's text, Mau's photography creates a visual dialogue that relies on identification and distance, reflection and reflexivity to query the way we view other worlds and, simultaneously, how it views us. Mau's photographs appear as volume one of *Xango*, whereas Fichte's text comprises volume two.⁷⁰ This sequencing, it would seem, raises the "chicken or the egg question." What comes first, Mau's images or Fichte's words? Is the text simply a supplement to the photographs? Are the two volumes meant to be read independently or side by side? This line of questioning has, unsurprisingly, led to two different answers. For Simo, the photographs are dependent upon the text. While he grants that "die Bilder zwar manche Beschreibungen veranschaulichen," he nevertheless contends that the "[d]ie Textbände können ohne die Photobände allein bestehen und gelesen werden," whereas the opposite is not the case.⁷¹ Peter Braun views the issue differently. He argues for a "Parallelität des Textes und des Bilddiskurses" in which "Fotografien wie Texte breiten sich parallel zueinander aus und laufen in einer parallelen Bewegung nebeneinander her."⁷² In a similar vein, Rainer Guldin states that "Photographie und Schrift stehen spiegelverkehrt zueinander. Die Photographin ist das Double des Schriftstellers."⁷³ Although each of the above analyses has its merits as well as shortcomings, none of them deal solely with the photographs on their own terms, which is

⁷⁰ Leonore Mau and Hubert Fichte, *Xango. Die afroamerikanischen Religionen: Bahia, Haiti, Trinidad I* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1976). From here on cited as "X1."

⁷¹ Simo, *Interkulturalität und ästhetische Erfahrung*, p. 152.

⁷² Peter Braun, "Irmas Kunst: Zu den gemeinsamen Arbeiten von Leonore Mau und Hubert Fichte," p. 74.

⁷³ Rainer Guldin, "Das Double der Schrift: Photographie und Schreibprozeß," p. 88.

what the photo series in the section on Haiti demands.⁷⁴

In the two sections that bookend Haiti—Bahia de Todos os Santos and Trinidad, respectively—the photos are accompanied by pull-page layouts of excerpts from Fichte’s text. Here it is indeed possible to speak of a doubling or parallelism between image and word. The section on Haiti, however, functions quite differently. Here the photos appear in succession, one after another without being broken up by text. The captions for the photos—written by Fichte—are pushed to the end of the volume functioning more as a legend and perhaps even an afterthought than a commentary on the photos. Further, these captions are not taken from Fichte’s text, but are new though not independent unto themselves. Thus, while there is a connection between Mau’s images and Fichte’s words, in the section on Haiti it is the photographs that take precedence. In the Haiti section, more so than in the other two, we are confronted with the fact that Mau and Fichte are, as Böhme argues, working on “*einem Werk*, [...] das in zwei medialen Zuständen überliefert ist.”⁷⁵ To Böhme’s statement, however, we should add the qualifier “different”—one work that is composed out of *two different* mediums. The tension between the image and the word in the Haiti section is produced by the difference between these two forms of representation that is neither encapsulated by their doubling or parallelism (Braun, Guldin) nor by strict recourse to the text (Simo). This tension is, however, not an antagonistic one. Rather, it is productive tension that arises from the collaboration on a joint project with a shared goal—to bring the reader/viewer into conversation with other worlds. It is not a question then of which medium

⁷⁴ Peter Braun comes closest to this looking at the photographs somewhat independently from the text. Nevertheless, his theory of “Parallelität” quickly turns from the photos themselves to their connection with the text. See Peter Braun, “Irmas Kunst: Zu den gemeinsamen Arbeiten von Leonore Mau und Hubert Fichte,” pp. 70-77.

⁷⁵ Böhme, *Hubert Fichte*, p. 47.

achieves this end better than the other, but rather how they reach the same goal through different means on two different levels—the visual and the textual. In contrast to *Die Fälschung*, in which Laschen's journalism requires the visual proof of the simulacric image, I argue that predominance accorded to Mau's photographs in *Xango* points to their ability to express visually what Fichte attempts through language and thereby overcome the colonialism in language that he laments at the outset. That is, the other language that he is in search of becomes the visual language of the photographs. This imagic language is, moreover, not only present in the photographs themselves, but also in the lasting colonial images and structures in Haiti as well as the syncretic signs and symbols of Haitian voodoo that subvert them.

Mau's first two photographs establish a visual dialogue with the viewer and the other world depicted therein. The first photograph depicts three Haitian women each carrying buckets and walking past an advertisement for the German chemical and pharmaceutical company Bayer claiming "un grand vainqueur" ("a great victory") accompanied by a hand displaying a victory sign (see figure 1, *XI*, 64-65). In the next photograph a foregrounded group of women files past a colonial palace (see figure 2, *XI*, 66-67).



Figure 1



Figure 2

Here we are visually confronted the victor motif as well as the communicative functions of

identification and distance as well as the reflexive receptivity of new information that returns the gaze back to the viewer. While the viewer is drawn in and identified by the advertising slogan in the first photograph and the palace in the second, he is also critically distanced therefrom, brought face to face with his victorious colonial position.⁷⁶ Receptively, the viewer is reminded that he is only granted access to whatever other world waits beyond the frame through the veil of the colonial foundations of knowledge. The advertising on the wall and the colonial palace is that which reflexively exposes him (and Mau) and the means through which he has access to this world—the intrusion of marketing, capital, and colonial conquest.

At the same time, however, both images point to the limits of colonial knowledge. The screen that sets up the viewer's critical reflexive gaze is also the wall erected by the colonial production of knowledge. This is neither a metaphorical nor symbolic wall, but the very physical, spatial, and cultural intrusions of the production of colonial knowledge. It is that which both hides the threat of the new and the extraordinary and that which walls us off from the other world. That is, our gaze is not only dominated by the wall in the photograph but by the desire to see behind it and to follow the women passing in front of it. It points to that to which we are not allowed access—the wall that we have created turns against us and shuts us out of other worlds. In the second photograph, the viewer is similarly barred from the other world. The women in the foreground, like those in the first photograph, do not face the camera and one goes so far as to cover her face with her hat mirroring the walled-off exclusion in the first. In both instances the viewer is not only confronted with his own gaze and the basis of colonial knowledge through what is filtered, but also with the gaze of the

⁷⁶ See Peter Braun, "Irma's Kunst," pp. 70-71.

other world. This is the postcolonial gaze that is both reflexive and reciprocal. On the one hand it reflects the viewer's glance back at himself and exposes the limits of what he sees or is able to see through the colonial veil. On the other hand, this gaze is reciprocal insofar as the women in the photographs above allow us to see what their other world wants us to see—it too imposes its gaze on the viewer by denying him total access thereby turning the colonial gaze back on itself.

As Mau's series of photographs progresses, the viewer is alternately granted a look behind the wall and separated by it. The reflexivity of the postcolonial gaze continues through scenes of servitude and poverty. In the former, a waiter dressed in a white suit and surrounded by a pristine courtyard nears the camera delivering a drink (see figure 3, *XI*, 68-69). In contrast to the first two photographs, here the viewer is faced with the waiter approaching the recipient of the cocktail who becomes imbricated in the continuation of colonial power structures and hierarchies.⁷⁷ Concerning poverty, one photograph depicts ill-equipped workers repairing a drain or sewage line and in another a group of begging women (see figure 4, *XI*, 70 and figure 5, *XI*, 71).

⁷⁷ See Peter Braun, "Irma's Kunst," p. 72.



Figure 3



Figure 4

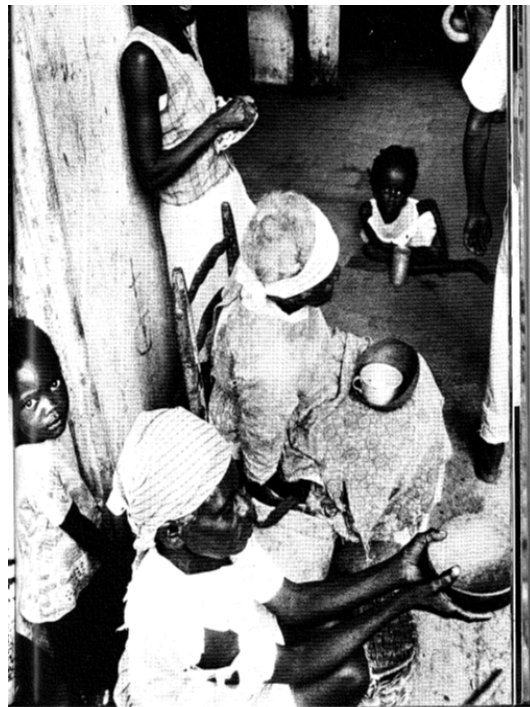


Figure 5

As

the viewer moves beyond the wall he carries with him the traces of the victorious colonial position inscribed thereon. On the other side, he encounters the conditions of possibility that make the erection of the wall achievable in the first place—exploitation in the form of continued servitude and poverty. The three photographs are not contrasting images, showing opulence and abundance of the colonial position versus the destituteness of everyday Haitians. Rather, they point to the imbrication of the two, as is the case with the wall or the covered face. Whereas in the first the viewer is in the position of the privileged recipient sitting at a table with fresh fruit and a swimming pool at arm's length away (the edge of the pool visible in the lower right of the frame), in the second the man is almost drowning in the sewer and in the third the women beg for enough to eat. In each photograph, the viewer is not capable of seeing through the wall or removing the hat from the woman's face; but he is nevertheless viewing this through the reflexive filter of the postcolonial gaze. The viewer's gaze is reflected back at him confronting with the foundation of his colonial position and at the same time the limits thereof—the limit imposed by the very walls raised in the production of colonial knowledge. What we see or are able to see is only that which we have erected for ourselves—a Third World voyeurism that hides the new and novel in favor of the familiar servitude and poverty.

The photograph immediately following the workers and the begging women is taken inside of a church from the vantage point of the altar in which the pews are occupied by rows of standing soldiers staring directly into the camera as the church goers file out in the background (see figure 6, *XI*, 72-73).

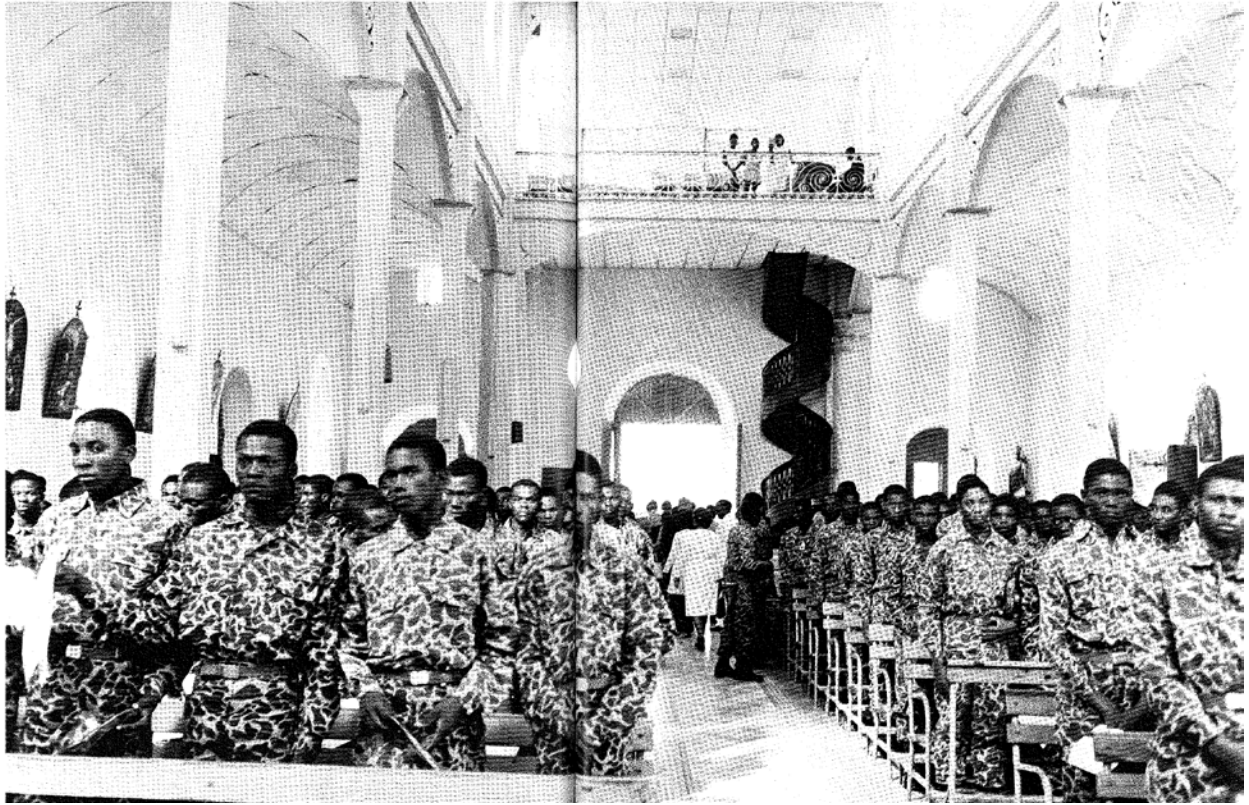


Figure 6

Rather than signaling the end of the first “Bildsequenz des Haiti-Kapitels,” as Peter Braun contends, this photograph is a transition into the Haitian world of voodoo.⁷⁸ Here we have two overlapping power structures. The Christian church and colonial efforts of conversion intersect with the special troops of the Haitian dictator François Duvalier, a convergence of distinct though related modes of oppression and exploitation. While the soldiers’ gaze is directed toward the camera and the viewer as if awaiting orders from the altar, the attention is simultaneously drawn down the aisle in the center of the frame following those exiting the church. As in the first two photographs (the women passing by the Bayer advertisement and those filing past the presidential palace), the viewer is pulled toward that which is outside of

⁷⁸ Peter Braun, “Irmas Kunst,” p. 73. Peter Braun’s excellent reading of Mau’s photos in the Haiti section ends with this photograph approximately a third of the way through the volume.

frame. This stands in contrast to the image of the waiter in which the viewer is only approached or the static images of the workers and begging women in which there is no escaping the frame. This transitional photograph establishes at once the limits of our colonial knowledge in the reflexivity of the gaze and initiates the reciprocal. We follow those abandoning the structures of power in order to be shown something beyond yet always limited by that which the other world will reveal, tagging along with those whose backs are turned to us.

The limit of the reflexive gaze is also that which the other world imposes on us. Mau's photographs thus do not end with the reflexive postcolonial gaze but combine this with the reciprocal gaze of the other world, which both conceals and reveals—divulging information to the viewer and simultaneously withholding it from him. The photographs of the voodoo rites and ceremonies are dominated by this tension. One of the first images displays a small voodoo temple shot from the outside (see figure 7, *XI*, 78-79). In front of the temple stands a checkered/striped cross and the white outside walls are covered by writing, drawings of various flora and fauna, a man with a drum, and a black cross.

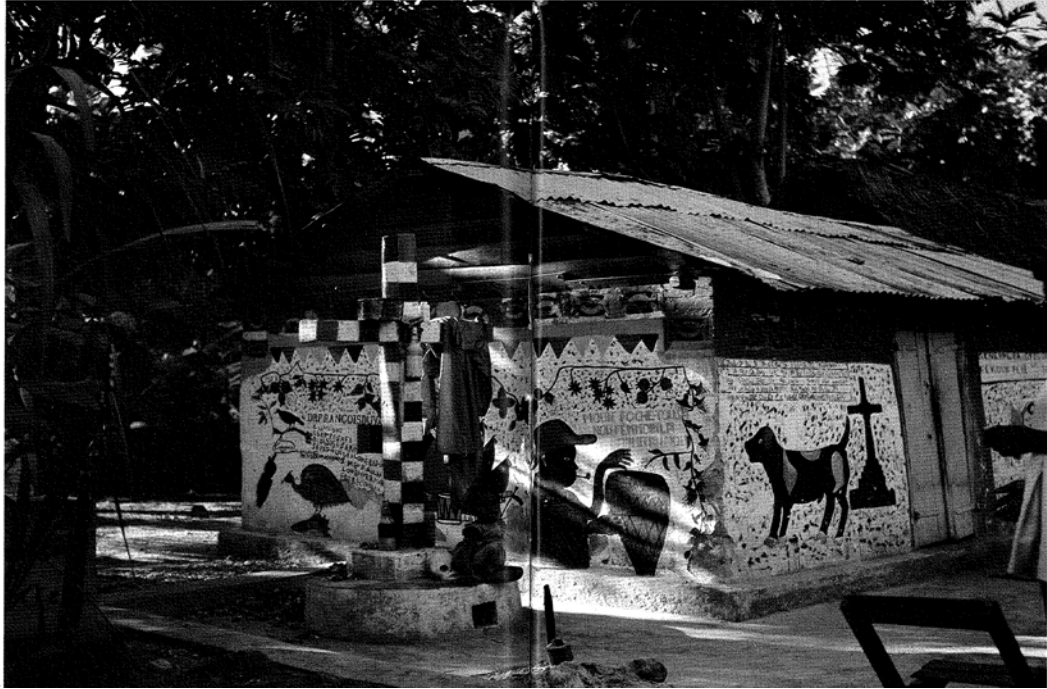


Figure 7

This image both mirrors and contradicts the Bayer advertising wall and the church. On the one hand, the contrasting black and images echoes the advertising and the crosses draw parallels to the Christian church. On the other hand, the functions thereof are inverted. The advertising wall, which forms the limit of colonial knowledge, is replaced by the walls of the temple, the reciprocal restriction that shuts us out. Similarly, the crosses—one black against the white wall, the other one dual-colored—invert the scene in the church, transposing the symbols of power and oppression—the syncretic power structure of the church and soldiers exchanged for the syncretism of voodoo. While the viewer recognizes this predominant Christian symbol and reflexively identifies with it, he is nevertheless distanced from it, closed off from this temple by the very thing that grants him access to the other world. Here, the reflexive gaze is confronted by the reciprocity of the other world that imposes its view on us, limiting our access to other worlds through the power and knowledge structures

constructed to understand it.

Just as moving beyond the advertising wall does not shed the remnants of colonial knowledge, passing through the walls of the temple carries with it the traces of the limits placed upon the viewer by the reciprocal gaze of the other world. Mau's photographs of voodoo ceremonies and rituals display the reciprocal gaze that is aware that it is being observed and thereby turns this observation around on the viewer creating tension between that which we are allowed to see and want to see and that which is denied to the viewer. The first photographs are wide shots that, in contrast to those that begin the Haiti series, presumably expand the view and open up the space concealed by the wall (see figure 8, *XI*, 84-85 and figure 9, *XI*, 88-89).



Figure 8



Figure 9

The expansiveness of the images, however, betrays their limits. In the first photograph the viewer's gaze is framed and enclosed by the wooden structure that rests on the border of the photograph. In this way, both the viewer and Mau are cut off and distanced from the scene taking place inside. In the second, the situation is the same. While the photograph attempts to capture the grandiosity of the ritual, from the waterfall to the mass of people, the viewer is nevertheless confronted with his position outside of the scene— with Mau, he views this from the position of the interloper to whom backs are turned excluding them from the intimacy of the ceremony. Both photographs function reflexively and reciprocally. On the one hand, they expose the viewer and Mau as outsiders, the status of which alone grants them access to this other world. On the other hand, it is reciprocal in that this is the limit that the other world imposes on us. Aware of our presence and possible intrusion, it frames us out at the same time the photograph seeks to capture all.

Mau's shots capture individual subjects in medium and medium close-ups. Narrowing the frame and sharpening the focus erases the distance and space the previous wide shots create. In one medium close-up, a man in a trance with his eyes closed and his arms and hands outstretched fill nearly the entire frame (see figure 10, *XI*, 90-91).



Figure 10

The medium close-up creates at once a sense of intimacy, closing off the space surrounding it and bringing the viewer face-to-face with a voodoo ritual, and simultaneously a sense of being cut off. While the viewer is granted a look into this other world divulging its secrets and mysteries, he reflexively encounters as well the limit of this understanding—the boundary produced by the photographic frame. The photograph attempts to contain the image which threatens to break the frame—the top of the man's head extends slightly beyond the boundary of the photograph and his fingertips rest precariously on the edge. However, it not only verges on exploding the frame and with it the boundary placed around it, it is that which holds it together imposing its own limits. This is echoed in two subsequent medium shots of a Voodoo ceremonies and rituals. The first shows a smiling man looking to his left (the right of the viewer) as a man dressed as Baron Samedi (the god of the dead in Haitian voodoo)

faces the camera with his hand stretched out beyond the frame (see figure 11, *XI*, 104-105).

In the second and last photograph in the Haiti series, a man with sunglasses pours milk over the head of another, whose arm similarly breaks the frame while he looks on smiling (see figure 12, *XI*, 110-111).



Figure 11



Figure 12

In contrast to the photograph of the entranced man, the border of both photographs is completely broken. In figure 9, the gaze of the smiling man is cast past the lens of the camera to something outside the frame while in figure 10 two-thirds of the man's arm extend beyond the border of the photograph. Even as these close-up shots attempt to limit the focus, constricting the space accorded to the viewer's gaze in order to contain and frame the scenes contained therein, the images resist this enclosure and simultaneously enforce it. The limit the photograph attempts to impose on the other world turns against it becoming the limit of that which we are allowed to know and to see. Although we are brought into the world of voodoo, the enclosure of the image exposes the limits placed upon it by the intrusion of the viewer and photographer. At the same time, however, this is also the limit established by the reciprocal gaze of the other world that denies a view outside the frame while signaling to something beyond the structures of knowledge and power that seek to contain it.

What we are ultimately presented with is not the reality of voodoo, its essence that exists behind the wall we have raised, but only that which the other world reveals. The faces are no longer hidden and this other world no longer closed off; nevertheless, it is restricted by the very thing that produced it. The reflexive and reciprocal gazes in the above photographs reflect the limit of knowledge of other worlds not by showing faults and cracks in its foundation, but rather by turning these limits against themselves. In this way, Leonore Mau's photographs establish a visual dialogue between the viewer and the other world through the interplay of visual reflexivity and reciprocity. While the reflexive gaze sets up the conditions of possibility for viewing the other world, the limit of the victorious colonial position through which the gaze is both filtered and reflected back at the viewer, the reciprocal gaze highlights the way the other world views us, imposing the same limits of knowledge that are established to understand it. Where colonial knowledge and the colonial gaze represent the limits we impose on ourselves, neutralizing the threat of the new and different, the reflexivity and reciprocity of the postcolonial gaze exposes this threat as the limit of that which we are able to understand. The strength of Mau's photographs lies, as with Fichte's text, not with their ability to provide an unimpeded and unburdened view of other worlds, but in the way in which they expose the foundations of our knowledge about them and the limits thereof. In doing so, they bring the viewer into dialogue with other worlds highlighting both the imbrication of different worlds—the structures of knowledge and power that create both—as well as the limits of these intersections that render them fundamentally distinct.

Conclusion

Our knowledge of other worlds is always governed by the colonial contradiction that knowledge about them not only takes part in their creation but in their subjugation under the colonial regime of knowledge and power. Thus, we are simultaneously limited by Wittgenstein's maxim that in order to avoid this, we are best advised not to speak of them at all. As I have demonstrated in the previous two chapters, however, there is a third way. Through the suspension of these two paradoxes we can arrive at a non-description—a critical self-reflexivity that aims to expose the contradiction that resides at the basis of our desire to know other worlds. In the end, neither Born's nor Fichte and Mau's work resolves the contradictions at their core, but rather rely on them as a postcolonial, utopian method of depicting other worlds. "Produced in the distance between contradictory elements, [utopia]," Louis Marin states, "is the simulacrum of the synthesis, while yet signifying the contradiction that produced it."⁷⁹ The "simulacrum" of synthesis arises in each work through its very completion, the act that defies Wittgenstein's paradox in daring to speak of that which they do not and cannot know. At the same time, however, Born's novel as well as Fichte and Mau's work lay bare for the reader the contradiction upon which they are based—that the production and dissemination of knowledge of other worlds is complicit in their creation and the continuation of colonial power. Further, their critiques of the imbrication of journalism and ethnology in this process reflexively locate the utopia of other worlds in the text itself and ultimately argue for literature as the site of utopia.

This is not to say that either work displays the best of all possible worlds, the *eutopia*, but rather the *outopia*, that is the no-place and the other of any place. To portray the places they write about and desire to know as utopia would be to strip them of the force of utopia as

⁷⁹ Marin, *Utopics*, p. 11.

an other place and, moreover, contribute to their continued colonization. For Born, the reportage and photojournalism level any differences and distinctions between worlds by creating and disseminating knowledge and with it the other world they seek to make known and understand. For Fichte and Mau, the situation is the same. In attempting to inform about other worlds, ethnology similarly takes part in their perpetual colonization. In both cases, they cast a critical and reflexive gaze back via the text. Where Born's novel emphasizes the power of literature over journalism to suspend the contradictions that the latter flattens, Fichte's text and Mau's photographs establish a dialogic reflexivity and reciprocity with the other world and the reader/viewer that uses the contradiction to initiate a conversation with other worlds. In refusing to synthesize the paradoxes that govern them, both works display their affinity to utopia as a text, as a literary mode that knows full well that it is creating other worlds and puts this process up for view. This is a reflexive, critical, and above all postcolonial literature that recognizes its colonial culpability and dismantles it through the very thing that created it—the contradiction of knowledge of other worlds.

Chapter 3

Capital, The Final Frontier: Science Fiction, Allegory, and Utopia in Alexander Kluge's *Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang*

From Other Space to Outer Space

Following the collapse of the student movement in West Germany, utopia underwent a twofold change. For one, the desire for utopia shifted from an emphasis on revolutionary solidarity and identification with the so-called Third World to spaces of alterity. As I demonstrated in the previous two chapters, utopia was neither the good place nor the no-place that its etymological heritage ambiguously balances, but rather an other space, somewhere beyond the borders of West Germany, in particular, and Europe, in general. At the same time, the exploration of other, outer spaces came face to face with the culpability for creating these spaces. In this respect, the works of Nicolas Born and Hubert Fichte mined the epistemological structure of other non-Western worlds, the ways in which knowledge about them and its representation in literature take part in their continued colonization. Secondly, the contradiction of the simultaneous investigation and creation of these other worlds coupled with the self-reflexivity endemic to these works opened up the text itself as a utopian space. That is, literature became a space of contradiction and contestation, a space where the paradox of utopian promise and deferment regained its socio-critical currency. In contrast to the supposed dominance of New Subjectivity or New Inwardness in the 1970s,

utopia survived as an other space, challenging colonialism and Eurocentrism as well as the primacy of private subjectivity. Indeed, it is possible to summarize that in both cases, as a space of alterity and a definitively literary space concerned with exteriority. Utopia after 1968 was, in a word, an outer space.

In this chapter, I examine Alexander Kluge's science fiction story, *Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang* [1973], as an investigation of an other, outer space. Kluge's work takes place in the 22nd century when, after a global, nuclear war has destroyed the Earth, the terrestrial survivors reside in the far-reaches of outer space. The story that is told, however, is not about the future in outer space *per se*, but rather the history of this future. Kluge's four protagonists recount the history of the destruction of the Earth and the survival and continuation of capital in outer space. Similar to the previous postcolonial novels, *Lernprozesse* examines outer space as a space of alterity. The interest in postcolonial spaces as sites of revolution was also an attraction to these other worlds as spaces of alterity to capitalism, countries in which a communist revolution was taking place. *Lernprozesse* expands this search for spaces of alterity to capital into the realm of outer space and science fiction. As with the postcolonial texts, however, *Lernprozesse* reveals that this outer space is governed by the same thing it seeks to escape, namely capital. That is, just as the search for other worlds in the postcolonial novel reveals its culpability in the continuing colonization thereof, in *Lernprozesse* outer space is the space for the reproduction and continuation of capital in the wake of the Earth's destruction. At the same time, however, like the postcolonial novels, Kluge's investigation of outer space turns back on itself, self-reflexively producing the text as a space of alterity.

Science fiction is an ideal genre for investigations of spatial alterity. In his study of

science fiction, Adam Roberts argues that it is “in some central way about the encounter with difference” that is “articulated through a ‘novum’, a conceptual [...] embodiment of alterity.”¹ Roberts’ definition is, however, largely indebted to Darko Suvin, who penned one of the first comprehensive analyses of the genre. Suvin defines science fiction as “*the literature of cognitive estrangement*” that, in contrast to the myth’s attempt to explain man and his relation to the world, “first posits them as problems and then explores where they lead [...]. It does not ask about The Man or The World, but which man?: in which kind of world?: and why such a man in such a kind of world.”² Science fiction is then a form of spatial thought experiment that queries what it is like on other worlds and, in turn, what these other worlds say about man.³ The term “cognitive estrangement” denotes, moreover, a dialectic of the known and the unknown, the familiar and the strange.⁴ Suvin further defines science fiction as “a developed oxymoron, a realistic irreality, with humanized nonhumans, this-worldly Other Worlds, and so forth. Which means that it is – potentially – the space of a potent *estrangement*, validated by the pathos and prestige of the basic cognitive norms of our

¹ Adam Roberts, *Science Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 17.

² Darko Suvin *The Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), pp. 6-7.

³ Science fiction for Suvin is understood as “[n]either prophetic futurology nor an empty game of chess,” but rather “an imaginative experiment” and a “cognitive model.” Suvin, “Science Fiction and Utopian Literature: Degrees of Kinship,” in *Positions and Presuppositions in Science Fiction* (Kent: Kent State UP, 1988), pp. 33-43, p. 42.

⁴ This is in following with Carl Freedman’s analysis of Suvin’s term from his work *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* [2000]. As he states: “Science fiction is determined by the *dialectic* between estrangement and cognition. The first term refers to the creation of an alternative fictional world that, by refusing to take out mundane environment for granted, implicitly or explicitly performs an estranging critical interrogation of the latter. But the *critical* character of the interrogation is guaranteed by the operation of cognition, which enables the science-fictional text to account rationally for its imagined world and for the connections as well as the disconnections of the latter to our own empirical world.” *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* (Middeltown: Wesleyan UP, 2000), p. 16.

times.”⁵ Science fiction literature is the space where the dialectical tension between the known and the unknown, based at once in rational plausibility and fantastic hypothesis, is maintained and put on display.

Moreover, this tension is mediated by what he terms, following Ernst Bloch’s *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, the novum. “A novum of cognitive innovation,” Suvin writes, “is a totalizing phenomenon or relationship deviating from the author’s and the implied reader’s norm of reality.”⁶ The novum is the point around which cognition and estrangement coalesce and that which preserves the two:

[...] the essential tension of SF is one between the readers, representing a certain number of types of Man of our times, and the encompassing and at least equipollent Unknown or Other introduced by the novum. [...] Clearly the novum is a mediating category whose explicative potency springs from its rare bridging of literary and extraliterary, fictional and empirical, formal and ideological domains, in brief from its unalienable historicity.⁷

The concept of the novum and its mediation of cognition and estrangement is also what ties utopia to science fiction. Defined by Suvin as first and foremost a literary genre, the “crucial element” of utopia is its existence as “an *alternative location radically different in respect of sociopolitical conditions* from the author’s historical environment.”⁸ As with the novum, utopia is dictated as well by the dialectic of the new and the known: “Utopia is an Other World immanent in the world of human endeavor, dominion, and hypothetic possibility.”⁹ The parallels between utopia and science fiction, as a “this-worldly other world” governed by the dialectic of cognitive estrangement leads Suvin, in fact, to characterize utopia as a

⁵ Suvin, *The Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, p. viii.

⁶ Ibid., p. 64.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., p. 41.

⁹ Ibid., p. 42.

subgenre of science fiction.¹⁰ Thus, science fiction explores outer space as a space of alterity, a utopia of the radically different yet possible that at the same time, and similar to the postcolonial novel, is the space of tension between the known and the unknown.

For all of Suvin's reliance on the known world of the reader, however, science fiction as a literary form enacts its cognitive estrangement on its own, as a text. Simon Spiegel, in his essay on the term and its relation to science fiction theory, argues that this is not "'cognition' as such," but rather within the text.¹¹ This is, in fact, the corrective to Suvin's model posed by Carl Freedman: "The crucial issue for generic discrimination is not any epistemological judgment external to the text itself on the rationality or irrationality of the latter's imaginings, but rather [...] the attitude of *the text itself* to the kind of estrangements being performed."¹² The text rather than the reader is the site of this cognitive estrangement, the space where the tension between this world and an other world, the new and the known, play out. While the empirical, cognitive referent as well as its estranged other are nonetheless the same, it is within the text that this distinction is established and where the dialectic of cognition and estrangement creates a space for its representation. The representation of this cognitive estrangement is the definition of science fiction provided by Seo-Young Chu in his recent work on the genre.

Science fiction, for Chu, is a "representational technology" that "generate[s] mimetic accounts of cognitively estranging referents" or, as he restates, that "render[s] cognitively

¹⁰ Suvin, *The Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, p. 42, 61.

¹¹ Simon Spiegel, "Things Made Strange: On the Concept of 'Estrangement' in Science Fiction Theory," *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (Nov. 2008), pp. 369-385, p. 373.

¹² Spiegel, "Things Made Strange," p. 373. The quote is from Carl Freedman, *Critical Theory and Science Fiction* (Middeltown: Wesleyan UP, 2000), p. 18.

estranging referents available for representation.”¹³ Chu differs from Freedman, however, in his assertion that the dialectic of cognitive estrangement occurs not “in the formal apparatus of a given SF text but in the object or phenomenon that the SF text seeks accurately to represent.”¹⁴ Thus, science fiction attempts to represent something external to the text that is cognitively estranging. Contrary to Suvin’s central notion of the novum, science fiction in Chu’s analysis renders something existent yet cognitively estranging visible, rather than that which deviates from the author’s or reader’s world. In this way, science fiction “involves greater similitude than dissimilitude between referent and representational text.”¹⁵ One of the things that science fiction represents as cognitively estranging is the globalized world, which hovers between the known and unknown, the literal and the figurative, and thereby “resists simple narration.”¹⁶ To be sure, Chu does not reject the importance of the text. Rather, he proposes a mimetic relationship whereby, in attempting to represent the unrepresentable globalized world, for instance, the text takes on some of those qualities in the same way the postcolonial text takes on the character of paradox and contradiction in order to represent the paradoxical and contradictory nature of other worlds.

Following Chu, I pose in this chapter the question: what is it that Kluge’s *Lernprozesse* renders available for representation in outer space? Outer space as a space of alterity is itself cognitively estranging. The outer space of *Lernprozesse* is populated by the new—from Martian outposts, distant planets and galaxies to spaceships—and at the same

¹³ Seo-Young Chu, *Do Metaphors Dream of Literal Sleep? A Science-Fictional Theory of Representation* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2010), p. 73.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁵ Chu, *Do Metaphors Dream of Literal Sleep?*, p. 5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-87.

time the shockingly familiar—war, colonization, and the exploitation of labor and other worlds that are mined for their resources. In line with Chu’s argument, *Lernprozesse* is filled with objects and concepts beyond simple representation, “neither the totally knowable nor totally unknowable.”¹⁷ There is, however, one main driving force, a force entirely familiar to the present, that motivates *Lernprozesse* and occupies its outer space, namely capital. In the preface to the republished edition of his co-authored theoretical work *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung* (*Public Sphere and Experience*) [1972] from 2001 Kluge opens the text with a picture of outer space depicting a large satellite, numerous planets and stars, and a spaceship. The caption reads: “Weit draußen. Die größte Öffentlichkeit, die es gibt, ist der Kosmos, Outer Space: Weltöffentlichkeit. Überschießendes Rüstungskapital, das auf Erden den Fortschritt hemmt, kann dorthin exportiert werden” (see figure 1).¹⁸



Figure 5

¹⁷ Chu, *Do Metaphors Dream of Literal Sleep?*, p. 7.

¹⁸ Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Der unterschätzte Mensch*, Vol. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 2001), p. 329.

In the update to the theoretical companion to *Lernprozesse*, outer space has become an intergalactic refuge for capital's terrestrial excesses. Outer space in *Lernprozesse* is the space of excess(ive) capital.

For the four protagonists at the center of *Lernprozesse*, outer space is a realm in which to escape history, to flee from capital's catastrophic past and present in order to secure their future existence. It is also the space for the survival of capital preconditioned on escaping its past, on moving spatially and temporally ever forward. In this respect, time takes on a spatial quality in the story. This echoes Georg Lukács' assessment of capital's transformation of time into space: "Thus time sheds its qualitative, variable, flowing nature; it freezes into an exactly delimited, quantifiable continuum filled with 'things' [...]; in short, it becomes space."¹⁹ Further, as Suvin notes, one of the main factors in the turn to future time in science fiction was "the strong tendency toward temporal extrapolation inherent in life based on a capitalist economy, with its salaries, profits, and progressive ideals always expected in a future clock-time."²⁰ In the era of high capitalism, science fiction, in Suvin's words, "is neither simply spatial [...] nor simply temporal [...] but spatiotemporal" in the same way that physicists, following Einstein's theory of relativity, speak of spacetime, whereby the two no longer function on diametrically opposed planes.²¹

In *Lernprozesse*, the time of capital has frozen in outer space. It is devoid of a past

¹⁹ Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, Rodney Livingstone, trans. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971 [1923]), p. 90.

²⁰ Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, p. 73.

²¹ Ibid. p. 74. Cf. Fredric Jameson's *Archaeologies of the Future*. In this work, Jameson proposes science fiction as a purely spatial genre. As he states: "Meanwhile the more deliberate move, which we can witness everywhere in the genre today [...], is less a matter of the extrapolation of forms of individual destiny onto a collective history [...] than it is of the mediation of space itself [...]. We need to explore the proposition that the distinctiveness of SF as a genre has less to do with time (history, past, future) than with space." Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (New York: Verso, 2005), pp. 312-313.

and it can live on indefinitely in the outer reaches of the universe in what Suvin would call its “spatialized future.”²² *Lernprozesse* renders the cognitively estranged spacetime of capital, its familiar yet elusive quality, available for representation.²³ Moreover, it does so not only as a work of science fiction, but as an allegory. Whereas with science fiction it is possible to represent the cognitively estranged spatialized future of capital, as an allegory *Lernprozesse* spatializes the past, reestablishing the history capital longs to forget. In this chapter I argue that, while the outer space of *Lernprozesse* has become the space of capital, ultimately colonizing other worlds, the text itself becomes a utopian outer space that displays the contradictions between capital’s future and its past. Kluge’s story of capital’s adventures into a future outer space is, then, not merely a foray into dystopian fantasy. On the contrary, it mounts a critique of capital’s propensity for spatial and temporal expansion. This critique is performed by the narrative and the formal allegorical nature of the text, its disconnected, fragmentary, and multimedia nature that makes *Lernprozesse* an allegorical ruin of capital, the outer space to capital’s unceasing spatial and temporal expansion.

Lernprozesse as Science Fiction and Allegory: Benjamin and Kluge

²² Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, p. 73.

²³ This follows many analyses of science fiction as a Marxist critique of capitalism. Mark Bould argues, for example, that “SF world-building is typically distinguished from other fictional world-building, whether fantastic or not, by the manner in which it offers, however unintentionally, a *snapshot of the structures of capital*” (my italics). Bould, “Introduction: Rough Guide to a Lonely Planet, From Nemo to Neo,” in *Red Planets: Marxism and Science Fiction*, Mark Bould and China Méville, eds. (Middeltown: Wesleyan UP, 2009), pp. 1-28, p. 4. Further, Carl Freedman elaborates on the ways in which science fiction and critical theory work together: “The unprecedented ‘cunning’ that capital now displays on the global stage renders Marxism more urgent than ever. Indeed, the very impasse confronted by Marxist politics demands creative new elaborations of Marxist critique.” Science fiction is one of the “creative new elaborations” on the “motions of capital” that Marxism and critical theory investigate. Freedman, *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*, p. 10.

Science fiction and allegory do not make for such strange bedfellows. By defining science fiction as mimetic representational model, Chu definitively states that “Allegory is not science fiction.”²⁴ This is not to say, however, that the two are mutually exclusive. While neither allegory nor science fiction can be reduced to one another such that allegory becomes science fiction or, conversely, science fiction becomes allegory, Chu nevertheless proposes the following relationship:

Indeed, the two modes are intimately related. [...] Science fiction and allegory [...] have a reciprocal relationship. They are each other’s significant other half. Each mode is the other mode’s reciprocal. Each completes the other. Just as $1/x$ and x need to be multiplied by each other to equal one, allegory and science fiction need to be multiplied together to achieve the product of a total unity.²⁵

Science fiction and allegory, then, complete each other, each accomplishing what the other cannot. In the case of *Lernprozesse*, what each provides is a spatiotemporal dimension. As I mentioned above, whereas science fiction imparts to the work a spatialized future, allegory gives it a spatialized past. *Lernprozesse* is not merely a simple mimetic representation of the space of capital, which would only be one side of the coin, but the space of history as well. Referencing a 1846 publication by the attorney Felix Eberty entitled *Die Gestirne und die Weltgeschichte*, Kluge writes in a more recent piece of science fiction: “Insofern sei alle Vorgeschichte im Weltall aufbewahrt auf den Schienen des Lichts. [...] Der Weltraum sei ein ‘ewig unverwüstliches und unbestechliches Archiv der Bilder des Vergangen.’”²⁶ Outer space, for Kluge, is made up of both the future space of capital as well the space of history. Thus, *Lernprozesse* is dominated by the dialectical tension between the future outer space of capital, on the one hand, and the space of a pre-apocalyptic past, on the other. It is this

²⁴ Chu, *Do Metaphors Dream of Literal Sleep?*, p. 75.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 80.

²⁶ Kluge, “Der Kosmos als Kino,” in *Geschichten vom Kino* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007), p. 44.

tension between the dystopian future and the lessons of the past, between the temporalities of science fiction and allegory, that makes up the fabric of the text and bestows upon it its self-reflexive utopian quality as the space where these spatiotemporal contradictions emerge.

Kluge's use of allegory is greatly indebted to Walter Benjamin. Indeed, as much as Adorno was Kluge's theoretical mentor, Benjamin, it can be said, has been his guide in aesthetic matters.²⁷ "Kluge is, though under very different circumstances and using different modes, following trails opened up by Benjamin," Peter Labanyi contends, trails that include, for example, "his preference for fragments and for essayistic and paradigmatic forms" as well as "his use of allegory."²⁸ Andrew Bowie has, for example, proposed Benjamin's "Über den Begriff der Geschichte" as necessary reading for a "fuller understanding of Kluge," to which we should add his *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* [1928].²⁹ It is in this work where Benjamin develops his theory of allegory. For Benjamin, the allegorical mode arises "immer um die sogenannten Zeiten des Verfalls."³⁰ Benjamin locates this moment of historical decay not only in the Baroque mourning play of the seventeenth century but also in

²⁷ This is especially true concerning film, about which Adorno, in contrast to Benjamin, was highly suspicious. It is Benjamin to whom Kluge repeatedly turns in his writings on film, particularly in "Die Utopie Film" [1983]. As Miriam Hansen notes, however, Adorno's views on film began to change somewhat in the 1960s, for instance in his 1966 essay "Filmtransparente," where he took on a more Benjaminian tone thanks in large part to Kluge. Miriam Hansen, "Introduction to Adorno, 'Transparencies on Film' (1966)," *New German Critique*, No. 24/25 (Autumn, 1981 - Winter, 1982), pp. 186-198, pp. 192-195. On Kluge's indebtedness to Benjamin see Christian Schulte, "Kairos und Aura: Spuren Benjamins im Werk Alexander Kluges," in *Schrift Bilder Denken: Walter Benjamin und die Künste*, ed. Detlev Schöttker (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2004), pp. 220-33.

²⁸ Peter Labanyi, "Surrendering to the Logic of the Flow: Reading Alexander Kluge," *After the Death of Literature: West German Writing of the 1970s* (Oxford: Berg, 1989), ed. Keith Bullivant, pp. 263-295, p.266.

²⁹ Andrew Bowie, "New Histories: Aspects of the Prose of Alexander Kluge," *Journal of European Studies* 12 (1982), pp. 180-208, p. 207, footnote 10. See also Leslie A. Adelson, "Experiment Mars: Contemporary German Literature, Imaginative Ethnoscapes, and the New Futurism," in *Über Gegenwartsliteratur: Interpretationen und Interventionen*, ed. Mark W. Rectanus (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2008), pp. 23-50 p. 37.

³⁰ Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963), p. 42.

the rise of expressionism after World War I.³¹ As Lutz Koepnick states, “Benjamin had argued in the *Trauerspiel* study that baroque allegory was the mode of perception peculiar to a time of social disruption and protracted war, when human suffering and material ruin were the stuff and substance of historical experience—hence the return of allegory in his own era as a response to the horrifying destructiveness of World War I.”³² Allegory is then not merely an indicator of this historical decay, but rather the very expression thereof. For Benjamin, “Die Allegorie des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts ist nicht Konvention des Ausdrucks, sondern Ausdruck der Konvention.”³³ In moments of catastrophe, allegory arises as both an expression and experience of the transitory nature of history and as a bastion against what Bainard Cowan characterizes as “the all-too-human propensity to forget the past and in so doing to look away from the truth of oneself.”³⁴ It is then no coincidence that Kluge turns to allegory in his work. Not only is his grounds for appropriating allegory permeated by the catastrophic legacy of National Socialism, but also by the “social disruption” at home in the 1960s and 70s and the “protracted war” in Southeast Asia that signal less of a break with Germany’s calamitous past than its continuation.³⁵ Furthermore, the catastrophic destruction of the Earth in *Lernprozesse*, coupled with the propensity to forget the past, makes it fertile

³¹ Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, p. 42. See also Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York: The Free Press, 1997), p. 56.

³² Lutz Koepnick, “The Spectacle, the ‘Trauerspiel,’ and the Politics of Resolution: Benjamin Reading the Baroque Reading Weimar,” *Critical Inquiry* 22:2 (Winter, 1996), pp. 268-291, p. 282.

³³ Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, p. 194. See also p. 178.

³⁴ Bainard Cowan, “Walter Benjamin’s Theory of Allegory,” *New German Critique* 22 (Winter, 1981), pp. 109-122, p. 110.

³⁵ In addition to the social upheaval in 1968 we can add the perceived continuation of Germany’s militarism and National Socialist legacy in minister Franz Josef Strauß’ plans to arm the German military with nuclear weapons in 1962, the passage of the Emergency Laws in 1968, West Germany’s support of the Vietnam War as well as the occupational ban (“Berufsverbot”) of 1972, which barred former activists from attaining positions in the government.

ground for allegory.

Benjamin's analysis of allegory is, moreover, closely related to the representation of a spatialized past. In Benjamin's account of the allegory, the ruin is the dominant figure of historical decay and ultimately ties allegory to history. "Auf dem Antlitz der Natur," he writes, "steht 'Geschichte' in der Zeichenschrift der Vergängnis. Die allegorische Physiognomie der Natur-Geschichte, die auf der Bühne durch das Trauerspiel gestellt wird, ist wirklich gegenwärtig als Ruine. Mit ihr hat sinnlich die Geschichte in den Schauplatz sich verzogen."³⁶ In the German mourning play, history emerges as allegory in the form of the ruin as both the "source of all suffering and misunderstanding, and the medium through which significance and, indeed, salvation are attained," as Bainard Cowan argues.³⁷ The ruin is representation of the past, an intrusion of history into the space of the work of art. Any chance of hope can only lie therein. That is, the ruin not only represents transience and suffering, but everything that did not happen that led to its becoming a ruin in the first place. This is illuminated in Benjamin's "Über den Begriff der Geschichte" thusly:

Glück, das Neid in uns erwecken könnte, gibt es nur in der Luft, die wir geatmet haben, mit Menschen, zu denen wir hätten reden, mit Frauen, die sich uns hätten geben können. Es schwingt, mit andern Worten, in der Vorstellung des Glücks unveräußerlich die der Erlösung mit. Mit der Vorstellung von Vergangenheit, welche die Geschichte zu ihrer Sache macht, verhält es sich ebenso.³⁸

The ruin is not a glorification of the past, but rather history's mistakes and missteps rendered spatially visible. In contradistinction to the Romantic symbol, Naomi Stead argues that for

³⁶ Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, p. 197.

³⁷ Cowan, "Walter Benjamin's Theory of Allegory," p. 116. This emphasis on the restorative power of the past is echoed by Kluge: "Ich möchte [...], daß in früheren Zeiten, aus denen ich stamme, Hoffnung versteckt ist. [...] Die Beschönigung der Zukunft macht mir angst." Kluge, "Ein Vaterland außerhalb des Realen," in *Geschichten vom Kino*, p. 58.

³⁸ Benjamin, "Über den Begriff der Geschichte," in *Walter Benjamin: Erzählen. Schriften zur Theorie der Narration und literarischen Prosa*, Alexander Honold, ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007), pp. 129-140, p. 129.

Benjamin, “allegory has the discontinuous structure of a series of moments, of transitory, failed attempts to capture meaning.”³⁹ Thus, the allegorical ruin as the intrusion of history into space is the representation of failed learning processes, precisely those catastrophic moments that brought the ruin into being. At the same time, the ruin enables a “saturnische[n] Blick” that is able to suspend the equivocalness (“Zweideutigkeit”) of destruction and redemption.⁴⁰

In the case of the German baroque mourning play, allegory undertakes a creation of a space for the past through the physical presence of the ruin on stage. In allegory, the ruin achieves, however, its presence in the form of thought and as image. For Benjamin, the existent ruin is analogous to the allegory: “Allegorien sind im Reiche der Gedanke, was Ruine im Reiche der Dinge [sind].”⁴¹ Allegory gains a spatial dimension in the realm of thought equivalent to the function of the ruin in the realm of things. “Was dauert,” Benjamin continues, “ist das seltsame Detail der allegorischen Verweisung: ein Gegenstand des Wissens, der in den durchdachten Trümmerbauten nistet.”⁴² Allegory and ruin not only represent a relation to history, but to knowledge thereof as well. What is accomplished through the allegorical referent, what persists in it as an object of knowledge housed in the ruin, is not a depiction of a totality, but rather history as being full of “antagonisms and contradictions,” to speak with Susan Buck-Morss.⁴³ In allegory, writes Benjamin, “[geht]

³⁹ Naomi Stead, “The Value of Ruins: Allegories of Destruction in Benjamin and Speer,” *Form/Work* No. 6 (October 2003), pp. 51-64, p. 55.

⁴⁰ Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, p. 196-197. See also Cowan, “Walter Benjamin’s Theory of Allegory,” p. 111-112.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁴³ Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics*, p. 56.

[d]er falsche Schein der Totalität aus.”⁴⁴ The knowledge gained from the allegorical ruin is knowledge of history as incomplete, as not having reached its end in salvation and reconciliation. Allegory creates this historical knowledge through the exegetical role of the ruin, which, in turn, transforms the work of allegory itself into a ruin; the beautiful image of totality collapses in allegory such that “das Werk als Runie sich behauptet.”⁴⁵ In the allegory, thought as well as the work take on the role and function of the ruin as a spatial marker for history.

The other key component for allegory’s spatial rendering of the past is the image. Benjamin finds in images the exact function of allegory in which “der zeitliche Bewegungsvorgang in einem Raumbild eingefangen und analysiert [wird].”⁴⁶ Temporal movement, the movement of history, is captured and frozen for a moment in the allegorical image. Benjamin’s now renowned concept of dialectical images, indeed, has its origin in his work on allegory.⁴⁷ As Benjamin later develops in *Das Passagen-Werk*: “Bild ist dasjenige, worin das Gewesene mit dem Jetzt blitzhaft zu einer Konstellation zusammentritt. Mit anderen Worten: Bild ist die Dialektik im Stillstand.”⁴⁸ For Benjamin, allegorical images produce a momentary cessation of the dialectic of history, a space into which thought can intrude. “Zum Denken,” Benjamin states, “gehört ebenso die Bewegung wie das Stillstellen der Gedanken.”⁴⁹ This “Stillstellen” of thought is again prefigured in allegory when

⁴⁴ Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, p. 195.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁴⁶ Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, p. 90.

⁴⁷ Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics*, p. 102.

⁴⁸ Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* Volume V/I, eds., Rolf Tiedemann und Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main.: Suhrkamp, 1991), p. 576.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 595.

Benjamin claims that allegory belongs to the realm of thought as ruins to the realm of things.⁵⁰ Such allegorical, dialectical images, should, however, not be understood as mere symbols. In her analysis of images in the work of Benjamin, Susan Buck-Morss contends that they are “mimetic representation[s]” that provide the “‘image’ to the concept.”⁵¹ She elaborates that: “The ‘visibility’ of the truth [...] must be understood quite literally: the ‘images’ were not symbols of the concepts, not poetic analogies for the social totality, but the real, material manifestation of both of them.”⁵² In the case of the allegory, the truth that is rendered visible is the dialectic of history. For Benjamin, the ultimate expression of this mimetic representation is the ruin as well as death’s head, both mainstays of allegorical painting:

[...] in der Allegorie [liegt] die *facies hippocratica* der Geschichte als erstarrte Urlandschaft dem Betrachter vor Augen. Die Geschichte in allem was sie Unzeitiges, Leidvolles, Verfehltes von Beginn an hat, prägt sich in einem Antlitz—nein in einem Totenkopfe aus.⁵³

In this example, the death’s head is not a symbol of the Hippocratic face of history, but also the concept itself, its manifestation as image. Just as the death’s head points to the past, that which has passed, it links this with the present as well, the human body that is always already undergoing its inevitable decay.⁵⁴ The allegorical image thus becomes the space (the “Raumbild”) where the movement of history is frozen and the past and its connection to the present are mimetically represented.

In line with Benjamin’s concept, allegory is the other, outer space of science fiction.

⁵⁰ Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, p. 197.

⁵¹ Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics*, p. 102.

⁵² Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics*, p. 102.

⁵³ Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, pp. 182-183.

⁵⁴ Stead, “The Value of Ruins: Allegories of Destruction in Benjamin and Speer,” p. 55.

Whereas science fiction is the mimetic spatial representation of the future, the allegory carves out a space for past through the ruin. The emergence of history in the space of allegory reflects, moreover, Benjamin's later criticism of science fiction as a desire to escape history altogether. In his essay, "Erfahrung und Armut," Benjamin references two works from the German science fiction author Paul Scheerbart, *Lesabéndio: Ein Asteroiden-Roman* [1913] and *Glasarchitektur* [1914]. The poverty about which Benjamin speaks is one of experience as well as the desire to erase "die Spuren seinen Erdetagen," to wipe away the traces of one's history.⁵⁵ In the works of Scheerbart, Benjamin notes, "legt [er] darauf den größten Wert, seine Leute [...] in standesgemäßen Quartieren unterzubringen: in verschiebbaren beweglichen Glashäusern."⁵⁶ Glass, for Benjamin, is a peculiar material in that nothing clings to it and in this way Scheerbart dreams of and creates "Räume [...], in denen es schwer ist, Spuren zu hinterlassen."⁵⁷ Science fiction is, however, not the sole locus of this desire. Rather, it is a representation of the bourgeoisie's longing to commit the same erasure:

Betritt einer das bürgerliche Zimmer der 80er Jahre, so ist bei aller "Gemütlichkeit," die es vielleicht ausstrahlt, der Eindruck "hier hast du nichts zu suchen" der stärkste. Hier hast du nichts zu suchen — denn hier ist kein Fleck, auf dem nicht der Bewohner seine Spur schon hinterlassen hätte: auf den Gesimsen durch Nippessachen, auf dem Polstersessel durch Deckchen, auf den Fenstern durch Transparente, vor dem Kamin durch den Ofenschirm. Ein schönes Wort von Brecht hilft hier fort, weit fort: "Verwisch die Spuren!"⁵⁸

The bourgeoisie, the representative class of capital, is characterized by the wish to cover their tracks, to hide any stains of the past. The science fiction of Scheerbart with its futuristic glass

⁵⁵ Benjamin, "Erfahrung und Armut," in *Gesammelte Schriften. Band II*, eds. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Scheppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), pp. 213-218, p. 217.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 216.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 217.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

buildings is the mimetic representation of this bourgeois, and by extension capitalist, desire to escape the past into a future where it is possible to completely erase its traces. The past of the allegory is seemingly swept away in science fiction. In its place, science fiction imagines the future as a space where, as with Scheerbart's glass architecture and the bourgeois living room devoid of any lasting imprints, history is left behind. Moreover, this is the attitude of capital vis-à-vis history as well.

While Benjamin is critical of science fiction's desire to create spaces in which no historical traces remain, it renders, at the same time, this desire visible for representation. This is evident in what Benjamin views as the other characteristic of glass: "Das Glas ist überhaupt der Feind des Geheimnisses. Es ist auch der Feind des Besitzes."⁵⁹ Glass is not only the material to which nothing clings, but that which carries no secrets and opposes possession. The architecture of science fiction reflects the functioning of the commodity, what Marx terms the "Ausgangspunkt des Kapitals:"

Das Geheimnisvolle der Warenform besteht also einfach darin, daß sie den Menschen die gesellschaftlichen Charaktere ihrer eignen Arbeit als gegenständliche Charaktere der Arbeitsprodukte selbst [...] zurückspiegelt, daher auch das gesellschaftliche Verhältnis der Produzenten zur Gesamtarbeit als ein außer ihnen existierendes gesellschaftliches Verhältnis von Gegenständen. Durch dies Quidproquo werden die Arbeitsprodukte Waren, sinnlich übersinnliche oder gesellschaftliche Dinge.⁶⁰

Thus, the glass buildings of Scheerbart's science fiction expose the secret of the commodity, its reification of labor that results in its cognitively estranging effect as something both perceptible and imperceptible ("sinnlich übersinnlich"). Or, as Benjamin summarizes quoting André Gide: "Jedes Ding, das ich besitzen will, wird mir undurchsichtig."⁶¹ Science fiction

⁵⁹ Benjamin, "Erfahrung und Armut," p. 217.

⁶⁰ Marx, *Das Kapital Band I*, in *Marx-Engels Werke*, Vol. 23 (Berlin: Dietz, 1968), p. 161, 86.

⁶¹ Benjamin, "Erfahrung und Armut," p. 217.

possesses then the dual quality of representing the desire of capital to escape history as well as its mysterious and secretive nature, the very structure of capital that rests on making itself both known and unknown.

Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang is just such a combination of allegory and science fiction. Kluge's story centers on four "Experten," Franz Zwicky, Stefan Boltzmann, A. Dorfmann, and von Ungern-Sternberg.⁶² The story opens in the year 2103 more than a century after the outbreak of the "Schwarze[n] Krieg" that began in 1981 (*LP*, 251). Light-years away from their devastated terrestrial home, the four comrades are left with no other choice than to come to terms with their own history:

[...] ohne Chance einer Rückkehr zu den übrigen Menschen und ohne hinreichenden Grund noch weiter vorzustoßen [...], waren sie selber vor die Situation gestellt, sich mit ihrer Geschichte auseinanderzusetzen. Einen anderen Gegenstand der Aneignung hatten sie nun nicht mehr. Wir durch ein Zauberwort schienen Zukunft, Gegenwart wie weggeblasen. (*LP*, 251)

Kluge's text opens then with an emphasis not on the future per se, but rather with a retrospective look from the future backwards to the historical events that led to these future catastrophes. Without the prospect of a future or a present, the four comrades only have history at their disposal. The motivation for Kluge's science fiction story, what drives its four protagonists to remember and account for their history is the ultimate catastrophe, the annihilation of the Earth. As Leslie A. Adelson remarks, *Lernprozesse* "seems to ask what happens to the material substance of human experience when matter as such is vastly transformed."⁶³ With the destruction of the Earth, mankind finds itself bereft of the material necessary for experience as well as for a materialist view of history. Benjamin's

⁶²Alexander Kluge, *Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), p. 250. Henceforth cited parenthetically as *LP*.

⁶³ Leslie A. Adelson, "Experiment Mars," p. 34.

“allegorische Betrachtung” as the “weltliche Exposition der Geschichte als Leidensgeschichte der Welt” realizes here the last “Stationen ihres Verfalls,” where there is nothing but decay and destruction.⁶⁴ *Lernprozesse* begins as an allegory, an engagement with the past through an investigation of the ruins left in the wake of the Earth’s destruction. In *Lernprozesse*, the ruin left behind propels the story of the four protagonists and the accompanying allegorical images in the text.⁶⁵

While the text begins with the history-focused end station of the four protagonists’ interplanetary journey and thus commences as allegory, the astronauts’ travels through outer space are only possible thanks to the stuff of science fiction. The experts’ story together begins in the Battle of Stalingrad centuries before their seemingly hopeless orbit around a distant star.⁶⁶ Realizing the hopelessness of the Battle of Stalingrad, the four protagonists depart eastward on foot (“zu Fuß”) in the direction of China and eventually end up in the United States where they board a spaceship in order to flee the destruction of Earth (*LP*, 269). Apart from the very improbability of this feat, Kluge’s word play is worth noting here: “Das ist die ‘Quantenmechanik’ (Quanten=Füße) der Geschichte,” Rainer Stollmann contends.⁶⁷ By virtue of quantum mechanics, the experts are able to escape Stalingrad. Although this appears as simply a cunning etymological excursion on Kluge’s part, the

⁶⁴ Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, p. 183.

⁶⁵ The variety of images in *Lernprozesse* consist of photographs, drawings, and collages that will all be discussed at length in the following section.

⁶⁶ Kluge’s interest in Stalingrad certainly precedes *Lernprozesse* and continues to dominate a large amount of his work. This begins with his *Schlachtbeschreibung* [1964]. For a detailed analysis of Kluge’s writings on World War II and Stalingrad in particular see Stefanie Carp, *Kriegsgeschichten: zum Werk Alexander Kluges* (München: Fink, 1987).

⁶⁷ Rainer Stollmann, “Schwarzer Krieg, Endlos. Erfahrung und Selbsterhaltung in Alexander Kluge’s ‘Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang’,” *Text & Kontext* 12.2 (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1984), pp. 349-369, p. 365.

experts' names tie them to real people and real scientific developments. As Stollmann further elucidates, the name Stefan Boltzmann is an amalgamation of two renowned physicists: Josef Stefan and Ludwig Boltzmann.⁶⁸ The post-Newtonian work of Stefan and his student Boltzmann resulted in the latter's theory of entropy, which, as Stollmann states, "braucht zur Vorhersage der Zukunft keine Vergangenheit, sondern nur den gegenwärtigen Zustand eines Systems."⁶⁹ Further, Franz Zwicky is based on the astrophysicist and rocket specialist Fritz Zwicky who, Stollmann notes, worked in Pasadena from 1952-1968 on "Projekt für Mondlandeflüge."⁷⁰ Thus, the experts' escape from their potentially perilous fate on the Russian front is itself an act of science fiction. At the same time, however, it is precisely the element of science fiction that necessitates the allegory. Entropy and rocket technology, as the basis of the science fictional in *Lernprozesse*, enable the protagonists to survive in the future irrespective of the past. Moreover, the present system, from which this entropy as well as the flight into outer space are derived, is capital.

The future of *Lernprozesse* is dominated by what Suvin terms the "pseudo-novum" of capital.⁷¹ That is, it mirrors the incessant commodity circulation of capital that Suvin characterizes, referencing Benjamin, as reflecting "the illusion of novelty [...] in the illusion

⁶⁸ Stollmann, "Schwarzer Krieg, Endlos," p. 363.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid. The other two protagonists are not derived or tied to scientists. Dorfmann presumably comes from Heinrich Dorfmann, a character in the 1968 film *The Flight of the Phoenix*. Von Ungern-Sternberg alone has no extra-literary origin and is described in the text as the son of the czarist officer Ramon von Ungern-Sternberg (*LP*, 268). Stollmann, "Schwarzer Krieg, Endlos." pp. 363-366.

⁷¹ Suvin, "A 'Social' Theory of Literature and Paraliterature," in *Positions and Presuppositions in Science Fiction* (Kent: Kent State UP, 1988), pp. 3-21, p. 14.

of infinite sameness.”⁷² Thus, following Suvin, *Lernprozesse* exhibits a “tension between novum and pseudo-novum.”⁷³ Where the pseudo-novum of capital secures the continuation of the new as always the same, the new interstellar capital as a repetition of the old terrestrial one, the true novum in this work of science fiction lies in the past that capital tries to escape, the past that is reconstructed through allegory and the ruins of the end of the Earth. As the mediating category between cognition and estrangement, the dialectic of the known and unknown, the novum in *Lernprozesse* is the very functioning of capital rendered visible, the revelation of its secretive nature. This is accomplished through the allegory. For Benjamin, allegory goes away empty handed: (“Leer aus geht die Allegorie”) insofar as “[es] bedeutet genau das Nichtsein dessen, was es vorstellt.”⁷⁴ As Cowan aptly summarizes, allegory, in accordance with its etymology as “other-discourse (*allegoria*),” always “point[s] elsewhere than to [its] supposed ‘proper’ meaning[.]”⁷⁵ Whereas *Lernprozesse* as science fiction renders the structure of future capital in outer space capital visible, the allegory confronts it with its past, the other of science fiction and the space of alterity to capital (or in Chu’s terms it is the 1/x to capital’s x). In other words, the story that the four protagonists tell together using allegorical images interspersed throughout the text are not necessarily representations of the future, but rather the history of the future—they are the other of the outer space of capital. Like ruins, the allegorical narrative and concomitant images point to something outside themselves, outside the story of capital’s interplanetary survival. In a word, they

⁷² Ibid., pp. 8-9. The reference is to Benjamin’s work on Charles Baudelaire. Reassessing his work on utopia and science fiction, Suvin reiterates the duplicitous nature of the novum, again with recourse to Benjamin, in his essay “Novum Is as Novum Does.” Suvin, “Novum Is as Novum Does,” in *Science Fiction, Critical Frontiers*, eds. Karen Sayer and John Moore (New York: St. Martin’s, 2000), pp. 3-22, p. 16.

⁷³ Suvin, “A ‘Social’ Theory of Literature and Paraliterature,” p. 14.

⁷⁴ Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, p. 264-5.

⁷⁵ Bainard Cowan, “Walter Benjamin’s Theory of Allegory,” pp. 111-113.

point to the catastrophic past. *Lernprozesse* is a hybrid comprised of both characteristics of allegory and its concerns rooted in the catastrophic past and the future-driven logic of capital. This fusion affords the text a means by which both to extrapolate capital's future in the extreme and to stage its critique, the history told by the four astronauts, albeit only after it is too late. At the same time, however, the text survives as a document of the catastrophic future of capital that serves as a critique of the capital's present.

Lernprozesse as Outer Space

Kluge's *Lernprozesse* is by no means a simple text. It lacks a cohesive narrative structure, jumping as quickly through various temporalities as it does spaces. It opens in the 22nd century, moves to a brief discussion of the outbreak of the war in 1981, then tracks the four protagonists' journey from Stalingrad (January, 1943) through China (Spring, 1943) to the U.S.A (1949) before arriving in outer space (1981), and ends in the century in which it began. Moreover, the four experts are by no means the sole focus of the story. Their story provides a frame that envelops the larger narrative of intergalactic capital after the apparent destruction of Earth. Kluge's insertion of various images, from photographs and drawings to collages, along with the displacement of the protagonists' story largely into footnotes further interrupts up the flow of the narrative. All of this is, to be sure, intentional on Kluge's part. Christian Schulte summarizes the calculated complexity of Kluge's work thusly,

So vermittelt z.B. organisches Erzählen—schon aufgrund seines souverän anmutenden Gestus—den Eindruck, die Welt lasse sich aus seiner einzigen Perspektive als homogener Kosmos darstellen, der immer noch der Botmäßigkeit des Subjekts unterstehe—ein Geltungsanspruch, der sich in der Erzählweise selbst manifestiert, und eine Schein-Sicherheit, die darüber betrügt, daß das Wirklichkeitsverhältnis des Menschen längst dadurch geprägt ist, daß ihm die äußere

Welt eher kollisionsartig begegnet, daß es ihm die Dinge, um mit Benjamin zu reden, “viel zu brennend [...] auf den Leib gerückt” sind, als daß er noch “Perspektiven und Prospekte”, souveräne Standpunkte einnehmen könnte.⁷⁶

Lernprozesse's convoluted structure thus not only mirrors the complexity of the reality of capital that is passed off as simplistic and understandable through traditional narrative structures, but in doing so critiques it. Indeed, as Kluge states in the preface of *Lernprozesse*, “Sinnentzug. Eine gesellschaftliche Situation, in der das kollektive Lebensprogramm von Menschen schneller zerfällt, als die Menschen neue Lebensprogramme produzieren können” (*LP*, 5). *Lernprozesse* is thus, a mimetic representation of this withdrawal of both meaning and sensuousness, which is the foundation of capital's survival in outer space; in other words, it is predicated on severing any and all connections to its catastrophic past. The emphasis on the lack of meaningful connections that frames *Lernprozesse* has a theoretical precedent in Negt and Kluge's *Public Sphere and Experience* [1972] that appeared just one year before. As they state:

Proletarisches Leben bildet keinen Zusammenhang, sondern ist durch die Blockierung seiner wirklichen Zusammenhänge gekennzeichnet. Die Form des gesellschaftlichen Erfahrungshorizontes, die diesen Blockierungszusammenhang *nicht* aufhebt, sondern befestigt, ist die bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit.⁷⁷

In Negt and Kluge's analysis, the bourgeois public sphere, as the dominant public sphere of capital, is based on blocking the production of connections. Kluge's artistic and theoretical works might therefore be seen as attempts to put this process of dissociation endemic to the present on display in a dystopic future.

⁷⁶ Christian Schulte, “Konstruktion des Zusammenhangs: Motiv, Zeugenschaft und Wiedererkennung bei Alexander Kluge,” *Die Schrift an der Wand: Alexander Kluge Rohstoffe und Materialien*, ed. Christian Schulte (Osnabrück: Rasch, 2000), pp. 45-68, p. 49.

⁷⁷ Negt and Kluge, *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung: Zur Organisationsanalyse von bürgerlicher und proletarischer Öffentlichkeit*, in *Der unterschätzte Mensch. Gemeinsame Philosophie in zwei Bänden, Band I* (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 2001), p. 337.

In depicting this process, rendering the withdrawal of capital from its past visible, to speak with Chu, *Lernprozesse* as a text becomes a space of contradiction between capital's past and future. It both mimetically represents capital's future in outer space and presents it alongside the past that it continually attempts to outrun. Thus, the text itself does not reestablish the connections, reconciling the past with its present future and therewith collapsing any contradiction. Rather, it presents them as a series of fragments that, allegorically, refute the false appearance of totality. As Schulte contends, Kluge's work displays "den fehlenden Zusammenhang [...] statt bloß das Resultat des Prozesses abzubilden."⁷⁸ In this way, *Lernprozesse* as a text becomes an allegory, an accumulation of the ruins of capital's past; it is a science fiction story about capital in outer space that self-reflexively folds back on itself to perform a critique of what it displays, namely capital's temporal split. It has often been noted that Kluge's texts themselves, in fact, resemble ruins. As Hans Magnus Enzensberger remarks in his 1978 review of Kluge's *Neue Geschichten*: "Sein Buch macht den Eindruck eines Trümmerfelds. Zum formalen Prinzip des Erzählens ist hier die Katastrophe gemacht worden."⁷⁹ Matthias Uecker also proposes the ruin-like nature of Kluge's texts. Discussing the multimedia quality of Kluge's works, Uecker states:

Allerdings handelt es sich bei diesen Bauteilen nicht um homogene, beliebig kombinierbare Materialien, sondern um durchweg schon einmal bearbeitete und nun aus ihren ursprünglichen Zusammenhängen herausgerissene Materialien, die wie Trümmer die Spuren ihres früheren Gebrauchs noch mit sich führen.⁸⁰

Similarly, Schulte sees Kluge's work as a secularized version of the writing on the wall that

⁷⁸ Schulte, "Konstruktion des Zusammenhangs: Motiv, Zeugenschaft und Wiedererkennung bei Alexander Kluge," p. 52.

⁷⁹ Enzensberger, "Ein herzloser Schriftsteller," *Der Spiegel*, January 2, 1978, p. 81.

⁸⁰ Matthias Uecker, "Rohstoff und Intermedialität: Überlegungen zu Alexander Kluges Fernsehpraxis," *Kluges Fernsehen: Alexander Kluges Kulturmagazin*, eds. Christian Schulte and Winfried Siebers (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), pp. 82-104, p. 87.

appeared to King Belshazzar announcing his impending doom: “Hier sind es die Untergänge selbst, die Katastrophen der Geschichte, die als ‘Schriften and der Wand,’ als Vorboten weiterer Untergänge in der Zukunft zu entziffern sind.”⁸¹ Further, Schulte contends, the raw materials (“Rohstoff”), photographs, drawings, quotes etc., that comprise Kluge’s work “sind [selbst] zu Menetekeln avanciert, weil sie dem Menschen fremd und abstrakt gegenüberstehen und ihren Sinn nicht mehr herausgeben.”⁸² As an agglomeration of various raw materials, *Lernprozesse* parallels with its predominant juxtaposition of images and texts Benjamin’s case for allegorical ruins that always point at something beyond themselves, always refusing to forfeit their meaning.⁸³

Kluge’s apposition of images and texts, Lewandowski notes, appears for the first time in his literary work with *Lernprozesse*.⁸⁴ This feature of Kluge’s text not only attempts to mirror, as Schulte states above, the complexity of the reality of capital, but is also “eine multimediale Versuchsanordnung, die den klassischen Einteilungen in Genres, in Ober- und Unterbegriffe eine experimentelle Vielfalt entgegensetzt.”⁸⁵ In this way, Kluge’s science fiction text about the future of capital is also a pseudo-documentary. That is, the images lend the story a feigned authenticity.⁸⁶ It does not fantastically divorce itself from the world, but rather in line with the characteristics of science-fiction and utopia outlined above,

⁸¹ Schulte, “Konstruktion des Zusammenhangs: Motiv, Zeugenschaft und Wiedererkennung bei Alexander Kluge,” p. 47.

⁸² Ibid., p. 50.

⁸³ See Cowan, “Walter Benjamin’s Theory of Allegory,” p. 116.

⁸⁴ Rainer Lewandowski, “Literatur und Film bei Alexander Kluge,” in *Alexander Kluge*, ed. Thomas Böhm Christl (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), pp. 233-244, p. 235.

⁸⁵ Schulte, “Konstruktion des Zusammenhangs: Motiv, Zeugenschaft und Wiedererkennung bei Alexander Kluge,” p. 47.

⁸⁶ Rainer Lewandowski, “Literatur und Film bei Alexander Kluge,” p. 235.

Lernprozesse creates a “this-worldly Other World” based on cognitive estrangement. In other words, the images aid in simultaneously creating a world that is fundamentally different yet possible, validated in a way by the faked authenticity of the various images that serve as documents of this future outer space. At the same time, however, the images produce a tension between the narrative of the extraterrestrial survival of capital and the documents of its future. As Uecker argues, “So haben doch die Effekte des Medientransfers und die Reibungen zwischen den aus unterschiedlichen Medien stammenden Rohstoffen einen wesentlichen Anteil an der [...] Wirkung seiner Arbeit.”⁸⁷ The friction produced through the juxtaposition of images and texts, Uecker maintains, their simultaneous connection and contrast, creates the space of the text.⁸⁸ This friction is, moreover, caused by the contradiction produced through the combination of allegory and science fiction, past and future. *Lernprozesse*’s unusual, complicated, and often confusing juxtapositions between text and image thus creates the outer space of capital out of contradiction and in doing so also produces a text that is itself this (outer)space, the site of friction between capital’s past and future.

The task of establishing the meaning of *Lernprozesse* that purposefully refuses to divulge it is, undoubtedly, a complicated one. One way to do accomplish this is through an exploration of the various spaces of capital in the text. Outer space is by no means empty space for Kluge. In *Lernprozesse*, capital expands into outer space, conquering new spaces and fortifying its colonization of already existing spaces, for example planets, which become sites of raw materials and resources. Outer space is, in short, filled with spaces that capital

⁸⁷ Uecker, “Rohstoff und Intermedialität. Ueberlegungen zu Alexander Kluges Fernsehpraxis,” p. 102.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 104.

can take over or award with value in the service of securing its future survival. In addition to numerous planets, the spaces of capital in *Lernprozesse* are comprised of outposts and juridical buildings as well as roving space flotillas. With the construction of these various spaces, capital reestablishes itself in the wake of the destruction of Earth. Moreover, these spaces mirror their terrestrial predecessors. Whereas each of these spaces are manifestations of interstellar capital, they are, at the same time, the ruins of the Earth's past, the remnants of capital hurled into outer space. These spaces thus contain a science fictional as well as allegorical component and demands to be read in two ways accordingly: as visible representations of capital's future in outer space and as the visible spatial ruins of its past. They are therefore always the other of what they appear to be, namely the new spaces of capital that have divorced themselves spatially and temporally from space and time of Earth. Succeeding in this manner, it will be shown that capital's construction and colonization of outer space in *Lernprozesse*, similar to exploration of postcolonial spaces, establishes the text itself as a utopian space of contradiction. That is, *Lernprozesse* manipulates the space of the text and thereby creates a space for the critique of capital, the past that is always the other of capital's future. In an effort to survey the terrain of capital's outer space, let us begin with the outposts and buildings of the new interstellar capital that dot Kluge's narrative before moving on to the planets, and lastly the spaceships that ferry capital into the far reaches of outer space.

The Outer Spaces of Capital

In the direct aftermath of the "Schwarzer Krieg," those who managed to escape find

themselves on Mars from where they attempt to assess the damage. On their new Martian outpost, the survivors send out satellite probes that send back the following information:

Das *Erddinnere tritt nach außen*. Teile des Atlantikwassers verschwinden in einem *Schlund*. Wenige Stunden später zerbricht die Erde in mehrere zerklüftete Teile, von der gemeinsamen Schwerkraft zusammengehalten. “Das war kein Ball mehr, das waren zwei längliche Trümmerklumpen.” (*LP*, 257)

When the “Mars-Institut” dispatches these probes to investigate the clump of ruins that now form a ring revolving around the remains of Earth’s gravitational field, the signal disappears (*LP*, 257). Unable to explore the terrestrial ruins, the former inhabitants of Earth are left without a history. Without a history, the text proffers the following question: “sind die Reste der Menschheit auf Planet Mars noch wirklich menschliche Wesen” (*LP*, 263)? Responding to this question, Hinnercke, the founder of space law, states:

Der Kollege von der Urlaubsstelle des Immanuel-Kant-Instituts—alles Rekonvaleszenten, aber noch denkfähig—meint, daß nach Untergang der menschlichen Gesellschaft, wie er sich ausdrückt und ohne die Menschheitsgeschichte [...] wir uns nicht einmal als menschliche Wesen bezeichnen können. [...] Er meint, wir wären nicht einmal Kannibalen oder Neanderthaler, sondern Nichts. (*LP*, 263)

Without a material history, humanity itself is reduced to nothing. How, Hinnercke inquires, can something come from nothing, from the zero-point of history? Hinnercke’s interlocutor, Dennerlein, the head of the surgical ward as well as the transport school, answers this question in a footnote:

Man kann keine Transporte durchführen, die sich auf ein ‘Wohin’ beziehen, wenn man nicht klar das ‘Woher’ bestimmen kann. Kommen wir von Nichts, so sehe ich nicht, wie wir von da wieder wegkommen wollen. Von Nichts kann man nicht starten, wenn ich das einmal philosophisch ausdrücken darf. (*LP*, 263)

With nothing to grasp onto, no ruins of their history with which to orient themselves, the survivors of planetary destruction are doomed to a timeless, future, a “wohin” without a “woher.” In short, they are doomed to continue the expansion of capital.

This central problem rooted in the absence of a past is, however, precisely the precondition for the continuation of capital in outer space. The Martian outpost becomes a representation of capital's genesis from nothing. In volume three of *Das Kapital* Marx describes the process through which capital is created seemingly out of thin air:

Der Staat hat seinen Gläubigern jährlich ein gewisses Quantum Zins für das geborgte Kapital zu zahlen. Der Gläubiger kann hier nicht seinem Schuldner aufkündigen, sondern nur die Forderung, seinen Besitztitel darüber, verkaufen. Das Kapital selbst ist aufgegessen, verausgabt vom Staat. Es existiert nicht mehr. Was der Staatsgläubiger besitzt, ist 1. ein Schuldschein auf den Staat, sage von 100 Pfd.St.; 2. gibt dieser Schuldschein ihm den Anspruch auf die jährlichen Staatseinnahmen, d.h. das jährliche Produkt der Steuern, für einen gewissen Betrag, sage 5 Pfd.St. oder 5%; 3. kann er diesen Schuldschein von 100 Pfd.St. beliebig an andre Personen verkaufen. Ist der Zinsfuß 5%, und dazu Sicherheit des Staats vorausgesetzt, so kann der Besitzer A den Schuldschein in der Regel zu 100 Pfd.St. an B verkaufen; denn für B ist es dasselbe, ob er 100 Pfd.St. zu 5% jährlich ausleiht, oder ob er durch Zahlung von 100 Pfd.St. sich einen jährlichen Tribut vom Staat zum Betrage von 5 Pfd.St. sichert. Aber in allen diesen Fällen bleibt das Kapital, als dessen Abkömmling (Zins) die Staatszahlung betrachtet wird, illusorisch, fiktives Kapital. Nicht nur, daß die Summe, die dem Staat geliehen wurde, überhaupt nicht mehr existiert. Sie war überhaupt nie bestimmt, als Kapital verausgabt, angelegt zu werden, und nur durch ihre Anlage als Kapital hätte sie in einen sich erhaltenden Wert verwandelt werden können.⁸⁹

In Marx' example of the flow of capital in financing state debt, capital is revealed as purely fictitious and illusory, as never having existed in the first place. The interest, or profit, that is gained, what could be considered value, is generated from an investment that was never intended to be capital, yet this is nevertheless what is produced. In this instance, capital emerges from nothing, or from the not-yet-existent future as speculation for future profit. "Die Bildung des fiktiven Kapitals," Marx continues, "nennt man kapitalisieren."⁹⁰ The Martian outpost represents this quandary of fictive capital, itself cognitively estranging as both something and nothing, and renders the process of capitalization visible for

⁸⁹ Marx, *Das Kapital Band III*, in *Marx-Engels Werke*, Vol. 25 (Berlin: Dietz, 1983), p. 483.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 484.

representation. Surviving the destruction of the Earth in outer space is to create something from nothing, to repeat the movement of fictive capital and create it for it a space in the future. At the same time, the creation of something from nothing is precisely the function of science-fiction and utopian literature. The worlds they create are both novel and new, related to and necessarily divorced and distanced from our own. *Lernprozesse* takes part as well in the construction of a fictitious outer space ruled by intergalactic capital. This creation is thus part of capital and opposed to it. Kluge's work not only creates this fictitious outer space, but also its allegorical other that emerges out of the fictive realm of both capital and science fiction.

The establishment of the first Martian outpost for capital's intergalactic expansion is, however, just the beginning. As capital continues its expansion into and colonization of outer space it constructs for itself along the way more spaces of value. One of these main spaces in *Lernprozesse* is the juridical complex concentrated on the planet "Tauta Eridani" (*LP*, 334). Further, the juridical buildings and indeed the judicial system as a whole have been purchased by large corporations:

Die Großen Gesellschaften hatten hier Delegationen ihrer Rechtsabteilungen jeweils in Sonderpalästen untergebracht. Ein Unternehmer Berlinger hatte einen Konzern zusammengebracht, der die Aktivitäten Wahrheitsfindung, Rechtsvertretung, Vertragskontrolle und Rechtsanfertigung umfaßte. [...] Die Großen Gesellschaften, die besondere Rechtsvertretungsbüros besaßen, so daß man von ihnen auch Recht kaufen konnte, gingen von der Berechnung aus, daß alle Richter des Justizplaneten überlastet waren. (*LP*, 335)

As with the Martian outpost, the juridical complex on the planet Tauta Eridani is a science fictional rendering of capital, here the wholesale purchase of the law. Relocated to a far-off planet, future capital appears at once familiar and strange. The images that accompany this section underscore the novelty of interstellar capital while simultaneously serving an allegorical function. The first shows a single classical rotunda set back against a desolate

landscape almost enveloped by the immense courtyard leading up to it (figure 2, *LP*, 336).

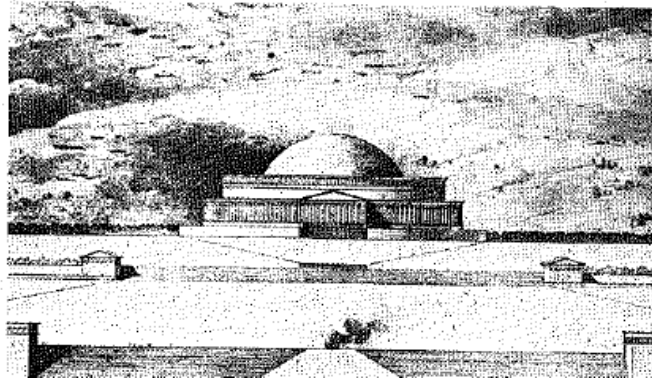


Figure 6

This image of the first building established on Mars carries the traces of its terrestrial past. Nothing in the image reveals its extraterrestrial nature and it appears to be plucked directly from the Earth and relocated to a distant planet. Its very insertion into the text, however, redoubles its ruinous quality whereby it not only establishes the connection between the image and the preceding text, but between the image and its past, its assimilation of terrestrial capital. By displacing this building not only into outer space but also temporally into the future, Kluge creates a second-order ruin that reestablishes its temporality. In other words, it regains its temporal force by freezing the incessant forward movement of capital and rendering it available for representation in the text. The text, then, becomes the outer space of both the intergalactic future of capital as well as its past. Where capital sheds its past during its spatial and temporal forward march, *Lernprozesse* creates a space in which its future and past exist side by side.

The second image in this section depicts an array of similarly styled rotundas set against a stellar background with the caption: “10 Jahre später: Die Justizpaläste des Sektors Schwan im Osten des Zentralen Justizplaneten” (figure 3, *LP*, 337). This progression from the solitary building almost engrossed by its surrounding landscape to numerous such

buildings seemingly piled on top of one another renders the preceding image a ruin in its own right, one overtaken by both the spatial compression and temporal span of the succeeding image.

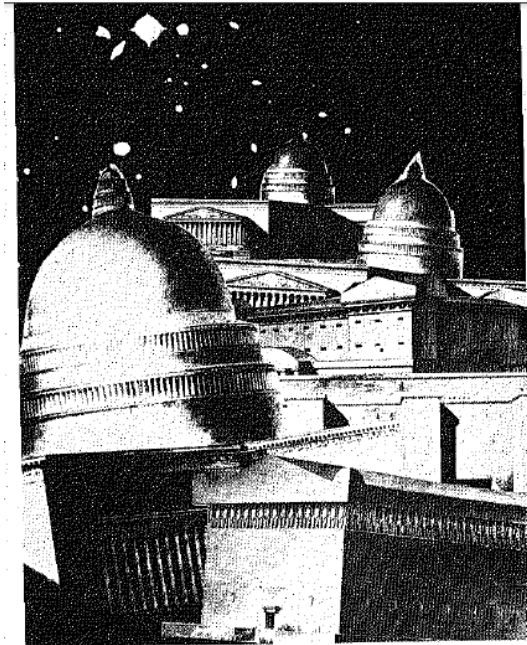


Figure 7

One building amidst this *mélange*, however, stands out. Front and center is a particular structure that Negt and Kluge expound on in the “Kommentare” to *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung*, namely Étienne-Louis Boullée’s “Kenotaph für einen Krieger.”⁹¹ Negt and Kluge describe this work by the neoclassicist architect from the French Revolution in the following terms: “Ein römischer Sarkophag wird hier zu einem Riesensarg vergrößert. In diesem gewaltigen Bauwerk kann kein einzelner mehr liegen. Der Sargdeckel ließ sich durch niemand heben. Überlebensgröße, aber fast uniforme Krieger bilden den Fries.”⁹² What stands out for them in such structures (among which the Tower of Babel also counts) is the

⁹¹ Negt and Kluge, *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung*, p. 653.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 652.

way in which they “versuchen, politische Gedanken mit architektonischen Mitteln auszudrücken, die Architektur soll ‘sprechen,’ ‘erzählen.’”⁹³ That which is told or expressed by the cenotaph is capital’s reification of labor:

Überall die Idee, einen neuen Lebenszyklus zu setzen, überholt von der Tendenz, das zur Verfügung stehende Material, das objektive Können, das die menschlichen Lebeninteressen hinter sich läßt, in Gang zu bringen und als ungeheure, bloß objektive Sammlung von Eigenschaften und Kräften zur selbstdarstellung zu bringen.⁹⁴

Boullée’s grand cenotaph is the architectural embodiment of this idea; what is expressed is not the value of the labor that went into its construction, but rather the reification thereof in both the assemblage of capital required to bring such monolithic structures about at all. Put differently, it is a manifestation of capital’s objective, material ability to produce monumental spaces regardless of the life interests among the laborers required to make them reality. It is not the characteristics and forces that have constructed this space of capital that are rendered available for representation, but rather the ability of capital to turn these into spatial representations of itself.

This oversized, non-functional cenotaph is the ultimate expression of the belief and desire of capital to be able to overcome anything, including the destruction of Earth and survive thereby in and through such spaces. This desire for immortality is what Negt and Kluge see in such structures. “Die Entwürfe,” they state, “scheinen bereits den Ruinencharakter, die Wiederentdeckung des Bauwerks, den Ewigkeitsaspekt, vorauszuplanen.”⁹⁵ This ruinous characteristic coupled with the desire for eternity is, they add, precisely what National Socialism attempted to emulate through Albert Speer’s

⁹³ Negt and Kluge, *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung*, p. 651.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 651, footnote 9.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 654.

architecture. In *Lernprozesse*, however, it is capital that has built this future-oriented, immortal ruinous character into the future in outer space. At the same time, however, this longing for immortality and eternity, expressed through such grandiose architecture acquires in *Lernprozesse* an altogether different, allegorical meaning. Here such structures are permeated by the history that brought them as ruins into outer space. This is both the history of the end of the Earth and the history of capital necessary for the construction of these edifices. In the cenotaph, which is too large to house any one person, both histories are embodied in one structure: the history of the future of capital converges here with the history of war and catastrophe that initiated its intergalactic exodus. Kluge's collage of recognizable, terrestrial buildings against the backdrop of outer space fulfills the functions of science fiction by representing the future of capital as well as those of allegory by reestablishing the its history through the countervailing characteristics of the ruin. In these buildings, the spaces of capital are overlapped and countered by their allegorical other. Moreover, this image accomplishes in miniature what the text does as a whole. That is, as with the collage, *Lernprozesse* is a space in which the outer space of capital confronts and exists contradictorily alongside the past that it longs to escape.

The construction of new spaces of capital in outer space, from the first Martian outpost to the juridical buildings, is essentially a form of terraforming. The planets themselves become the new habitats for capital in the wake of the terrestrial catastrophe. The issue of terraforming is a central concern for Chu in his analysis of science fiction. Referring to Kim Stanley Robinsons' Mars trilogy, Chu argues that "the science fiction of terraforming [...] open[s] up a narrative space in which globalization is made available for concrete

representation.”⁹⁶ Central to science fiction’s representation of terraforming, Chu adds, is the “logic of simile” whereby the new terraformed planet is explicitly compared to and is a representation of Earth.⁹⁷ Through the simile, the spatial and temporal dimensions of new planets in outer space are tied to the spaces and temporality on Earth. Just as Chu finds in Robinson’s work the representation of a new internationalism on terraformed Mars that mirrors the globalization of Earth, so too does *Lernprozesse* render capital’s continued expansion and exploitation of other worlds available for easy recognition.

Globalized capital and its exploitative terraforming extend from the Martian outpost and the juridical planet Tauta Eridani to other planets and other celestial bodies that are mined for their natural resources. Prime examples of terraforming are the three planets in the system “Dogkart” (*LP*, 338). This planetary system was originally colonized (“besiedelt”) following an expedition from the already terraformed Mars outpost (*LP*, 338). One of the three planets, Pinzgau, is already under the control of capital, the Suez-Canal Corporation. The other two, however, are inhabited by members of a commune:

Diese Kommune besiedelte Planet II, indem sie einen Stahlglaspavillion auf einem der *Kontinente* errichtete, die sich aus der gallertartigen Masse aus Öl, Wasserstoff und Metallspuren, die auf diesem Planeten als “Meere” aufzufassen war, heraushoben. Sie hatten zeitlebens Schwierigkeiten, ihre Besitzergreifung gegenüber den Großen Gesellschaften aufrechtzuerhalten. [...] Die Gesellschaften strengten in Abständen Prozesse an, um durch den Beweis der Besitzaufgabe die Löschung der Eintragung zu erreichen. Hielt sich das Kollektiv der Peickerts, das gern zusammenbleiben wollte, auf Planet I auf, so wurde der Besitz von Planet II bezweifelt. (*LP*, 338)

Through the logic of simile, the planets in the system of Dogkart are representations of both globalized capital’s colonization and exploitation of other planets, as well as its mirror image

⁹⁶ Chu, *Do Metaphors Dream of Literal Sleep?*, p. 102. Robinson’s Mar’s trilogy consists of *Red Mars* [1993], *Green Mars* [1994], and *Blue Mars* [1996].

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 102

on Earth. The planets have continents and oceans, two terms that are respectively italicized or quoted emphasizing both their similarity to and difference from their former terrestrial counterparts. More importantly, however, are the planets' terrestrially similar resources, namely oil, metal, and hydrogen that large corporations wish to extract.

The problem is that the commune has already secured at least one of the planets for themselves for precisely those same reasons. In order to maintain their rights to the planets and their resources, the commune devises a plan to connect the planets through a series of pipelines, thus establishing a “physisch-dingliche Verbindung zwischen beiden Himmelskörpern, die sie im juristischen Sinne zu einem einzigen untrennbaren Körper vereinigte” (LP, 338, see figure 4, LP, 339).

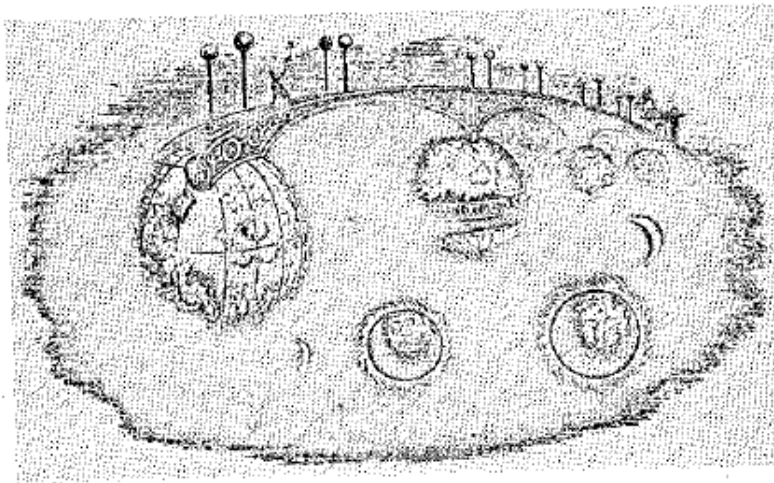


Figure 4

This image, which originates from Grandville's illustrated work *Un Autre Monde* [1843/44], is discussed by Benjamin in his *Arcades Project (Das Passagen-Werk)* [1928-29/1934-1940]. For Benjamin, Grandville's sketches of imaginary worlds reflect the commodity fetish of capital extended into outer space. “Die Mode,” Benjamin writes, “schreibt das Ritual vor, nach dem der Fetisch Ware verehrt sein will. Grandville dehnt ihren Anspruch auf die

Gegenstände des alltäglichen Gebrauchs so gut wie auf den Kosmos aus.”⁹⁸ Echoing Benjamin, the extraterrestrial planets in *Lernprozesse* are little more than valued commodities. Further, just as Benjamin detects an antagonism (“Zwiespalt”) between the utopian and cynical character of Grandville’s work, for the commune as well it is both their utopian planet outside and the very site of capital.⁹⁹ The commune must, then, surrender to the ritual of commodity fetishism in order to safeguard their planet. That is, the solution to the juridico-capital control of the corporations itself necessitates a form of globalized reification, creating a “physisch-dingliche Verbindung” thereby collapsing the time and space between the two remaining planets in Dogkart (*LP*, 338). As with the global war that destroyed the Earth and the continuation thereof by globalized capital, however, this plan is destined to fail.

The problem with the commune’s idea is also the same as the time-space compression of capital that causes time and space to collapse in on itself.¹⁰⁰ In short, the root of the problem is interplanetary terraforming. While they are able to construct the pipelines, the interplanetary bridges between the two planets, the orbits and the gravity of the different planets make this feat impossible. This is demonstrated in the accompanying image (figure 4, *LP*, 339). As the caption to this image makes clear, such a bridging of planets is hopeless: “Selbstverständlich ist diese Brücke bei der Bewegungsmechanik wirklicher Planeten nicht herstellbar, da die Himmeskörper sich auf Umlaufbahnen bewegen und zu keinem Zeitpunkt

⁹⁸ Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, p. 51.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ See David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990), p. 230.

‘stillehalten’” (*LP*, 339). Since actual planets never remain still, but are subject to the movements of space and time (their spatial orbits correspond to particular temporal durations), such a bridge is impossible. The globalized terraforming connecting the planets in *Dogkart* is slated *a priori* for catastrophe. The problem of the bridge is, however, “eher zu meistern als eine juristische Auseinandersetzung mit den Rechtsabteilungen der Großen Gesellschaften” (*LP*, 339). As with its assimilation of the law, what capital is able to accomplish as capital (here globalization) is inaccessible to others. Capital is successful in interstellar terraforming due to its appropriation of the law that is itself the result of terraforming, the construction of the juridical spaces on the planet Tauta Eridani. What is rendered here available for representation (both as narrative and image) is precisely the collapse of time and space endemic to capital that ultimately results in catastrophe. The image of the interplanetary bridge, however, freezes the moment in time and space before everything breaks apart, accomplishing the spatiotemporal standstill that is necessary for the bridge to function. This can only last an instant as the planetary stasis already has its collapse built into it, it is already a ruin. In this allegorical image, capital is presented with its other, its past, before its immanent collapse in the future. In this way the tension between allegory and science fiction produced by the text succeeds in pulling apart the time-space compression of capital, if only for a moment, in order to demonstrate how just such a collapse of time and space resides at its core.

The creation of spaces of capital in outer space, from the original Martian outpost and the juridical buildings to the terraforming and exploitation of other planets, would, to be sure, be impossible without spaceships. Just as ships were imperative to imperial, colonial expansion in the search for new resources and spaces of capital, the new intergalactic

vehicles in *Lernprozesse* enable the continued pursuit and extension of capital in outer space. Indeed, such technical advancements in transportation are the precondition for capital's acceleration and attenuated time-space compression.¹⁰¹ In *Lernprozesse* these mobile spaces of capital become the driving force of its interplanetary proliferation and moreover, visible representations of capital's time-space compression in the service of extracting resources and thereby exploiting other worlds. What Chu terms "Spaceship Earth" becomes in *Lernprozesse* Spaceship Capital.¹⁰² "Spaceship Earth," Chu argues, "literalizes time-space compression by framing the globalized world as part of a much vaster whole."¹⁰³ Chu, however, sees this much more optimistically. For him, Spaceship Earth and its crews "often function as microcosmic representations of the global community" which "forces humans to unite" and to "see themselves as a single species."¹⁰⁴ In *Lernprozesse*, spaceships are mimetic representations of the temporal and spatial movements of capital.

Space travel enables capital to continually stay ahead of its catastrophic past. Indeed, the entire story of the four protagonists as the story of the movement of capital is an attempt to outrun history. The four experts' journey from Earth into outer space is predicated on an extreme time-space compression (surviving not only hundreds of years into the future, but traversing large expanses of space seemingly effortlessly) that enables an escape from their past:

ZWICKY: Unsere Geschichte lag doch hinter uns. Weder waren wir "Bürgerknechte", noch "Lakaïen der Bourgeoisie", noch "infame Bürger", noch "bürgerliche Speichellecker". [...]

¹⁰¹ Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 232.

¹⁰² Chu, *Do Metaphors Dream of Literal Sleep*, p. 104.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 105, 106.

DORFMANN: Als wir 1933, elf Jahre alt, “zu denken anfangen”, waren wir keine Bürger, sondern Nationalsozialisten.

ZWICKY: Und diese Eigenschaft haben wir in Stalingrad zurückgelassen. Es war ungerecht, uns diese geschichtliche Einordnung anzuhängen, wenn wir hier *weit weg von der Geschichte, in der wir groß geworden sind*, in China hocken. (LP, 275)

Aboard Spaceship Capital, the four experts are not only out to escape their National Socialist past they left behind in Stalingrad, but also the entire catastrophic past of capital’s various crises, or as Dorfmann states “Schneller gefahren, als die Krise folgen kann” (LP, 365). In doing so, outer space becomes a space in which the protagonists as well as capital can continue to exist regardless of the crises of their past. Relying on advancements in transportation, from the quantum mechanics that propelled them across Russia into China to the rocket propulsion that shot them into outer space, the four protagonists continually surf atop the wave of time-space compression of capital to their advantage.

Spaceships in *Lernprozesse* not only serve to escape the crises of capital’s past but to destroy this history altogether. This is the function of the “86. Raum-Gleitflotte.” Under the leadership of H. Dirksen, the 86th space flotilla is guided by his principle that the past poses the greatest threat to capital:

Die abgestorbenen Zonen der Industrie, als eine hinter uns liegende “ungeheure Sammlung” von Sternen- und Kriegsverbrechen, zertrümmerten Rohstoffen und daran anhängenden Rest-Lebewesen, würden, wenn sie aus diesen Zonen ausbrächen und in die Gegenwart vordringen, die gesamte Produktion, so wie wir sie nun einmal eingerichtet haben, zerstören. **Wir müssen diese Zonen der Vergangenheit hermetisch absperren.** Wir müssen uns von unserer Geschichte trennen, auch wenn das manchem leid tun mag. (LP, 346)

The *modus operandi* of this particular flotilla is then to traverse the outer reaches of space to hermetically seal off remnants of history, to cordon off this past that could destroy it were it to ever encroach on the present spaces capital. This turns out, however, to be no simple matter. The ruins of extinct zones of capital are rigged with traps that prove to be extremely

dangerous for the troops of the 86th space flotilla (*LP*, 346). In order to avoid damage by booby-trapped ruins, which here become quite literally stand-ins for the potential danger of history to capital, the flotilla prefers to annihilate these planets from afar, earning them the nickname “die Geschichtstöter:” “Deshalb landete keiner dieser Vergangenheitsschützer auf einzelnen Himmelskörpern, sondern sie zerstörten aus der Planetenumlaufbahn die Stätten, an denen Wärmeausstrahlung auf Lebewesen schließen ließ” (*LP*, 346). The spaceship of the history killers literalizes capital’s desire to erase its own past, ridding itself of this history to survive in the timeless future of outer space.

Paradoxically, however, the “Geschichtstöter” serve an allegorical function, too, insofar as they become guardians of the past by destroying it. In his reading of *Lernprozesse*, Stollmann asserts: “Es findet Geschichtsproduktion statt durch das Abtöten von Geschichte.”¹⁰⁵ That is, in destroying the zones of the past they create at the same time the very ruins that pose a threat to the future of capital. This also makes them a threat to capital in as much as their production of history and ruins condemns every other space of present and future capital to a catastrophic end. Accordingly, measures are taken to secure capital against the threat of the “Geschichtstöter:”

Grundlage dieser Arbeitsweise war eine vollständige Gleichgültigkeit gegenüber den Werten, Rohstoffen, die hierbei zerstört wurden. Um eine Übertragung dieses besonderen Raubbau-Verfahrens auf die Industriezonen der Gegenwart auszuschließen, wurde die 116. Flotte ausgerüstet, die die produktive Gegenwart durch einen mächtigen, aber starren Sperriegel gegen eine mögliche Rückkehr der 86. Flotte schützte. (*LP*, 346)

The eventual return of the “Geschichtstöter” of the 86th flotilla is, however, almost guaranteed. As soon as the present zones of industry reach the inevitable stage of the extinct ones, they too are subject to the same fate (figure 5, *LP*, 342).

¹⁰⁵ Stollmann, “Schwarzer Krieg, Endlos,” p. 358.

planets when he exclaims: “Anschließend umkurvten die Schiffe den Planeten Pluto—einen Metallklumpen aus Gold, Osram und Platin in Planetengröße—sowie die rohstoffreichen Planeten III Alpha Zentauri, IV des Sirius. Diese Rohstoffe warteten, bewacht von der Flotte auf, ihre Verwertung” (*LP*, 304). Paradoxically, however, the spaceships’ incessant quest for resources results not necessarily in anything material, but rather in speculation and fictive capital. In the section titled “Eines Tages ist die Industrie ganz fort,” a manager describes how the planets become profitable without the industrial extraction of the raw materials:

Zuletzt fuhren die Prospektoren, Ingenieure und Managing-Direktoren nur noch an den Planeten vorbei und produzieren bzw. verwerteten die Naturschätze *im reinen Gedanken*. Es ist die Konkurrenz der anderen, ebenfalls an den Planeten bzw. anderen Planeten vorbeireisenden Gesellschaften, die uns treibt Diese Verwertungsform bringt höhere Profite als der tatsächliche Abbau. Ich möchte es einmal so sagen: ein von Vertretern der Suezkanal-Gesellschaft bloß angeblickter Rohstoffplanet steigt in seinem Marktwert bereits derart ins Uferlose. (*LP*, 359)

In this way, the very act of considering a planet profitable—its valuation—engenders capital before and, indeed, without the exploitation of its resources. Spaceship Capital is a mobile generator of capital merely by roaming outer space and surveying other planets (figure 6, *LP*, 305).

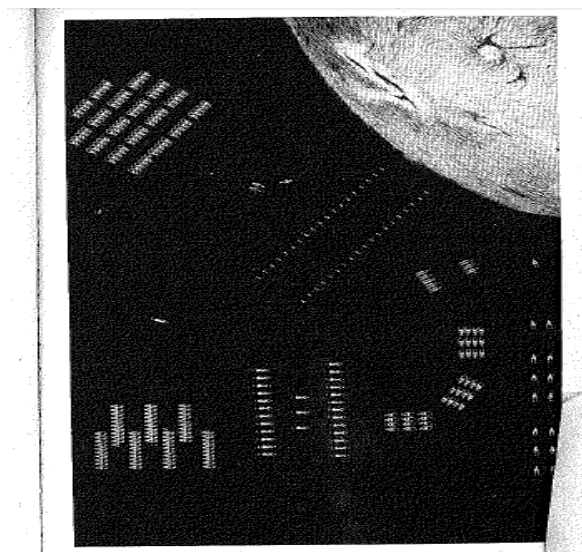


Figure 6

This above image—a screen capture of a video game transposed over a satellite photo—is appropriated to illustrate Boltzmann’s flotilla surveying a sun as an energy source.

Boltzmann’s fly by (“Vorbeiflug”) has essentially created capital simply by being there and assessing this sun’s potential. The capital created by roving spaceships is the product of its time-space compression that allows it to collapse temporal and spatial barriers and, in doing so, glean more profit.

The incessant temporal and spatial expansion of capital into the far reaches of outer space moves from the initial outposts on Mars, to the terraforming and colonization of other planets, and lastly to the spaceships that nomadically roam outer space in search of and creating capital. Each space demonstrates, moreover, that as capital progresses, it creates its own ruins from which it must constantly flee, until, in the end, the space of capital becomes a spaceship hurtling forward through time and space. As with the other spaces, the spaceships, from Boltzmann’s expeditionary force above to the history killers of the 86th flotilla, consume and exploit outer space leaving it essentially a used-up hull, tossed aside as a ruin of its past. As one section heading at the end of *Lernprozesse* reads: “**Eines Tages ist die Industrie ganz fort**” (*LP*, 358). Accordingly yet another expeditionary force is launched into the zone of the now-disappeared industry. Finding no traces of remaining capital, “Sternenzähler” Eduard Körner focuses his telescopes at the “**Zonen der Vergangenheit**” and the ruins of the planet Earth (*LP*, 360). He discovers that the planet in the wake of the catastrophe has not only developed an atmosphere but that there are “Terrassen, Gärten, Kanälen und Landstrichen [...], die von den chinesischen Genossen nach der Katastrophe von 1981 wieder aufgebaut worden waren” (*LP*, 360). Before he can inform others of this incredible discovery, Körner is killed. No one ever learns that the ruins of Earth, the past that

capital abandoned, continue to exist. Körner's death and with him the death of the knowledge about the terrestrial zone of the past dooms capital to a perpetual future, hopelessly in search of more raw materials and continually creating and jettisoning a catastrophic past in its wake.

Conclusion: Back to the Future

This is the fate of the four protagonists who tell the story of the end of the world and the survival of capital in outer space. They too are fated to remain in outer space, without a chance of returning to the Earth. "*Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang*," Stollmann writes, "kehrt die Robinsonade um – diese beginnt mit der Fiktion eines geschichtslosen Individuums, *Lernprozesse* endet dort."¹⁰⁶ At the end of the story, when it is no longer possible for the experts, in particular, and capital, in general, to continue moving forward and to find more raw materials they develop one final plan:

Auf dem sechsten Planeten "ihrer" Riesensonne finden sie wälderbedeckte Kontinente. Mit den chemischen Waffen eines ihrer Rettungsboote "ritzten" sie das Abbild der *Hymne des Sektors Morgenröte* in die Wälder. [...] Dieses Zeichen intelligenten Lebens mußte vorbeifahrenden Intelligenzwesen auffallen und sie zur Landung verlocken. (*LP*, 365)

The last ditch effort of the four protagonists is thus to lure more capital and more willing labor that can be exploited to this planet by literally marking it as a space of capital.¹⁰⁷ The final image in the text is a reproduction of the hymn of sector twilight, the score to to *L'Aurore*, or *Twilight* (figure 7, *LP*, 367).¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Rainer Stollmann, "Schwarzer Krieg, Endlos," p. 362.

¹⁰⁷ As the footnote to this passage explains: "Vielleicht gelingt es auf diese Weise, doch noch Arbeitskräfte anzulocken, die sich als 'Parnter' auspressen lassen" (*LP*, 365).

¹⁰⁸ This from Victor Hugo's poem of the same name set to music by Gabriel Fauré.



Figure 7

The four protagonists literally carve the future, the continual dawn (“Morgenröte”) of capital into the landscapes of outer space. With this the spirit of capital seeks to carry on even deeper into outer space and into the future. As they state, however, should this plan fail, “bleiben sie als Geschichtsschreiber tätig” (*LP*, 365, footnote 4). Their decision to finally tell their story, the history of catastrophe and intergalactic capital, is only from the point when it is too late to change anything. Thus, unable to go back to Earth, to the zone of the past, the four protagonists must go back to the future of capital, carving a ruin into the plant so that capital can continue to temporally and spatially expand.

In this way, *Lernprozesse* not only inverts the Robinsonade, but utopia as well. The four interstellar travelers remain in this dystopian outer space, trapped in the spatialized future of capital. At the same time, however, the text is able to accomplish that which eludes the four experts. *Lernprozesse* establishes a connection to their terrestrial home through the accumulated visual and narrative ruins of capital’s past, allegorical markers of the earthly

heritage of capital. That is, just as outer space is a realm of excessive future capital, it is also a resilient spatial archive of its past. As a work of science fiction and allegory it creates a space for the contradictory tension between the future and the past of capital. By mimetically displaying the functioning of capital, the necessity to outrun the catastrophic past it creates, and refusing to stitch together the historical connections that it severs, *Lernprozesse* performs a critique of present capital before it is too late, unlike the four astronauts. It is the space where the past and future of capital exist side by side, not collapsed into one another.

Lernprozesse is then a utopian space of contradiction and contestation, the allegorical other of capital that confronts it with its own visual and narrative ruins. “Kritik,” Benjamin states of allegory, “ist Mortifikation der Werke” and it is this mortification performed by critique through which “das Werk als Ruine sich behauptet.”¹⁰⁹ In this way, the text does not become, like the planet into which the experts carve their Siren’s song, another affirmation of capital, but rather a space of alterity to it. Inverting the postcolonial texts previously discussed, *Lernprozesse* begins with the alterity of outer space as a means to stage a critique of the spaces and temporalities of capital. The critique performed by the text renders at once the work itself an allegorical ruin of capital, a textual space of utopian alterity. In a similar fashion, P.M.’s *Weltgeist Superstar* [1980], to which we presently turn, also begins with the utopia of science fiction as a means to critique. At the same time, however, this work tests the limits and possibilities of a sustained critique of capital. Whereas *Lernprozesse* ends with critique, P.M.’s work pushes the boundaries thereof and arrives back at literature as the principle arbiter and medium of the idea of utopia after sixty-eight.

¹⁰⁹ Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, p. 202-203.

Chapter 4

Marxism in Outer Space: The Future of Utopia in P.M.'s *Weltgeist Superstar*

Introduction: Marxism is Dead, Long Live Literature

What became of Marxism and its promises after 1968? This question of the fate of theory and Marxism's future after 1968 is played out in the pages of author P.M.'s science-fiction novel *Weltgeist Superstar* [1980].¹ While researching Marx's *Das Kapital* for an essay titled "Zur Formation des Begriffs des variablen Kapitals unter dem Einfluß von Hegels Rechtsphilosophie unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Physiokraten in den ersten Skizzen zum 'Kapital'" in the "Friedrich-Noske Institut" in Bielefeld, fictional protagonist P.M. stumbles upon an original draft to the *Grundrisse*, in the margins of which he notices strange writing (WG, 27). As it turns out, these odd symbols are an alien language. Able to decode a few words with the help of his knowledge of Sanskrit, P.M. finds himself at the center of a conspiracy that begins an adventure that leads him around the world, from Germany to Russia, Afghanistan, the United States, and eventually into outer space. The

¹ P.M., *Weltgeist Superstar* (München: DTV, 1983). This was the first work by the anonymous Swiss author P.M. who writes solely under this pseudonym. It was originally published by Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, a publishing house in Frankfurt am Main that was initially dedicated to publishing political tracts by the student movement; it first appeared in 1980. His most well-known work is the anarcho-utopian novel *Bolo'bolo* [1983]. While some critical secondary material exists for this work, there is currently none on *Weltgeist Superstar*. All references to this work will hereon be cited parenthetically as "WG."

discovery of alien language in the margins of Marx's *Grundrisse* eventually reveals that Marx is alive. An alien race, known as Xagas, aided Marx in staging his death in 1883 and provided him with a spacecraft, aboard which he cannot die. In turn, Marx composes some of his most famous economic tracts for the Xagas, who use the emotional energy resulting from revolutions on Earth as a power source, effectively mining Earth for affective capital.² On the one hand, Marx survives, as the opening pages of the text reveal, "um die Weltrevolution zu befördern" (WG, 1). On the other, the revolutionary predictions that Marx provides the Xagas serve to ensure the continuation of capital. In *Weltgeist Superstar*, Marx survives as a tool of intergalactic capital; he has become a commodity, theorizing revolutions that are exploited and gleaned as a raw material for an alien race of capitalists.

P.M.'s *Weltgeist Superstar* brings together the two main threads that have guided this project, namely postcolonial and outer spaces. Like Kluge's *Lernprozesse*, *Weltgeist Superstar* is a science fiction novel that explores the spaces and temporalities of outer space as the realm of the continued accumulation and exploitation of capital. And like Born and Fichte, P.M.'s novel is also decidedly postcolonial. P.M.'s discovery of Marx's secret writings leads him behind the Iron Curtain and into Afghanistan, initiates first contact with an "alien" race, and ultimately results in the exploration of other worlds, namely the planet Tara which is inhabited by a humanoid race. In addition to the concerns of postcolonialism and science fiction, however, P.M.'s text traverses a host of different literary genres. For one, *Weltgeist Superstar* is a clear allusion to the passion play and its popular rendering in

² For a detailed analysis of capitalism and its commodification of desires, emotions, and intensities, see: Gernot Böhme, "Contribution to the Critique of the Aesthetic Economy," *Thesis Eleven* 73 (2003), pp. 71-83.

Andrew Lloyd Webber's 1971 rock opera *Jesus Christ Superstar*.³ Both P.M. and Marx go through the phases of trial, suffering, and staged death before transcending into immortal aliens/gods.⁴ The passion play is at once the visual representation of Christ's past, a remembrance of and emotional, spiritual attachment to his tribulations and his ultimate sacrifice for man, and the story of his betrayal by Judas as well as the Jewish Pharisees, who are often displayed as adversarial at best.⁵ *Weltgeist Superstar* is, however, a secularization of these themes. It is Marx who has heretically betrayed his theoretical doctrines for capital (replacing and representing Judas' forty pieces of silver) and P.M. must go through the aforementioned stages in an attempt to save Marxism, a process that entails, as I will demonstrate, Marx's death and sacrifice in order to save Marxism.

Weltgeist Superstar is, however, more than a secularized passion play. It also equals parts epistolary novel, hard-boiled detective story, and ultimately utopian fiction. As an epistolary it aims to secure communication, acting at once as a "homing beacon" while also destabilizing temporal and spatial positions.⁶ This communication is not only between the text and the readers, conveying P.M.'s discoveries and travels, but between the readers and possible future encounters with the alien Xagas as evidenced by the accompanying guide to the Xaga language. In this way, as with the postcolonial novel, the epistolary travelogue transmits not only images of otherness but self-reflexively deals "with the movements of the

³ *Jesus Christ Superstar* first appeared as a rock album in 1970 before being produced by Andrew Lloyd Weber as a Broadway musical in 1971.

⁴ On the stages of the passion play and its differentiation from other religious plays see Ursula Schulze, *Geistliche Spiele im Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit: Von der liturgischen Feier zum Schauspiel* (Berlin: Schmidt, 2012), p. 78.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 200, 213ff.

⁶ See Sunka Simon, *Mail-Orders: The Fiction of Letters in Postmodern Culture* (New York: SUNY Press, 2002), pp. ix, 136.

self and its knowledge between the poles of writing and reading,” to speak with Sunka Simon.⁷ Further, P.M.’s search for the hidden truth behind Marx’s secret writings ties *Weltgeist Superstar* to the hard-boiled detective story that envelops the protagonist in an interplanetary conspiracy, essentially entangling him in the very narrative he is out to unravel.⁸ P.M.’s quest for truth, knowledge, and indeed enlightenment contained in the very essay he is researching on Marx’s Hegelian heritage, leaves him on the run from the forces of anti-enlightenment out to secure the status quo. This quest for truth is, as many scholars have noted, a secularized pursuit in a time of crisis and chaos, in a world that God has abandoned.⁹ In the case of *Weltgeist Superstar*, it is not God that has deserted the world, but rather Marx himself and the gospel of Marxism that is now in service of intergalactic capital. Lastly, *Weltgeist Superstar* is a piece of classical utopian fiction along the lines of Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia* [1516] and Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon* [1872]. It follows the standard trajectory of both works in that another world is discovered—an island beyond the horizon or an unknown civilization nestled behind an impending mountain range respectively—from which the traveler returns in order to tell of it and in so doing (re)creating literature as the space of utopia.¹⁰

The title of P.M.’s work elicits not only an investigation of the multitude of literary genres through which it moves, but an exploration of philosophy and aesthetic theory. As

⁷ Simon, *Mail-Orders*, p. 123.

⁸ See for example George Grella, “The Hard-Boiled Detective Novel,” in *Detective Fiction: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Robin W. Winks (Woodstock: Foul Play, 1988), pp. 103-120, p. 104.

⁹ See Willy Haas, “Die Theologie im Kriminalroman,” in *Der Kriminalroman*, ed. Jochen Vogt (München: Fink, 1971), pp. 116-122, p. 122. See also Siegfried Kracauer, *Der Detektiv-Roman: Ein philosophischer Traktat* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), pp. 53-54.

¹⁰ For an overview of traditional utopian literature see Frank E. and Fritze P. Maunel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1979) and Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1990).

with the previous chapters, *Weltgeist Superstar* traffics in an interrogation of intellectual history, here Hegel, Marx, and the Frankfurt School's brand of Western Marxism represented predominantly by Theodor Adorno. As the first part of the title makes clear, the text deals with Hegel's philosophy of history and the "Weltgeist." On the one hand, *Weltgeist Superstar* is a literary representation of Hegel's philosophy, whose stages and movements especially concerning world-historical individuals and the World Spirit, moreover, closely parallel those of the passion play. On the other, it turns Marx's critique of Hegel on its head. Marx's critique of Hegel centers primarily on the revelation of Hegel's secret positivism that ultimately upholds the status quo turning the "Weltgeist" into a commodity of capital.¹¹ In *Weltgeist Superstar*, however, Marx is revealed as a Hegelian, subject to the same positivism and similarly serving the interests of capital. *Weltgeist Superstar* pits Marx against Hegel and the winner is Hegel.

The second half of the title, however, leads us in a different direction, namely to the concept of the superstar, to the culture industry, the dialectic of enlightenment, and Adorno. The Enlightenment, which "wollte die Mythen auflösen und Einbildung durch Wissen stürzen," in Adorno and Horkheimer's analysis, reveals itself as its dialectical other, as the myth's continued control and oppression couched in knowledge, reason, and the emancipation of the subject.¹² One of the principle arbiters of enlightenment's domination is the culture industry, from Hollywood movies to popular music and literature. Through the culture industry "[wirkt] [d]ie Gewalt der Industriegesellschaft in den Menschen ein für allemal " ensuring "daß der Prozeß der einfachen Reproduktion des Geistes ja nicht in die

¹¹ Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009), p. 142.

¹² Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1969), p. 9.

erweiterte hineinführe.”¹³ In *Weltgeist Superstar*, Marx is enveloped in the culture industry becoming a superstar and thus participating in the perpetual domination through appeasement that characterizes capitalism. Thus, in addition to pitting Marx against Hegel and vice versa, *Weltgeist Superstar* elucidates the dialectical thought of Western Marxism that is indebted to Hegel.¹⁴ That is, it is an exercise in Adorno’s negative dialectics, his attempt to rescue Hegel’s dialectic, as well as a confirmation his aesthetic theory.

In his polemic against committed literature, Adorno turns to the works of Samuel Beckett to argue for a literature of negativity: “The spell they cast, which also binds them, is lifted by being reflected in them. However, the minimal promise of happiness they contain, which refuses to be traded for comfort, cannot be had for a price less than total dislocation, to the point of worldlessness.”¹⁵ For Adorno the negativity of literature resides in its self-reflexivity that points back to the very conditions of its production, its unfreedom, which it cannot escape. In *Weltgeist Superstar*, Marx has achieved such happiness, evading death and with it the very narrative of his own life, and resides literally dislocated and worldless in outer space. In its indictment of Marxism as a commodity of the culture industry traded for happiness *Weltgeist Superstar* proposes literature as the space of negativity; it returns Marx to the self-reflexivity and negativity of literature and offers him up for critique. In so doing, it is the text that stands opposed to the dialectic of enlightenment. *Weltgeist Superstar* is then,

¹³ Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, p. 135.

¹⁴ Martin Jay in fact defines Western Marxism as decidedly Hegelian: “Western Marxism [...] has often been equated with Hegelian Marxism. The recovery of Marx’s early writings in the late 1920s and the subsequent publication of the *Grundrisse* a generation later helped strengthen this equation, as they demonstrated for many that Marx had indeed been what Lukács and the others had said he was: a radical Hegelian. [...] Western Marxism, therefore, meant a Marxism that was far more dialectical than materialist, at least as those terms were traditionally understood.” Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), p. 3.

¹⁵ Adorno, “Commitment,” in *Aesthetics and Politics* (New York: Verso, 1977), pp. 177-195, pp. 190-191.

to speak with Judith Ryan, an example of literature that not only “knows about” theory but responds to it.¹⁶

In traversing these various geographic, literary, and theoretical spaces, *Weltgeist Superstar* weaves together each of the other works and discourses previously discussed in this dissertation. The epistolary emphasis on communication with the reader and other worlds combined with the detective novel’s quest for knowledge echo Born’s and Ficthe’s concerns with the epistemological construction of other worlds. The passion play and the survival of capital via a science-fictional *deus ex machina* together with science-fiction’s representations of the spaces and temporalities of immortal capital further link this work to Kluge’s own spatial concerns in *Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang*. In common with all of them is the emphasis on literature as a utopian space of alterity, which is part of what I claim to be a larger exploration of the currency of intellectual history and aesthetic theory after the West German student revolts. *Weltgeist Superstar*, I argue, decidedly demonstrates that the fate of Marxism and the idea of utopia after 1968, and indeed all of the desires for alterity contained therein, lies neither in the other worlds explored nor in a return to theory but in the return to prominence of literature as a utopian space. That is, it is not merely a response to and an exercise in theory, but moreover a self-aware and self-reflexive work that bridges literary genres thereby asserting literature both as the other space of theory and the provenance of utopia. In *Weltgeist Superstar*, literature rather than theory has the proverbial last laugh. In a word: Marxism is dead, long live literature!

¹⁶ In her recent work, Judith Ryan argues: “In the last third of the twentieth century [...], an entire array of novels had appeared that might be said to ‘know about’ literary and cultural theory.” Ryan, *The Novel After Theory* (New York: Columbia UP, 2012), p. 1. While Ryan explicitly omits the Frankfurt School to focus of French Theory, *Weltgeist Superstar* is a clear-cut example of literature after the Frankfurt School.

The Death of Marxism: Epistolary, Detective Novel, and Science Fiction

Weltgeist Superstar begins with a disclaimer informing the readers of the grave ramifications of the book in their hands:

Das Buch,
das Sie in Händen halten, enthält bisher geheime Informationen über Kontakt mit
Außerirdischen, teilt uns P.M., der aus Sicherheitsgründen anonym bleibende
Verfasser dieser brisanten Dokumentation, mit. Es ist daher mit
Beschlagnahmungsversuchen oder Repressionsakten von Seiten verschiedenster
Geheimdienste zu rechnen (WG, 1).

The text then opens as a dangerous message in a bottle whose contents carry the threat of confiscation or repressive silencing at the hands of intelligence services that wish to suppress any revelation of both extraterrestrial contact and Marx's survival. In this introduction Marxism is posed as the perpetual public enemy number one. Strikingly, this warning parallels the appearance of two incendiary publications 1970s, Michael "Bommi" Baumann's autobiography *Wie es alles anfang* (*How It All Began*) [1975] and the Buback obituary [1977]. Baumann's autobiographical account of his terrorist activities in West Germany resulted in the storming of the Trikont publishing house in Munich and its confiscation by authorities as well as a backlash against state censorship by the likes of Heinrich Böll and Daniel Cohn-Bendit.¹⁷ The Buback obituary, which was, like *Weltgeist*, published anonymously, professed sympathy with the RAF's (Rote Armee Faktion) abduction and murder of attorney general Siegfried Buback and faced similar censorship and resulted in the arrest of many of those responsible for its publication.¹⁸ In both instances, any criticism of the state from the Left

¹⁷ See Michael Baumann, *How It All Began* (Vancouver: Pulp, 1977).

¹⁸ See Peter Brückner, *Die Mescalero-Affäre: ein Lehrstück für Aufklärung und politische Kultur* (Hannover: Internationalismus Buchladen und Verlagsgesellschaft, 1977).

was met with severe restrictions to the freedom of the press and of opinion. The message that *Weltgeist* promulgates—the fact that public enemy number one, namely Karl Marx, continues to live in the conservative eighties—similarly faces such threats.

Weltgeist thus begins with the dangers of knowledge, communication, and ultimately literature that is subject to the agents of anti-enlightenment seeking to suppress the dissemination of information counter to the dominant narrative. It does so, moreover, as an epistolary whose main purpose is, as Simon states, “to secure all channels, to make the process of communication and its content fail-safe.”¹⁹ Not only is it addressed to and establishes contact with the readers, but it also directs them as to how to contact both the Xagas and Marx. The readers are told that they can purchase identification cards from the author, through the publishing house as arbiter, which will identify them as friendlies to the alien race and Marx alike. It establishes then a network of correspondence and communication through letters through which the readers can find out the truth that the powers that be deem a threat. At the same time, however, the “secure channels” of the message, of the epistolary, are far from safe. As with the Buback obituary and Baumann’s autobiography, it is less than certain as to whether this information will be received and the promised communication and contact established. The forces of the dialectic of enlightenment are constantly on the lookout for potentially hazardous material. Thus, rather than a fixed, constant position from which the messages are sent and received, the permanence assured by the address must be destabilized. P.M. is neither allowed to remain stationary nor directly divulge his address. In this way, the novel verges on a postmodern epistolary that Simon defines as characterized by spatial and temporal “displacements” and

¹⁹ Simon, *Mail-Orders*, p. ix.

“dislocations.”²⁰ In order to stay ahead of the agents of anti-enlightenment, P.M. must remain on the run and this very displacement, in turn, renders the revelation of the dialectic of enlightenment a tenuous prospect at best.

At worst, the dialectic of enlightenment is already heralded in the text. The information as well as the identification cards *Weltgeist* offers come at a price, 5,000 Franks to be exact or the reduced amount of 4,850 for orders in excess of ten (WG, 6). The introduction also instructs readers to inquire about a “*Weltgeist-Klub*” in their town or region and for 50 Franks the reader will be mailed a list of them. Moreover, stuffed animals of the various alien species discussed in the book as well as board games are available for purchase at the “Boutique Semantha, Steigrübelweg 74, 8011 Zürich” (WG, 7). In short, everything in *Weltgeist Superstar* is up for sale, including, but not limited to, enlightenment itself, the dangerous knowledge that the work conveys. P.M.’s novel thus admittedly places itself in the camp of the culture industry and the dialectic of enlightenment that is capable of absorbing even its most serious affronts and converting them into commodity. Enlightenment and indeed the revolution against its dialectic, from Buback and Baumann to Marx himself, are all swept up and sold off by the culture industry in the service of continued control and domination. The text is essentially enveloped by the same thing it professes to dispel. This is, moreover, carved into the very structure of the work. The spatial and temporal displacements of its epistolary form that keep the information and its author safe are re-stabilized by the culture industry; send your money to the address above and you will be provided with your own stuffed Xaga or Marx doll all for the low cost of enlightenment and its continued dialectic. Enlightenment cannot then be predicated on uncovering the dialectic of

²⁰ Simon, *Mail-Orders*, p. ix.

enlightenment, which is always already prefigured.

The duplicity of the dialectic of enlightenment as well its discovery and transmission is also the subject of the detective novel. Siegfried Kracauer defines the genre as depicting a condition of society “in dem der bindungslose Intellekt seiner Endsieg erfochten hat, ein nur äußeres Bei- und Durcheinander der Figuren und Sachen, das fahl und verwirrend anmutet, weil es die künstlich ausgeschaltete Wirklichkeit zur Fratze stellt.”²¹ In short, the world that the detective novel displays is one of both enlightenment and its dialectic, the reality that lies behind the final victory of the intellect as one that lies in tatters. Moreover, the detective emerges as the personification of reason (“ratio”), himself an enlightenment figure, who, especially in the private eye of the hard-boiled variation, “works outside the established social code, preferring his own instinctive justice to the often tarnished justice of civilization.”²² The crime is, as Willy Haas states, “der Fluch gegen die irdische Organisation” and it is the hard-boiled private eye’s job to expose the corrupt forces of the dialectic of enlightenment and in so doing bring a criminal to justice thereby reestablishing the order of enlightenment in both instances.²³ Most importantly, however, is the detective/private eye’s envelopment in the very case, the narrative, he is out to solve. Two classic examples will serve to illuminate this point, John Huston’s *The Maltese Falcon* [1941] based on Dashielle Hammet’s 1931 novel and Roman Polanski’s *Chinatown* [1974]. In *The Maltese Falcon*, private investigator Sam Spade is hired to search for a client’s missing sister that first results in a murder and finally a plot to attain the priceless Maltese

²¹ Kracauer, *Der Detektiv-Roman*, p. 10.

²² Ibid., p. 51. Grella, “The Hard-Boiled Detective Novel,” p. 106. Grella’s point is echoed by Kracauer who argues that the illegal act not only emanates from the legal system itself, but that the latter uses such illegalities in its very procedures. See Kracauer, p. 78.

²³ Haas, “Die Theologie im Kriminalroman,” p. 121.

Falcon. In *Chinatown*, private eye and former detective J.J. Gittes is similarly caught up in a murder/conspiracy involving one land magnate's attempts to monopolize southern California's water. In both cases, the private eyes are not merely objective outsiders rationalizing and solving the crimes from a distance, but are sucked up into the whirlwind of plots and conspiracies. While the outcomes are, to be sure, different, the basic structure is the same—corruption at the highest level, inept and incompetent police, and the envelopment of the two private eyes in the quest for the truth.

These classic hard-boiled detective tropes are mirrored almost exactly in *Weltgeist Superstar*. P.M. is an intellectual detective searching for enlightenment in Marx's work. His quest for the truth, his research on the influence of Hegel in Marx's *Das Kapital*, inserts him into the very narrative he is writing about, sending him on the run from the forces of the dialectic of enlightenment that wish to keep this information hidden. What drives the narrative, however, is not only P.M.'s own research, but written language. It is writing that: 1) draws him into his own narrative; 2) is the source of the conspiracy and ensuing mortal danger in which P.M. finds himself; and 3) creates a wormhole into another world. Moreover, it is marginalia, Marx's scribble ("Gekritzel," "Kritzeleien") rather than the body of the text itself that initiates P.M.'s global and interplanetary flight (WG, 31-32). P.M. initially attributes the curious symbols either to Marx changing and testing out a new feather pen or to him haphazardly going off into the margins as his wife Jenny calls him to dinner (WG, 31). Marx's scribbles in *Weltgeist Superstar* are, to be sure, more than accidental. In his work on scientific texts and marginalia, Hans-Jörg Rheinberger summarizes their importance thusly:

Hier befinden wir uns an dem Ort, wo das Einfache noch als das Vereinfachte erfahren wird, wo es noch die Spur seiner Degeneration aus dem Komplexen an sich

hat. [...] Aber was tut das experimentelle, also noch ersichtlich graphematische Denken anderes als Spuren in einen Repräsentationsraum zu legen, die genau das freigeben, was es zu experimentieren gibt? Die Erzeugung von Spuren im materiellen Repräsentationsraum einer Wissenschaft ist nichts anderes als ein Schreibspiel.²⁴

For Rheinberger, marginalia is at once the simplification of an idea as well as the traces, or tracks, of thought that have manifested in the representational space of the text. It is, in short, a type of writing game played while attempting to solve a complex problem. Thus, before P.M. knows what these strange markings in the margin connote, they become clues for the intellectual detective to unravel, the traces of something larger and more complex and in this way parallel Bertolt Brecht's characterization of the detective novel as resembling a crossword puzzle.²⁵ Marx's strange marginalia is, moreover, what Rheinberger calls a "Xenotext."²⁶ Referencing Brian Rotman, Rheinberger states: "Das kann man als 'Fremdschrift', kurioser, als 'Andertext' übersetzen. 'Was er bezeichnet, ist nichts anderes als seine Fähigkeit, weiter zu bezeichnen. Sein Wert ist bestimmt durch seine Fähigkeit, Lesarten seiner selbst ins Leben zu rufen.'"²⁷ The writing in the margin of Marx's manuscript is then both what initiates P.M.'s quest as well as what inscribes him into the story, the "Fremdschrift" that brings the text to life pointing to something beyond the border of the manuscript. What at first appears as mere scribble is what puts the detective on the trail to put together the written clues and thus solve the case.

P.M. is at first unaware of the gravity of the information that awaits him in the

²⁴ Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, "'Alles, was überhaupt zu einer Inskription führen kann:' Experiment, Differenz, Schrift," in *Im Zug der Schrift*, Norbert Haas, Rainer Nägele, Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, eds. (München: Fink, 1994), pp. 295-312, p. 301.

²⁵ Bertolt Brecht, "Über die Popularität des Kriminalromans," in *Der Kriminalroman*, Vol. 2, Jochen Vogt, ed. (München: Fink, 1971), pp. 315-321, p. 315.

²⁶ Rheinberger, "'Alles, was überhaupt zu einer Inskription führen kann:' Experiment, Differenz, Schrift," p. 303.

²⁷ Ibid. Rheinberger quotes from Brian Rotman's *Signifying Nothing* (New York: St. Martin's, 1987), p. 102.

curious symbols in Marx's *Grundrisse*. As the archive closes for the evening, P.M. jots down some of the writing to take home. After falling asleep, the key to decoding the symbols comes to P.M. in a dream:

Ich hatte einen Traum von jener klaren Sorte, wo man plötzlich Dinge zusammenbringt und durchschaut, die im wachen Zustand völlig getrennt und dunkel bleiben. Es begab sich nun, daß ich zu jener Zeit meine Sanskritstudien wider aufgenommen hatte, erstens im allgemeinen Orient-Magie-Trend, zweitens aus purer linguistischer Neugier [...]. In jenem denkwürdigen Traum sah ich einen wilden Tanz von Devangari-Schleifschen, -Häckschen, -Schnörkelchen [...] die sich allmählich mit den Kringeln, Punkten, Schleifen, Stricheleien der Marxmanuskripte vermischten. (WG, 32-3)

Counter to the detective as the personification of reason ("ratio") proposed by Kracauer, P.M.'s revelation comes not through cold, calculating, deductive reason but rather in a suspension thereof, in a dream. This calls to mind André Breton's advocacy of the dream another realm of enlightenment. "Under the pretense of civilization and progress," Breton writes in the *Manifesto of Surrealism*, "we have managed to banish from the mind everything that may rightly or wrongly be termed superstition or fancy."²⁸ For Breton, the dream is not a form of irrationalism but a different type of thought and enlightenment that "show[s] signs of organization."²⁹ Breton thus queries: "When will we have sleeping logicians, sleeping philosophers? Can't the dream also be used in solving the fundamental questions of life?"³⁰ In *Weltgeist Superstar*, P.M. is just such a sleeping philosopher-detective. Rather than relying on "ratio" (Kracauer) or logical thinking (Brecht), the detective's uncovering of the dialectic of enlightenment necessitates going beyond a firm adherence to enlightenment

²⁸ Breton, *Manifesto of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972), p. 10. This is from the first 1924 version of the manifesto.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 11. Unlike Adorno who viewed superstition, fantasy, and myth as part of the dialectic of enlightenment, Benjamin initially embraced surrealism, at least in its first instantiation, in particular the dream aspect. See Walter Benjamin, "Der Surrealismus" [1929], in *Walter Benjamin: Passagen. Schriften zur französischen Literatur*, ed. Gérard Raulet (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007), pp. 145-159.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 12

reason.³¹ In this case, it is through the language of the dream that enlightenment unfolds. The dream divines the truth of the scribbles and thereby plays an essential role in the detective's work to decipher the clues.

In *Weltgeist Superstar*, the Sanskrit-like characters (along with the importance of the dream as path to truth that puts P.M. on the trail of solving the case of Marx's mysterious marginalia in the *Grundrisse*) mirror and augment a new dimension to the publication history of many of Marx's early writings. Along with his *Ökonomish-philosophische Manuskripte* [1844], the *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* [1857-58] was discovered and published decades after Marx first put pen to paper. The former were found in the SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands) archive in 1920 and subsequently published in Russian in 1927 before appearing in German in 1932.³² Following a similar history, the complete *Grundrisse* was first made public in Russian in 1939, although Karl Kautsky published the introduction already in 1902. Both works provide a crucial link between these, Marx's early anthropological works, and his later more "mature" works on political economy, namely *Das Kapital*.³³ Further, the *Ökonomish-philosophische Manuskripte* as well as the *Grundrisse* were well received during the 1960s on account of their new insights into the breadth of Marx's work. The former, for instance, became the foundation for the dimension of sensuality and sensuousness in Marxism that would influence later thinkers

³¹ See Brecht, "Bertolt Brecht, "Über die Popularität des Kriminalromans," p. 315, 318.

³² See Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 66.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

from Marcuse to Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge.³⁴ The *Grundrisse*, by contrast, not only bridges the early Marx with the Marx of *Das Kapital*, but brings to light his reliance on if not return to Hegel. “The truth is,” Alfred Schimdt notes in 1968, “that the methodological structure of his work is based on a second study of Hegel’s *Logic*” that already manifests itself in the *Grundrisse* and in *Das Kapital* reaches its pinnacle in that “it goes back, in the Hegelian sense, from being to essence.”³⁵ It is, then, no mere coincidence that in *Weltgeist Superstar* the discovery of yet another aspect of Marxism should reveal itself in the *Grundrisse* nearly a century after Marx’s death. P.M.’s research both plays into the intellectual history of Marx’s work and inscribes him into this narrative. At the same time, however, the hard-boiled detective elements lend this narrative an added dimension of mystery and adventure. Further, the Sanskrit and the dream provide, like the sensuousness and sensuality of his economic-philosophical manuscripts, a different approach to reading Marx, namely a romantic one imbued with cryptic hieroglyphs and a surrealist one emphasizing the unconscious rationality of the dream.³⁶

³⁴ In these manuscripts, Marx links the human senses and sensuality to the process of world history: “Die Bildung der 5 Sinne ist eine Arbeit der ganzen Weltgeschichte. [...] Die *Sinnlichkeit* (siehe Feuerbach) muß die Basis aller Wissenschaft sein. Nur, wenn sie von ihr, in der doppelten Gestalt, sowohl des *sinnlichen* Bewußtseins als des *sinnlichen* Bedürfnisses ausgeht [...] ist sie *wirklich* Wissenschaft.” *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2009), pp. 123-125. The emphasis on the senses and sensuality is predominant in Marcuse’s work from *Eros and Civilization* [1955] to his *Essay on Liberation* [1969]. For Kluge, these concepts become key to his theory on realism in the early 1970s in *Gelegenheitsarbeit einer Sklavin. Zur realistischen Methode* [1975]. Sensuousness is already a key term in *Public Sphere and Experience*.

³⁵ Alfred Schmidt, “On the Concept of Knowledge in the Criticism of Political Economy,” in *Karl Marx: 1818/1968* (Bad Godesberg: Inter Nationes, 1968), pp. 95, 98. Žižek as well notes the necessity of Hegel for Marx’s later works primarily in “the mid-1850s, when, after the failure of the 1848 revolutions, he started to read Hegel’s *Logic* again.” Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (New York: Verso, 2012) p. 252.

³⁶ George Grella, for example, notes the kinship between hard-boiled detective novels and romantic fiction. “Although hard-boiled writers set out to write tough, contemporary mysteries in modern colloquial language, they ultimately wrote romantic rather than realistic fiction. Virtually every major attempt at accurate reporting became a literary device.” Grella, “The Hard-Boiled Detective Novel,” p. 118.

For P.M., reading and writing about Marx not only requires elements of hard-boiled detective, linguistic, and dream work, but soon becomes a dangerous adventure in its own right as the epistolary frame forewarns. The kinship between Marx's marginalia and Sanskrit allows P.M., who happens to know a little Sanskrit, to use this linguistic knowledge to decipher some of the strange marks in the manuscript. The first words he translates are quite innocent and even expected in a work of Marx's, namely "historische Bedürfnisse" and "Arbeitstag" (WG, 34). Before he can get much further with his translations he hears footsteps approaching his door and a key being inserted into the lock. P.M. turns out the light and hides just as a tall man in a trench coat enters the apartment, shoves some of P.M.'s notes into his coat pocket, and fires three shots into his "aufgebäumte Daunendecke" (WG, 35). Without the rest of the untranslated material P.M. flees and clearly the subject of a deadly cover-up, landing first in Göttingen and then Moscow all the while trailed by suspicious men in dark trench coats. Thus begins P.M.'s detective adventure. The trail down which Marx's marginalia, his secret message, has led him, uproots P.M. from his life as the intellectual detective, as well as his stable positionality, and thrusts him into the detective narrative himself, on the run from those who seek to keep Marx's mysterious writing a secret. His quest for the truth has, in essence, made him a criminal in the court of the dialectic of enlightenment. "In den Kriminal- und Abenteuerfilmen," write Adorno and Horkheimer, "wird dem Zuschauer heute nicht mehr gegönnt, dem Gang der Aufklärung beizuwohnen."³⁷ This inability to assist in the enlightenment process is almost accomplished in *Weltgeist Superstar* with P.M.'s attempted assassination. Without even knowing everything, he already knows too much and thus poses a threat to the dialectic of enlightenment's status quo. The

³⁷ Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, p. 146.

promise of possible enlightenment hidden in Marx's scribbles cannot be allowed. As with the epistolary, however, it is soon revealed that P.M.'s quest for enlightenment is itself entangled in the very dialectic that it seeks to escape.

Managing to survive the attempt on his life in his apartment and flee West Germany, P.M. arrives in Moscow under a fake name and passport. He quickly finds himself involved with a group of dissidents who entrust him with a certain microfilm "der die Welt erschüttern wird" (WG, 57). The contents of the microfilm are, of course, "unbekannte Marxmanuskripte aus dem Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus," incidentally the same institute that first published the full version of the *Grundrisse* (WG, 57). From Russia, P.M. is smuggled into Afghanistan where he finds himself among a tribe of "Amudis," which is currently engaged in a liberation struggle ("Befreiungskampf") against the Afghani government (WG, 77). When he shows the manuscripts to a young man, Adschal, he informs P.M. that they closely resemble their old, religious "Maschu-Texte" and brings P.M. to "der Weise Bagwan Dadurna" (WG, 79). The sage presents him with an old poem, whose writing resembles Marx's manuscript, but not enough for P.M. to fully connect the characters in the one with those in the other. After showing Bagwan his list of partially transcribed symbols, the wise man provides P.M. with the missing phonetic information ("Lautwerte") necessary for a full translation of both the poem and Marx's text (WG, 80). Before setting to work completing his translation of the manuscript, he reads from the poem:

Es war die Geschichte eines alt-indischen Yogi, der dank Unterstützung des Gottes Vischnu langwierige Abenteuer bestand. [...] Der Höhepunkt war eine lange Fahrt im goldenen Wagen Vischnus durch den Himmel und ins Zentrum der Welt. Der Yogi – er hieß Pamandro Maumirdschi – kam ins Land der weisen Drachen, den Göttern des Handwerks und der Wissenschaft. Dann zeigte ihm Vischnu die beiden Urprinzipien Atya und Itya (das Dauernde und das Wechselnde) in ihrem unendlichen Ringen. Schließlich durfte der Yogi zur Belohnung eine Zeitlang im Land der Glückseligen – Kamtara – wohnen, wo er jedoch hochmütig wurde und zur Reinigung in die Hölle

der schleichenden Geister – Gulapa – gehen mußte. (WG, 80-81)

The Amudi legend that P.M. reads is, in fact, his own. The yogi Pamandro Maumirdschi is P.M. and the trip described therein soon mirrors P.M.'s voyage into outer space. Strikingly, this is told in the form of a myth. P.M.'s quest for the truth as the hard-boiled detective on the lam from the agents of the dialectic of enlightenment is turned on its head. P.M.'s story is not that of the enlightenment figure at odds to break the stranglehold of the culture industry, but rather the embodiment of the dialectic of enlightenment.

The narrative that P.M. becomes a part of is ultimately the myth couched as an intellectual's quest for the enlightenment. At the same time, however, this myth as told by the Amudi poem, fulfilling in a way a predestined role, is itself the outcome of his enlightenment quest. "Aber die Mythen, die der Aufklärung zum Opfer fallen," Adorno and Horkheimer explain, "waren selbst schon deren eigenes Produkt."³⁸ In *Weltgeist Superstar*, P.M.'s engagement with Marxism leads him not to enlightenment, but to its dialectic. In this way, the result of reading Marx, beginning with P.M.'s thesis on Marx and Hegel and continuing with his discovery of the strange characters and the ensuing detective work, is to become part of a myth. P.M.'s quest leads him right into the heart of the dialectic of enlightenment where it reveals itself as myth. Moreover, the story into which P.M. has written himself ultimately echoes Adorno and Horkheimer's diagnosis of the lack of resolution in detective and adventure stories. All of the detective work P.M. has done that leads him from the archive in Bielefeld, to Moscow, and lastly to a tribe in Afghanistan ends in myth where it is revealed that he is simply following a course of predefined actions. To speak with Adorno and Horkheimer, P.M. is subject to "die automatisierte Abfolge genormter Verrichtungen"

³⁸ Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, p. 14.

prescribed by the culture industry and inscribed into detective and adventure works in which every situation is only perfunctorily connected.³⁹ Thus, the detective story as well as the myth that P.M. becomes a part of prefigure his every move. Above all, what drives the intertwined narratives forward is Marx and Marxism.

Thanks to the help of the Amudi sage, P.M. successfully translates the rest of Marx's manuscript. As he discovers, Marx was abducted by aliens. While on a trip to the seaside town of Ramsgate outside London with his wife Jenny, Marx walks alone on the coast when he notices what he thinks to be a star before it comes nearer. What he then describes as a "Suppenschüssel" emits a beam of light that draws him onboard the spacecraft (WG, 83). The beings, called Xaga, that inhabit the ship communicate primarily via monitors on their chests displaying various images and colors but quickly learn the German language. They inform Marx that they are interested in the Earth as "ein 'sehr' intensive[r] Planet" that consists of a "bestehende[n] Quantum an Gefühlen, positive und negative" which they use as a form of energy "zum Bau und Antrieb der Fahrzeuge, zum Unterhalt ihrer Körper, zur Abwehr störender Einflüsse" (WG, 86-87).⁴⁰ The Xagas are principally interested in proletarian revolutions, "die viel Gefühl, vorallem Haß absonderten," as a source of energy but "hatten Angst vor der Beseitigung der Ursachen dieser Revolutionen, also der Klassen und des Kapitals" (WG, 88). In order to aid the Xagas and assure them their energy source Marx speeds up his work on the "Kritik der politischen Ökonomie" and states further that he originally wrote *Das Kapital* for the Xagas in order to educate them on the economic and

³⁹ Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, p. 145-146.

⁴⁰ This mirrors Gernot Böhme's analysis of the "aesthetic economy:" "At a certain stage of development in which the material needs of society are generally satisfied, capitalism must bet upon another type of needs, which calls for the appropriate term desires. The third fundamental category of the aesthetic economy is thereby named. Desires are those needs which, far from being allayed by their satisfaction, are only intensified." Böhme, "Contribution to the Critique of the Aesthetic Economy," *Thesis Eleven* 73 (2003), pp. 71-83, p. 73

political situation on Earth (WG, 88). While the Xagas wish to profit from terrestrial revolutions, they are, however, wary of intervening too much: “Vorallem wollten sie es nicht riskieren, durch ihr Eingreifen spätere, noch größere Revolutionen zu vereiteln” (WG, 89). For the Xagas it is most important to secure a continued, permanent revolution whereby they can consistently expropriate emotional energy from the Earth.

As *Weltgeist Superstar* suggests, Marx wrote some of his pivotal works in order to help a race of extraterrestrials exploit proletarian revolutions on Earth as a source of affective capital. What the Xagas ultimately fear is both the abolition of classes and capital as well as the revolutions that would bring this about. In short, they fear the utopian outcomes anticipated by Marx the theoretician of communism and revolution. It is then revealed that a retarded Marx and Marxism was from the outset a tool for the interests of interstellar capitalism. With the help of Marx, an alien race of capitalists were given a theory of the political economy with which to efficiently predict where and when revolutions would transpire and thus easily glean terrestrial capital. The permanent revolutions the Xaga require correspond quite closely to Marx and Engels’ speech to the Central Committee of the Communist League in 1850, shortly after the failure of the 1848 revolutions:

Während die demokratischen Kleinbürger die Revolution möglichst rasch und unter Durchführung höchstens der obigen Ansprüche zum Abschlusse bringen wollen, ist es unser Interesse und unsere Aufgabe, die Revolution permanent zu machen, so lange, bis alle mehr oder weniger besitzenden Klassen von der Herrschaft verdrängt sind.⁴¹

The idea of permanent revolution developed by Marx and Engels after 1850 acquires in *Weltgeist Superstar* a decidedly affirmative character. Rather than advancing the dissolution

⁴¹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Ansprache der Zentralbehörde an den Bund vom März,” in *Marx-Engels Werke*, Vol. 7 (Berlin: Dietz, 1973), pp. 244-254, p. 248.

of the domination by the propertied classes, permanent revolutions secured a source of continued capital accumulation for the Xagas. Moreover, written particularly under the renewed influence of Hegel's thought, this speech signals Marx's indebtedness to Hegel's concept of history as gradual and rational progress.⁴² Under the influence of extraterrestrials and Hegel's positivism, Marxism in *Weltgeist Superstar* becomes a commodity of a higher form of intergalactic capital. Just as Marx rebuked Hegel as affirmative vis-à-vis the status quo, the return of Hegel in Marx's later works turns Marxism into a tool of the culture industry. Marxism becomes thereby an integral part of the dialectic of enlightenment. While it promises an end to capitalism, Marxism itself becomes a source of capital, continued domination, and control packaged and sold as revolutionary thought. It is the Hegelian super spirit of the culture industry and intergalactic capital.

A crucial part of Marx's manuscript is not only the revelation of his abduction by alien capitalists for whom he wrote his works, but also the establishment of meeting points and dates for further contact with the Xagas. In this way, Marx's manuscript, as with *Weltgeist* itself, is a type of message, a homing beacon for contact with aliens and other worlds. The locations of future meetings with the extraterrestrials would change every year beginning in 1864 and "schien Marxens Einschätzung der Entwicklung der Klassenkonflikte zu entsprechen," (WG, 90). In addition to the contact points, the Xagas instruct Marx "diese Liste einem [ihm] geeignet erscheinenden, beschränkten Personenkreis zukommen zu lassen" (WG, 90). Similar to the epistolary frame of the novel, Marx's manuscript secures stable sites of present and future capital, addresses where it can be found, and passes this message off to its readers in order that they, too, might take part in the Xagas plans. Indeed, Marx's

⁴² G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 32

manuscript is not only a form of communiqué, but a chain-letter passed on from person to person containing a specific date, time, and place for a possible future meeting with alien capitalists. While Simon attributes an interactive element to postmodern epistolary chain mail whereby the reader is challenged to “play with its links,” this is not the case in *Weltgeist Superstar*.⁴³ As with P.M.’s adventure thus far, he is less the subject and arbiter of his own deeds and movements than an avatar moving along a predefined narrative pattern disguised as the logical work of a detective. Although Marx’s original message, the marginalia in the *Grundrisse*, drives P.M.’s spatial displacement, his chain mail re-stabilizes them in the service of capital. P.M.’s encounter with the Amudi and the translation of the manuscript is then anything but chance or the result of playing with the links in the chain. Rather it was already encoded into Marx’s manuscript as the epistolary transmission that led to his subsequent detective work and eventually to his own myth. In short, the message was meant for P.M.

The next meeting between the Xagas and an unlikely earthling is scheduled according to Marx’s marginalia to take place in the year 1978 in Springfield, Missouri. Accordingly, P.M. is smuggled out of Afghanistan and into the United States in order to be at the right place at the right time. On April 17, the protagonist P.M. is taken aboard a spacecraft in the very same manner by which Marx was first abducted a century before. Once onboard, he is greeted by none other than Marx himself who welcomes him with a token of bourgeois decadence, a bottle of “Château Rothschild 1876” (WG, 114). Marx explains that despite Engels’s premonitions about distributing the list, which he says did not fit into his “rationalistisches Schema,” he was able to smuggle it past him (WG, 116). Ultimately,

⁴³ Simon, *Mail-Orders*, p. 63.

however, Marx comes to an agreement with the Xagas that seemingly renders the list unnecessary. He tells P.M. that

[...] es ihm gelungen sei, mit den Xagas ein Abkommen zu treffen. Er sollte für sie politische Analysen machen, sie versprachen ihm, ihn bei seinem Tod aufzunehmen und in ein Raumschiff zu setzen, wo er unsterblich wäre und seine Arbeit würde fortführen können. Als Bedingung hätte er sich allerdings verpflichten müssen, nichts Geschriebenes über die Kontakte mit den Xagas zu hinterlassen und nicht direkt auf irdische Ereignisse einzuwirken. (WG, 117)

The list that was meant to ensure the continued parasitistic relationship between earthlings and the Xagas is exchanged for Marx's immortality. It is not only Marx's work, a tool of capital, that has become alien but also Marx himself. As Marx admits: "Ich gehöre nicht mehr ganz zur Menschheit" (WG, 127). His immortality is guaranteed by his continued support of the Xagas, through which he becomes a *deus ex machine*, the invisible hand and unseen god, of extraterrestrial capital. Marx circles the Earth like the Xagas, theorizing from above though not directly interceding in terrestrial affairs. Ultimately, he has betrayed his own dictum that the point of philosophy is not to merely interpret the world but to change it in exchange for eternal life.⁴⁴ In order to live Marx and Marxism must become alien, the arbiter of capital.

While forbidden to directly intervene Marx was, of course, able to leave behind the hidden manuscripts, which, he states, accounts for the Amudis' knowledge of the Xagas. P.M., however, notices a slight inconsistency with this story. "Ich erinnerte mich," P.M. thinks to himself, "daß es in Afghanistan keinen Treffpunkt gab. Der nächste lag im Indus-Tal, in der Nähe von Sukkr. Dort sollen sich die Amudis [...] um 800 nach Christus befunden haben" (WG, 117). If the meeting point was not in Afghanistan where the Amudis currently

⁴⁴ See Marx, "Thesen über Feuerbach," in *Marx-Engels Werke*, Vol. 3 (Berlin: Dietz, 1969), p. 5ff, thesis 11.

live, but near where they originated as a tribe in 800 B.C.E., then how and why was it that Marx bequeathed them the myth? The originator of this paradox is indeed Marx. He wrote the myth of the yogi Pamandro Maumirdschi—our protagonist, the intellectual historian P.M.—being taken aboard Vishnu’s golden carriage, i.e., Marx’s spacecraft, and left it with Amudi knowing all the while that P.M., who just so happens to know Sanskrit, could decode the secret message leading him to precisely that place at that particular time. Just as myth is exposed as enlightenment, as is the case with P.M.’s initial quest for truth, enlightenment in turn is inscribed into an underlying myth.

P.M. is, in fact, not the first visitor aboard Marx’s spaceship. In the past, representatives from both sides of the Iron Curtain, the CIA and the KGB, were taken aboard. While the former attempted to bring him over to the side of Western capitalism, the latter hoped to acquire his assistance in the spread of communism. Marx was interested, however, in neither. He has transcended both ideologies in the name of eternal life and the perpetuation of intergalactic capital, which knows no such divisions and for which the entire globe is a site of potential capital. As an alien, capitalist Marx poses a threat to both established world-views and political economies. He is a heretic in the eyes of the Soviet Union and remains a threat to American capitalism, both of which are founded on an animosity of the another. Marxism as capitalism thus divests each side of an oppositional standpoint, collapsing both into one hegemonic system beyond the control of either world power. Without their opposite, neither can be said to truly exist. Both sides are aware that an alien race of capitalists steered by Marx could render them at any time impotent and that “nicht einmal der ‘Marxismus’ konnte sie davor retten,” as P.M. remarks. Marxism is no longer antithetical to capitalism, but to communism as well. Marxism is only revolutionary insofar as it provides an

alternative to both political economies in the sublation of them into an all-encompassing intergalactic capitalism fed on revolutionary emotion.

In order to sustain both systems, Marx must die. He tells P.M. how in 1951 he took a KGB agent aboard who attempted to assassinate him (WG, 119). A decade later, unable to lure Marx into the service of the United States, a CIA operative threatened him with a “Marx-ist-tot-Kampagne” and then similarly tried to poison him (WG, 121). Ironically, in order to maintain their systems, both sides come together in order to neutralize the threat. As Marx explains: “nur durch die Zusammenarbeit mit den USA konnte verhindert werden, daß oppositionelle Bewegungen in Kontakt mit mir oder den Xagas kommen konnten. Sie wußten nun beide, wer ich war and daß für sie nichts drin lag” (WG, 120). To quell the potential uprisings in the name of a new world order of intergalactic capital, in which neither side has any power, they begin to spread UFO propaganda and produce “Science-Fiction-Filmen und Literatur, um die Leute abzustumpfen” and to create a fear of extraterrestrials “zu denen,” Marx states, “ich nun ja auch gehöre” (WG, 120). Incapable of physically eliminating Marx, they turn to the culture industry, namely science fiction, in order to numb the masses and instill within them the horror of Marxist capitalism.

Paradoxically, however, *Weltgeist Superstar* accomplishes the very same thing. Just as Marx writes himself and P.M. into myth, the novel subsequently produces a science-fiction text in which Marx and Marxism as traditionally conceived of is dead. By taking P.M. aboard, Marx creates the conditions of possibility for his death through the culture industry, fulfilling the dialectic of enlightenment prefigured in his manuscript, predestined in his myth, and completed in the science fiction novel. *Weltgeist Superstar* imagines driving the final nail in the coffin of Marxism. Marx’s theory dies in literature. From its epistolary beginnings

and through the twists of the detective story, the logic of the narrative is structured around the dialectic of enlightenment whereby Marxism is revealed as an affirmative theory of capital accumulation.

By producing the conditions for his own science-fiction story, Marx traps himself within the spatialized future of capitalism. Similar to Kluge's *Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang*, *Weltgeist Superstar* creates an outer space governed not only by the timeless spatial futurity of capital, but by a non-revolutionary, affirmative Marxism. Over the last decade Marx has observed how concepts such as "proletarische Revolution" and "Kommunismus" have become "Ausdrücke, die heute keiner mehr versteht oder die Abscheu auslösen, weil einige Industrialisierungsfetischisten, Äquatorialbonapartisten, Schlipsverkäufercliquen [...] in die Zukunft hinein[fallen] wie in ein leeres Treppenhaus hinab" (WG, 126). The eternal rush into the future has become little more than a haphazard stumbling guided by the drive of capital. Rather than creating a future, however, this incessant falling forward has produced and procured a perpetual present:

Das Kapital hat alles ausgebucht bis ins Jahr 10,000. Wenn man die radioaktiven Abfälle berücksichtigt, bis ins Jahr 500,000. Unsere Bedürfnisse liegen in der Zukunft, im "Kommunismus": daraus bestehen die Profite des Kapitals, daraus wurden die MG's der Sonderpolizeitruppen geschmiedet. Das Kapital hat zugleich keine Zukunft mehr, weil es diese schon auf tausende von Jahren hinaus ausgebeutet hat: die Erde ist ausgepumpt, die Menschen kaput. Das Kapital ist in die Gegenwart zurückgekehrt, macht statt Zukunft ewige Gegenwart. Beton, Überwachung, Militarisierung. Es gibt keine Gewalt, aber jedes Abweichen von vorgeschriebenen Bewegungen kann tödlich sein. (WG, 132)

In Marx's analysis of the present, capital has successfully conquered the future such that it returns to itself creating an "ewige Gegenwart." At the same time, however, capitalism manages to turn the very dreams of a future, of qualitatively different "Bedürfnisse," and of "Kommunisimus" into the source of its profit and its control. Thus, Marx's assertion that

“Das Leben in der Zukunft: das ist Macht” takes on a decidedly different character (WG, 132). The life in the future is controlled by a brand of capitalism that enacts its control not through brute force *per se*, but rather by ensuring allegiance to the hegemony of its inescapable contemporaneity. In the outer space of *Weltgeist Superstar*, Walter Benjamin’s messianic “Jetztzeit” becomes the time and space of a future capitalism, a spatio-temporal stratum that also ensures Marx’s perpetuity.⁴⁵

If Marx’s eternal life brings with it the death of Marxism as a revolutionary theory, then in order for Marxism to regain its utopian potential he will have to die himself. That is, Marxism will have to undergo a second death in order to escape the eternal, atemporality of capital. As with the science-fiction works produced by the cooperation of the United States and the Soviet Union, however, what Marxism once was, a revolutionary theory to be feared, can only survive because of its negation in literature. In short, these works not only created a fear of extraterrestrials and by extension Marx, but they preserved a Marxism that was still revolutionary and tied directly to terrestrial matters, not subject to the prohibition of the Xagas. In this way, *Weltgeist Superstar* attempts a negation of the negation of Marxism. Marxism’s commodification, its transformation into a Hegelian superstar of a new cosmic culture industry fed on emotion, must then take its cue from Marx himself and let the dead bury their dead.⁴⁶ This does not, however, transpire within a theory that is already compromised, but within literature which is able to negate what Marxism could not, namely Marx himself. *Weltgeist Superstar* attempts this feat through a restaging of the passion play

⁴⁵ See Benjamin “Über den Begriff der Geschichte” in *Walter Benjamin: Erzählen. Schriften zur Theorie der Narration und literarischen Prosa*, Alexander Honold, ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007), pp. 129-140, p. 137.

⁴⁶ Karl Marx, “Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte,” in *Marx-Engels Werke*, Vol. 8 (Berlin: Dietz, 1972), pp. 115-207, p. 117.

that, while not fulfilling the last stage, the death of Marx, nevertheless creates the preconditions for literature as utopia.

The Passion and Utopia of Weltgeist Superstar

Aboard the spaceship, Marx takes the abducted P.M. to visit three different planets. The first is called “Ma-Apu,” a humid, swampy planet with a landscape composed of moss and various mushrooms, or “Apus,” and inhabited by a race of caterpillar-like beings, “Bobas” (WG, 140-143). The second planet, devoid of both life and a name, is inhabited by a robot race of Ats and Its. P.M. begins to reflect on what he has witnessed on these two planets and what exactly Marx intends for him to learn from them: “Was hatte er mir mit dem Besuch bei den Bobas und den Ats und Its beibringen wollen? Eine gewisse Logik steckte schon darin: Selbstveränderung bei den weichen Bobas, revolutionäres Umkippen bei den harten Ats. Lektionen in Dialektik” (WG, 158). Although he believes that he is being instructed in revolutionary dialectics, exactly the opposite is the case. “Irgendwie kamen mir die beiden Planeten bekannt vor,” P.M. states, “und sie hatten bei mir kein großes Erstaunen ausgelöst” (WG, 158). The reason for his lack of amazement from what Marx has shown him is that he has heard all of this before: “Das Lied von Dschanu Atwajana; die Reise des Yogi Pamandro Maumirdschi – P.M. – im goldenen Himmelswagen; das Land der weisen Drachen – der Bobas – der Kampf der Itya und Atya...und dann? Der 3. Planet. Alles fiel mir wider ein” (WG, 159). These two planets correspond precisely to the myth composed by Marx and left for P.M. in Afghanistan. The last piece of this paradoxical puzzle lies in the third planet “Kamtara” that is mentioned in the Amudi legend and involves his trip “zur Reinigung in die Hölle der schleichenden Geister – Gulapa” (WG, 81). Marx tells P.M. that something has

gone awry on the planet “Tara” and it is up to P.M. to figure out precisely what that is (WG, 160). Marx gives P.M. a small gadget resembling a headphone that teaches him the language on Tara. P.M. quickly realizes that the language is very similar to Sanskrit. Max replies:

Gut beobachtet. Darum ist eben Deine Aufgabe so wichtig. Denn in der Tat stimmt da etwas nicht. Indoeuropäische Sprachen haben in dieser Gegend nichts zu suchen. Auch stark vereinfachte nicht. Und genau das sollst Du herausfinden: es muß ein Fremdkörper in diese Zivilization geraten sein. Und dieser Fremdkörper muß herausoperiert werden, ihn mußt Du suchen und hierher zurückbringen. (WG, 161)

It is, thus, P.M.’s mission to find out the source of this time-space paradox that has infected the planet Tara.

Tara is a tropical planet whose vegetation consists primarily of jungle. It is, as Marx describes, “sehr erdähnlich [...] Für Menschen gibt’s keine besonderen Probleme und man braucht keinen Raumanzug” (WG, 160). Tara’s similarity to the Earth recalls the traditions of science fiction as well as colonial and utopian literature that depict a “this-worldly Other World,” to speak with Darko Suvin.⁴⁷ P.M. arrives on this jungle planet clothed in nothing but a leopard-skin loin cloth and armed with a command of the indigenous language. P.M.’s arrival on the planet Tara mirrors contact of European explorers with the new world, a jungle paradise at the edge of the known world inhabited by a primitive peoples. More astonishingly, however, are parallels with traditional utopian literature, especially More’s *Utopia* [1516], written only a decade after the discovery of the Americas. P.M. emerges from the jungle to find himself in front of a large “etwa 10 Meter hoher, aus dicken Baumstämmen zusammengefügt Palisadenzaun” (WG, 164). This echoes, in fact, Raphael’s description of the city Utopia that “is surrounded by a thick, high wall, with towers and blockhouses at

⁴⁷ Darko Suvin *The Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), p. viii.

frequent intervals.”⁴⁸ P.M. shouts for someone to let him in and a guard appears at the top of the wall. While initially skeptical of P.M., particularly his skin color that does not match their own brownish-green hue, the Tarani are quickly won over by his command of the language, attribute his idiosyncrasies to memory loss, and allow him entrance to the city of Igaha, the capital of Tara. As with his knowledge of Sanskrit that opened up the other world of Marxism and extraterrestrials, it is again language which grants him access to the other world of Tara. While being shown around by a Tarani named Dedakxar, P.M. remarks:

[...] [ich] tippte mit dem Finger hier an eine Säule, dort an eine Mauer, griff nach aufgehängten Wäschestücken, streichelte zum Lüften herausgelegte Teppiche: das nannte man nun also eine Utopie, diese verdächtige Ansammlung von Phantasie, Vernunft, Schönheit, Vielfalt, Faulheit, Genüßlichkeit, Freundlichkeit, Intelligenz usw. Eine gute Utopie, sagte ich zu mir, mit einem leichten Touch von Widersprüchlichkeit, nicht überorganisiert, entwicklungsfähig, aber ohne Aussichten. (WG, 205)

Tara contains all the tropes common to *Utopia* from beauty and pleasure, to reason and intelligence as well as sharing its urban rather than solely rural nature.⁴⁹ All of this comes across to P.M. as a dream, a “verdächtige Ansammlung,” and he constantly has to touch everything to remind himself that it is, indeed, real. The dream which initially motivated his search ultimately leads him to a utopian world. It is, however, not only in these traditional conceptions of utopia, but in its organization of labor and its connection to nature, that Tara mirrors *Utopia*. Concerning labor on Tara, P.M. states:

Nach jahrzehntelangen Erfahrungen hatte man das System der zwei Pflichtarbeitsstunden pro Tag eingeführt. Diese kurze Arbeitszeit war möglich dank einer ausgeklügelten Landwirtschaft, einer absolut abfallfreien Wirtschaft, eines Gleichgewichts von Produktivität und Natur. [...] Die notwendigen Arbeiten wurden

⁴⁸ Sir Thomas More, *Utopia* (New York: Penguin, 2003), p. 53.

⁴⁹ See Frank E. and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1979), p. 123ff.

von Volksversammlungen festgesetzt. [...] (Geld gabs natürlich nicht, d.h. die Tarani wissen nicht einmal, daß es nicht gibt, weil sie kein Wort dafür haben). (WG, 209-211)

Tara resembles not just any utopia, but the proto-Marxist one written by More, in which agricultural labor is divided up and money is worthless, because it does not exist.⁵⁰ In *Weltgeist Superstar*, however, the question is how all of this came to be.

Upon his arrival, P.M., who goes by the Tarani name Nixdur, is subjected to numerous interrogations and examinations. The Tarani determine that he possibly hails from the planet from which the Tara originated, Cantara translated “Irgendland,” a play on the etymology of the utopian “outopia,” or nowhere (WG, 203). In order to jog his memory, the Tarani present P.M. with a box containing a wristwatch. This is the exact same watch that P.M. wears including an identical scratch on the watch face. The importance of the watch is yet another classical utopian theme originating in Samuel Butler’s *Erewhon* [1872], whose title is a transposition of “nowhere.” In this work, Butler discovers a hidden civilization behind a secluded mountain range who has outlawed technology. His possession of a watch sets him apart from the inhabitants of Erewhon and leads to his imprisonment.⁵¹ In contrast to this work, P.M.’s watch is what links him to the Tarani and indeed the origin of the planet. The Tarani explain that the watch “gehörte dem Urvater Naryan, der im Jahr 27, dem unheilvollen starb” (WG, 175). Naryan’s watch as well as his mannerisms and physical appearance resemble P.M. Confronted with this puzzle, P.M. states:

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 124. See also More, *Utopia*, pp. 55-57. This echoes as well Marx’s notion of communism á la Marx: “Der Communismus als positive Aufhebung des Privateigentums, als menschlicher Selbstentfremdung und darum als wirkliche Aneignung des menschlichen Wesens durch und für den Menschen; darum als vollständige, bewußt und innerhalb des ganzen Reichthums der bisherigen Entwicklung gewordene Rückkehr des Menschen für sich als eines gesellschaftlichen, d.h. menschlichen Menschen. Dieser Communismus [...] ist die wahrhafte Auflösung des Widerstreits des Menschen mit der Natur und mit dem Menschen. [...] Er ist das aufgelöste Räthsel der Geschichte und weiß sich als diese Lösung.” Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, p. 116.

⁵¹ Butler, *Erewhon or Over the Range* (Forgotten Books, 2008), p. 46ff.

Ich dachte, daß es sich wohl um einen Scherz von Marx handeln mußte: ich war eindeutig dieser Naryan und meine Uhr war der Beweis. Darum konnten sie sie auch nicht sehen. Sie konnte für sie nicht existieren. Ich existiere aber offensichtlich gedoppelt, einmal vor vierhundert Jahren und einmal jetzt, also konnt ich beide Uhren sehen. Mit der Zeit stimmte überhaupt nichts mehr. (WG, 175)

As the Amudi legend P.M. read in Afghanistan proves, P.M.'s has indeed been pushed along the inevitable logic of the narrative which enveloped him beginning with Marx's manuscript. Everything in his past and present leads up to this future for which P.M. is predestined, from his knowledge of Sanskrit, his discovery and translation of the marginalia and his journey to Afghanistan to his interplanetary voyage. As he surmises: "Offenbar gab es hier eine Vergangenheit, die in meiner Zukunft lag. Und Cantara konnte nichts anderes sein als die Erde" (WG, 175). On Tara, P.M. finds himself inscribed into a past narrative that is predicated on his future, a future that has been realized because of Marx.

This paradoxical history does not go unnoticed by those on Tara, namely by Tagar and Nairi. Tagar, who is suspicious from the beginning, tells P.M. forthrightly:

Du bist Naryan und 385 Jahre Fortschritt beißen sich damit in den Schwanz. Alles beginnt von vorn, d.h. es hat gar nie begonnen. Wir haben wieder die Wahl zwischen Überleben und Angst oder Lust am Untergang. Auch die andern haben das begriffen darum wollen sie nichts über Dich wissen. Du sollst ein Rätsel bleiben. [...] Dein Gedächtnis ist unser Untergang. Cantara hat dich gesandt, um uns mitzuteilen, daß unsere Zeit um ist, daß wir erlöst werden. (WG, 195)

In order for Tara to exist, P.M. must remain a puzzle like the Sanskrit characters that initiated his entire journey and in so doing become literary. P.M.'s literarization is the precondition for this utopia, another key element in the history and tradition of utopian literature and criticism. In More and Butler, the traveler must return to their homeland in order to write the account thereby giving rise to utopias as fundamentally literary practices.⁵² Accordingly,

⁵² See particularly Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), p. 39 as well as

P.M.'s return to Tara *qua* utopia is cause for alarm. His reappearance short circuits this utopian literarization through a different literary figure. While the other Tarani view him as merely a paradox, a puzzle that must not be solved, for Tagar he is a doppelgänger.

P.M.'s return as doppelgänger is not the return of the repressed as Freud famously outlines in "Das Unheimliche," but rather something more messianic as indicated by Tagar's assertion that he has come to save them. This is the second coming of a Christ-figure sent by Marx, the narrative's *deus ex machina*, to redeem the inhabitants of Tara. Returning to the etymology of Tara, as land, and Cantara as the other land, however, this redemption is the inversion of utopia. The ambiguity of More's original *Utopia*—as both the no place, "outopia" and the good place "eutopia"—attains its critical force only in its referentiality and self-reflexivity.⁵³ Only through Raphael's telling of the story of Utopia does it transform from a nowhere into a somewhere, a first-hand description of an existent island, as well as the good place in contrast to the England of the 16th century of his audience. For Tagar, then, Earth is the utopian "Irgendland" not Tara. Thus, Tagar's desired salvation is a desire for the utopia of Earth. As with the inversion of utopia, however, P.M.'s messianic return is another instance of Marx's reversal of Benjamin's messianic "Jetztzeit" that has become the time of capital. On Tara, P.M.'s past, present, and future are folded into a Benjaminian "Jetztzeit" that subsequently signals the salvation of the Tarani and the end of their profane history; for Tagar, the appearance of P.M. as a messianic doppelgänger indicates "daß unsere Zeit um

Louis Marin, *Utopics: The Semiological Place of Textual Spaces* (New York: Humanity, 1984), p. 65. As Manuel and Manuel also note, once Raphael begins to recount his travels in *Utopia* he writes himself back into his story: "The whole world of the Utopians is seen only through the eyes of the fierce Hythloday, who is so carried away by his depiction of their calm felicity that in the telling he becomes as mild and gentle as they are. Manuel and Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, p. 122.

⁵³ See Manuel and Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, p. 1 as well as Marin, *Utopics*, pp. xv-xvi.

ist.”⁵⁴ Counter to Benjamin’s conception, however, this end of history is not the end of the time of capital, but rather its reestablishment. While Tara is a utopia for P.M., Tagar’s utopia lies in the insertion into the time and space of capital.

P.M. as a doppelgänger of Naryan is, however, not simply a messianic moment. It is an interruptive force that initiates a self-reflexivity in which, like with the other literary tropes discussed thus far, both the text and P.M. becomes aware of themselves as literature and their imbrication in theory. In his analysis of various doppelgängers throughout literature and philosophy, Dimitri Vardoulakis poses the doppelgänger as an “operative presence” that

unfolds on the fault lines of literature, criticism, and philosophy. The doppelgänger arises at the points where each inquiry reaches a limit, transforming itself into something else. [...] Thus, the doppelgänger becomes a medium of reading the work, and hence constitutive of writing. This process of the mutual limiting and interacting between [...] literature, criticism, and philosophy is, then, an initial feature of the reflection proper to the doppelgänger.⁵⁵

Each instantiation of the doppelgänger in *Weltgeist Superstar*, beginning indeed with P.M.’s reading of his own myth in the Amudi legend, is a moment of literary and philosophical transformation and reflection. Being confronted with the myth in which he is the central character breaks the detective story in search of enlightenment and confronts it with the dialectic of enlightenment. Similarly, his appearance to Tagar as a doppelgänger is a moment of interruption in which the myth gains a quasi-religious, messianic significance that again inverts Benjamin’s “Jetztzeit.” In his subsequent meeting with Nairi, the imbrication of literature and philosophy as reflected by the doppelgänger, reaches another limit transforming the story once again.

⁵⁴ See Walter Benjamin, “Theologico-Political Fragment,” in *Reflections*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, ed. Peter Demetz (New York: Schocken, 1978), p. 312.

⁵⁵ Dimitri Vardoulakis, *The Doppelgänger: Literature’s Philosophy* (New York: Fordham UP, 2010), p. 5.

It is, however not only Tagar who recognizes the significance of P.M.'s return, but Nairi. After Tagar informs her of the results of P.M.'s examinations, revealing that everything about P.M. corresponds to the "Urvater" Naryan, from his blood type to his identical wounds, she invites P.M. to visit her abode. Once there, she admits to P.M. that his reappearance on Tara "ist paradox" and she knows "wer dahinter steckt" (WG, 213), namely Marx. Nairi then tells P.M. the story of how Tara came to be inhabited:

Mein Name war damals Dana – wieder einmal. Lokaman war betrunken gewesen und hatte nicht aufgepaßt – wir benützten die Gelegenheit. [...] Darum kann ich es dir erzählen, den du hast keine Zukunft. [...]

Lokamann hatte nicht aufgepaßt und 40 Leute schlüpfen durch die Maschen der Zeit. 20 Frauen und 20 Männer. Es war kein Zufall, daß ich, also, Dana, unter den Frauen war. Lokaman kontrolliert zwar die Zeit, aber ich gebiete über das Leben. Zeit ohne Leben ist leer, Leben ohne Zeit ist Tod. Lokaman ist der Rhythmus, wir sind die Form. (WG, 213)

While Lokaman, the god of time, slept, the goddess of life, Dana, and thirty-nine others were able to slip through the strands of time to populate Tara. Among this original group was P.M., the "Urvater" Naryan. This, to be sure, comes as a shock to P.M. who desperately tries to make sense of everything: "Das kleine Männchen namens 'ich' hüpfte im Dreivierteltakt im Gehirnbunker herum. Lokaman? 'Loka' heißt 'Welt', 'Universum', 'Wissen'; 'man' heißt 'Geist', 'Seele', aber auch 'Mann'. Weltgeist? Allseele? Mister Universum" (WG, 215)? As Nairi's story elucidates, it is not only Marx, but the "Weltgeist" who is responsible for the paradoxical existence of Tara as well as P.M.'s return to the planet. Along with the original thirty-nine settlers of Tara, P.M. managed to escape the time Marx, Weltgeist, created the utopian Tara outside of the eternal contemporaneity of capital, and must therefore perpetually leave the planet and return to it in order to ensure its continued paradoxical existence. Tara exists as a utopia in so far as it is outside of the temporal and spatial dominion of capital that

is governed by an affirmative, capitalistic Marxism under the sway of the positivistic logic of Hegel's philosophy of history. P.M.'s return as a doppelgänger thus folds the narrative of the passion play into Hegel's philosophy of world history. It is a narrative representation of Hegel's famous doppelgänger, the reappearing world-historical figures critiqued by Marx as always appearing twice, "das eine Mal als Tragödie, das andere Mal als Farce."⁵⁶ At this interruptive juncture created by Nairi's revelation, *Weltgeist* again becomes a self-aware and self-reflective textual imbrication of literature and theory. The passion play *Jesus Christ Superstar* alluded to in the title becomes the passion play of Hegel's conception of history, *Weltgeist Superstar*.

Hegel lays out his formidable philosophy of history in his posthumously published *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* [1832-1845]. For Hegel, the movement of world history is not only rational, but necessary, following the dictate of what he terms the world spirit, or "Weltgeist." As he states in the opening to his lectures:

Es hat sich also erst aus der Betrachtung der Weltgeschichte selbst zu ergeben, daß es vernünftig in ihr zugegangen sei, daß sie der vernünftige, notwendige Gang des Weltgeistes gewesen, des Gesites, dessen Natur zwar immer eine und dieselbe ist, der aber in dem Weltdasein diese seine eine Natur expliziert.⁵⁷

Thus, for Hegel history is guided by his contention that reason rules both the world and the movement of world history as embodied by the "Weltgeist." The worldly manifestations of reason in the service of the "Weltgeist" are "die welthistorischen Individuen."⁵⁸ While acting in accordance with the progression of world history, they do so as unknowingly, following

⁵⁶ Karl Marx, "Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte," in *Marx-Engels Werke*, Vol. 8 (Berlin: Dietz, 1972), pp. 115-207, p. 115.

⁵⁷ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, p. 22.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

what Hegel terms “die *List der Vernunft*” couched as fate and instinct⁵⁹ As Hegel states, they are “[die] produzierende Idee” as well as “[die] nach sich strebenden und treibenden Wahrheit,” in short the very “vorteilhaft, wesentlich und notwendig” tools of history.⁶⁰ Moreover, such figures are characterized by passion (“Leidenschaft”) as well as suffering and death. Hegel admits, for instance, that “[d]ie Weltgeschichte nicht der Boden des Glücks [ist]” and that world-historical figures, among them Caesar, Alexander the Great, and Napoleon Bonaparte, all either die young, are murdered, or exiled, tossed aside as “leere[] Hülsen des Kernes” once their deed is accomplished.⁶¹ While Hegel’s philosophy of history is arguably less a theodicy, than a philosophical treatise on thought and its historical coming into being and its struggle for self-comprehension, the religious connotations and parallels to the passion of Christ cannot be wholly overlooked.⁶² Indeed this is the line taken in *Weltgeist Superstar* both in its overdetermined title and in the narrative. P.M. becomes just such a world-historical figure, subject to a predestined fate, the narrative reason and logic of history and the “Weltgeist.”

In his subsequent conversations with the inhabitants of Tara, P.M. discovers that all of their stories parallel his own. They all found out about the Xagas through secretly circulated texts, made their way to the contact points, and eventually to Tara. Further, like

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 49.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, p. 42, 47.

⁶² This is, in fact, the line taken in most studies of Hegel. G.H.R Parkinson argues, for instance, that rather than a “metaphysical fantasy [...] to talk of the world-spirit is to talk of what human beings think and do.” G.H.R. Parkinson, “Hegel, Marx and the Cunning of Reason,” in *Philosophy*, Vol. 64, No. 2 (July, 1989), pp. 287-302, p. 290. Karin de Boer similarly maintains that: “The concept of spirit rather refers [...] to the efforts of thought to comprehend itself. As far as its occurrence in world history is concerned, the concept of spirit exclusively refers to the mode of thought that underlies the efforts of successive civilizations both to organize themselves in a rational way and to comprehend the principle of this self-organization.” Karin de Boer, *On Hegel: The Sway of the Negative* (New York: Palgrave, 2010), p. 182.

P.M., they all had plans “zurückzukehren und gewisse Dinge zu tun. Doch gefiel es ihnen auf Tara so gut, daß sie blieben” (WG, 216). In this way, most of the Tarani have shrugged off the burden of world history as well as the dictates of the utopian explorer who must return in order to reside on Tara. P.M. ultimately ascertains that the “Einwohner Taras [...] Abtrünnige der Geschichte [waren]” and that the planet is little more than “ein einziges Alterheim der Gestrandeten der Geschichte” (WG, 216). Accordingly, P.M. too decides to go against his past, present, and future and stay in Tara. While announcing his decision with a declarative “Marx [könne] in seiner Suppenschüssel schwarz werden,” Marx suddenly appears beside him. The others at the table enjoy a round of laughter before Odur, one of the Tarani, draws P.M.’s attention to the seat next to him:

Da saß ein Zwerg mit der geröteter Glatze, großer Kolbennase, ausgefächertem, weißem Bart, in einem schmutzigen, blau gestreiften Pyjama. Er schwankte betrunken, hatte unkontrollierte Lachausbrüche und stellte sich vor mit: ‘Weltgeist’. ‘Ein alter Freund von mir,’ ergänzte Marx mit leicht geniertem Grinsen. (WG, 217)

Here personified as a drunken, bald dwarf, it is Weltgeist, the force behind Hegel’s affirmative philosophy of history, that has been guiding Marx’s hand and thus moving P.M. into his role as a world-historical doppelgänger, the redeemer of Tara and thus the guardian of the time and space of capital.

That Weltgeist is described as an ugly dwarf controlling everything seemingly unseen is again an instantiation of the doppelgänger as an interaction between literature and philosophy that arises as the narrative reaches another limit transforming itself into a version of Hegel. The combination of Marx, the historical materialist, and Hegel’s “Weltgeist” as a theological philosophy of history conspicuously inverts Benjamin. His famous first thesis in “Über den Begriff der Geschichte” outlines the imbrication of historical materialism and theology:

Bekanntlich soll es einen Automaten gegeben haben, der so konstruiert gewesen sei, daß er jeden Zug eines Schachspielers mit einem Gegenzuge erwidert habe, der ihm den Gewinn der Partie sicherte. Eine Puppe in türkischer Tracht, eine Wasserpfeife im Munde, saß vor dem Brett, das auf einem geräumigen Tisch aufruhte. Durch ein System von Spiegeln wurde die Illusion erweckt, dieser Tisch sei von allen Seiten durchsichtig. In Wahrheit saß ein buckliger Zwerg darin, der ein Meister im Schachspiel war und die Hand der Puppe an Schnüren lenkte. Zu dieser Apparatur kann man sich ein Gegenstück in der Philosophie vorstellen. Gewinnen soll immer die Puppe, die man historischen Materialismus nennt. Sie kann es ohne weiteres mit jedem aufnehmen, wenn sie die Theologie in ihren Dienst nimmt, die heute bekanntlich klein und häßlich ist und sich ohnehin nicht darf blicken lassen.⁶³

In Benjamin's example the small, ugly dwarf of theology controls the puppet of historical materialism such that he wins his game of chess every time. Further, as Vardoulakis argues, the cooperation of historical materialism and theology in Benjamin's anecdote does not propose a unity of the two, but rather, like a doppelgänger, holds both in suspension.⁶⁴ In contradistinction to Benjamin's thesis, in *Weltgeist Superstar* the theology of Weltgeist and Marx's historical materialism collapse into one another. It is the dwarf Weltgeist that invisibly, at least for a time, conducts Marx such that it is the time of capital that always wins. In this metaphor *cum* literary reality, Weltgeist and Marx control P.M. in their game of intergalactic capital; he is a mere world-historical pawn, moving across the chess board of their prefigured narrative, the cunning of reason and the world history of capital.

Thus, P.M.'s true task was not to return to discover the paradoxical origin of Tara as Marx led him to believe. Marx knew from the beginning that it was P.M./Naryan and Dana who crept past the sleeping Weltgeist, which explains the similarity of the Tarani language to Sanskrit. As they explain to him: "meine Aufgabe bestünde eben darin, diese unnütze Zierde der Schöpfung zu warnen, die Absichten Danas zu durchkreuzen, das Ewig-Männliche, den

⁶³ Benjamin, "Über den Begriff der Geschichte" p. 129.

⁶⁴ Vardoulakis, *The Doppelgänger*, p. 194.

Weltgeist zu retten. Ich müsse den Zauber Danas durchbrechen, indem ich den Verlockungen Taras entsage” (WG, 219). P.M. is to break the spell of Dana, her control of Tara, by renouncing the temptation to stay, paralleling in a way Christ’s renunciation of Satan’s temptation control of the profane world, and thus restore the patriarchal order of history and capital.

With Marx and Weltgeist now on the planet Tara, P.M.’s story, his world-historical narrative is almost complete. According to the last part of the Amudi legend: “Schließlich durfte der Yogi zur Belohnung eine Zeitlang im Land der Glückseligen – Kamtara – wohnen, wo er jedoch hochmütig wurde und zur Reinigung in die Hölle der schleichenden Geister – Gulapa – gehen mußte” (WG, 81). Having lived on Tara, the land of the happy, P.M. must now traverse the hell inhabited by the “Gulapa.” Rather than a “Hölle,” however, this is the “Höhlsystem” erected by the “Gyului,” the original dwarf-like inhabitants of Tara (WG, 220). The Gyului represent the only threat to the utopia of Tara and have been engaged in battle with the Tarani especially over the Tarani’s development of motors that to the Gyului are “gefährliche[] Störungen” (WG, 223). Moreover, the Gyului have become addicted to a substance called “Tarama” that “bestand aus der Gehirnmasse toter, erwachsener Tarani” and “beruht auf der Angst und dem Haß gegenüber den Gyului” similar to the Xagas’ extraction of emotional energy from Earth (WG, 222-223). As Marx and Weltgeist lead him through the Gyului tunnel system, they come across a circle of men sitting with the Gyului, among whom sit Rudolf Bahro, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Toni Negri, Mao, Lenin, and Pestalozzi in addition to Candide, “der junge Werther,” and Orestes (WG, 221). The caves of Gyului are the literal underground of the representatives of Marxism after Marx, themselves serving Marx and Weltgeist’s affirmative theory of capital. At the same time, gathered in this underground are

the figures of P.M.'s literary genealogy: Voltaire's *Candide* as a parody of Leibniz's monadology as creating Earth as a utopia of the best of all possible worlds, Goethe's epistolary *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, and the mythical figure of Orestes, who in Robert Graves's account killed his mother and ended a matriarchy.⁶⁵ Thus P.M. is confronted with his theoretical and literary prefigurations and the overarching philosophical and narrative trajectories into which he has been inscribed.

All of these great male characters of literature and philosophy are in attendance to hear the plan of the Gyului to finally rid themselves of the Tarani:

In ihrer Verzweiflung hatten sich die Gyului zum "Großen Plan" entschlossen: durch die unterirdischen Gänge, die sie unter den Städten der Tarani gegraben hatten, würden sie gleichzeitig in einer Nacht in die Häuser eindringen und alle Tarani umbringen. Es würde da kein letztes, großes Tarama-Fest geben. Dann würde man ohne die Droge leben müssen. (WG, 223).

The Gyului plan to slaughter the Tarani in a colonial uprising against those who have intruded on their native soil, would restore their control of the planet and secure a victory over the utopian matriarchy and the allure to remain behind on the utopian Tara as well as the conquest of Marx, Weltgeist, history, and capital. As penance for his hubris, namely for wanting to betray the demands of world history capital prescribed by Marx and Weltgeist by remaining on Tara, P.M., like the others in attendance, becomes ensnared in the final plan of the Gyului. In one final appearance as doppelgänger, it appears that P.M. will fulfill his role as world-historical figure and the narrative of the passion play by sacrificing himself for the eternal life of capital. The Gyului are practitioners of psychotronics, creating out-of-body experiences. In the Gyului caves, P.M. confronts his doppelgänger, which, in order to allay

⁶⁵ Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2001), p. 112ff.

narrative confusion, he labels himself diacritically as Ich'' and his psychotronic other Ich' (WG, 222). At one point, P.M. looks on as the Gyului begin to eat him:

Ich' fühlte, daß sie mich' fressen wollten und freute mich' darauf. Die zärtlichen, langen Zünglein der Gyului links und rechts von mir' tasteten schon meine' Arme ab, kitzelten mich' an den Wangen. [...] Ich'' bemerkte voller Entsetzen, daß ich' von zwei Gyului umzügelt wurde, daß deren Hände schon nach mir' griffen, ihre schrecklichen Rachen sich öffneten, um mir' die Halsschlagadern zu durchbeißen. (WG, 224)

The Gyului perform a virtual, fictional Eucharist with P.M.'s doppelgänger, through which he would have actualized his role as the savior of Tara, returning it to the Gyului and to the control of capital. P.M., however, cannot die in his own story. His world-historical task is to renounce Nairi/Dana's temptation to remain on Tara forever, not to destroy Tara *per se*, as Tagar would have it. More importantly, however, this renunciation—leaving utopia—is the precondition for utopia itself. Thus the other narrative in which he is enveloped, utopia, has the final word. Ultimately, P.M. must secure the continued death of Marxism as a revolutionary theory of communism and preserve the affirmative hybrid capitalism of Marx/Weltgeist in order for utopia, the other place, as well as utopia, the book, to exist. The death of Marxist theory is the necessary condition for the survival of utopia. This is the passion as enacted by *Weltgeist Superstar*. It is the story of the betrayal and sacrifice of Marxism for the sake of utopia.

During his time in the caves, however, P.M. notices that Marx, having spent too much time away from the life-support of his spaceship, is becoming increasingly weaker. P.M. has to drag Marx back to the ship before he dies. They reach the ship and Marx, who has fallen unconscious, comes to only to level a series of insults at P.M.: “‘Idiot,’ fluchte er heiser, ‘du hast alles verpfuscht.’ [...] Er schimpfte weiter. ‘Dummkopf, Kretin, Tölpel, Strohkopf,

Amateur, Naiviling! All meine Anstrengungen waren vergeblich!’” (WG, 228). Unbeknownst to P.M., Marx had a completely different plan in mind for P.M.:

Er hatte die Xagas übers Ohr hauen wollen. Nach seinem absichtlich herbeigeführten Tod hätte ich die Suppenschüssel übernehmen können und wäre nicht an ein Abkommen mit den Xagas gebunden gewesen. Das heißt, ich hätte selbst auf der Erde intervenieren können, Leute an Bord holen können usw. Jetzt ginge das nicht mehr. (WG, 228)

Marx had thus planned to escape from his own world-historical role as the puppet of the Weltgeist and intergalactic capital by dying and thus freeing himself from the eternal contemporaneity of capital. With P.M. in control of the ship and not bound to a contractual parasitic relationship with the Xagas, Marx’s revolutionary thought could finally come into being. This would have ceased the perpetual return and continuation of history, in whose service he has been condemned to circling the globe providing the theory for the extraction of terrestrial capital and reinsert him into a revolutionary time, finally letting the dead bury the dead, to speak with Marx. To be sure, Marx’ failed plan could never have succeeded. Killing Marx and thereby negating his allegiance to his affirmative theories would be the rebirth of a revolutionary Marx and the end of Tara as well as everything that led up to this point. As written into his very theory, including the Amudi legend composed for P.M., everything has to have happened precisely in this manner. Were P.M. to take over the ship, nothing that led to his terrestrial and extraterrestrial adventures would ever have transpired, he would never have made it aboard Marx’ spacecraft to begin with, and Tara would never have existed. Thus, P.M. fulfills his world-historical role by saving Marx and his contract with the Xagas and securing Tara as a utopian planet outside the confines of the time and space of capital.

Back aboard the ship, P.M. and Marx are visited again by the Xagas. They explain that although Marx's theories have helped them expropriated a large amount of affective capital from the Earth, predicting the sites of revolution and thus energy have become unreliable (WG, 234). In order to increase the efficiency with which they are able to accumulate energy from the Earth, the Xagas come to an agreement with P.M. The Xagas "sind [...] nun bereit, mit unseren mächtigen Raumschiffen in die Ereignisse einzugreifen. Um dies durchführen zu können, ist es allerdings notwendig, daß es auf der Erde ein Netz von Informanten und Gesprächspartnern gibt, das mit allen entscheidenden gesellschaftlichen Bewegungen und explosive Schichten verbunden ist" (WG, 235). P.M. is to serve as their earthly representative, establishing a network of people willing to work with the Xagas primarily through composing a "Bericht[], der alle Informationen über die neue Zusammenarbeit enthält" (WG, 235). His task is essentially to write his own epistolary. P.M. approves of the plan and the Xagas agree to place him where ever in the world so as to best carry out his work and give him a powerful ring, with which he can levitate and produce a defensive shield among other things, but which he can never remove. Further, to alleviate the stress and danger of such work, namely the threat that the KGB and CIA, as P.M. states, "erbarmungslose Jagd auf uns machen werden," the Xagas establish Tara as a "Erholungsplanet[]" (WG, 236-237). Tara can only continue to exist as long as intergalactic capital remains firmly in place and this transpires through P.M.'s epistolary that creates a network of communication between sites of potential revolution and the Xagas.

As the pact between the Xagas and P.M. is concluded, Weltgeist exclaims: "Wir haben sie reingelegt! Hurrah!" (WG, 239). Who exactly have they managed to outsmart and in what way? The ambivalence of the pronoun "sie," corresponds to both the Xagas as well

as Dana and Nairi. On the one hand, they have maneuvered the Xagas into finally taking action on Earth. At the same time, however, they have secured the continued creation of Tara as a utopian “Erholungsplanet” for the members of P.M.’s terrestrial network. In this way, they have accomplished little more than the perpetuation of the past, present, and future and the confirmation of Weltgeist’s cunning reason. Indeed, his enthusiasm mirrors Marx’ exactly when he states that he, too, was able to outsmart the Xagas by secretly distributing the instructions for how to contact him thus motivating the entire story: “‘Aber ich habe sie hie und da hereingelegt, ich hab einige Manuskripte versteckt’” (WG, 117). On the other hand, in “fooling” the Xagas into creating Tara, they have also broken Dana/Nairi’s hold over the planet. Part of the Xaga’s plan, and Weltgeist’s as well, is to set the Gyului upon the inhabitants of Tara “um die Attraktivität dieses Planet so stark zu vermindern, daß die Kontaktpersonen nicht allzu zahlreich auswandern würden und so dem Aufbau des Kontaktnetzes entzogen würden” (WG, 246). On two fronts, the cunning of reason and Weltgeist have again succeeded in safeguarding history and the “Ewig-Männliche.” This twofold victory is, moreover, the production of utopia as a literary space. Both instances create the conditions of possibility for the existence of Tara, namely by ensuring that P.M. writes his report, *Weltgeist Superstar*, and does not, indeed cannot, remain in utopia.

P.M. returns to Earth, choosing to reside in a rural commune in Switzerland. When he arrives at the secluded house in a Swiss forest, occupied by different men and women who share in the necessary daily work, P.M. is again confronted with a paradox. Introducing himself as Bruno to the occupants of the commune, P.M. confirms his intention to fully participate in all of the daily chores and even to invest 10,000 Franks to the communal coffer.

All of his promises come as quite a shock to the other communards because they have heard all of this before:

Alle blickten mich verwundert an. “Was ist los?” fragte ich, weil mich ihr Schweigen zu lang dünkte. “Nun,” sagte Hanspeter zögernd, “Du bist schon der Vierte, der mit den gleichen Vorstellungen hier ankommt. Sie waren alle sehr ähnlich, in Deinem Alter, allein, fleißig, freundlich, kamen von irgendwoher, kannten alle Leute und die Situation, wollten etwas schreiben. Sie wußten nicht, wohin sie wollten, waren sehr aufgeschlossen, nahmen an unseren Unternehmungen teil. (WG, 262)

P.M. has again returned to the site from where everything will begin again, leading to all the events that have transpired thusfar in the story. He too is taken aback by all of this and asks himself: “War es ein Zufall? Ein allgemeiner Trend von herumirrenden Existenzen aus den sechziger Jahren” (WG, 262)? P.M. is, however, not just any aimlessly wandering ghost of the sixties. He is this very spirit, or better, its world-historical, messianic doppelgänger which must sacrifice and betray its faith in revolutionary theory, in general, and Marxism, in particular, thereby safeguarding the utopia of literature as a space of alterity. What is then quite heretical to the spirit of the 1960s, the death of Marxism, is the only thing that can save it.

The members of the commune present P.M. with letters written to himself as the “Urvater” Naryan from two of his revolutionary agents and Xaga contacts informing them of their whereabouts, one in Paris, the other in Brooklyn, thus confirming P.M.’s identity and his previous visit to the commune (WG, 263). The climax of this revelation occurs, however, when P.M. is presented with a package addressed to Bruno containing a book titled “Weltgeist Superstar,” the word for word account of P.M.’s travels and experiences that corresponds to the page numbers of *Weltgeist Superstar* (WG, 269). Thus the narrative completes its own arc and returns to the epistolary. It is P.M.’s letters and communication with the other exiles of history as well as his report, “Weltgeist Superstar,” that is responsible

for the creation and survival of the utopian Tara, but also that which links Tara to Earth. In this way, his epistolary both “marks and defies the borders” that it traverses, as Simon argues.⁶⁶ Thus, the utopian planet Tara is distinguished from Earth, bordered off from it much as More’s Utopia is separated by a vast ocean and Butler’s Erewhon by a mountain range, and at the same time connected to it through the communicative link established by the epistolary *qua* utopian literature. Just as Butler’s and More’s works create other worlds that lie both in and beyond the known world, *Weltgeist Superstar* as utopian, epistolary fiction creates a science-fiction planet out of this same mold.

Astonished to receive a package from himself containing the book documenting his travels, P.M. turns to the entry from that day. He reads how Dana, who lives at the commune under the name Trudi, attempts to free P.M. of his Xaga ring, which binds him to the Xaga and to his role as a world-historical doppelgänger. In the book, Dana is successful and now wears the ring herself and it appears that she has indeed outsmarted everyone, Marx, Weltgeist, and the Xaga and finally broken the cycle. As with Marx’ attempt to free himself from the shackles of the Xaga and ultimately Weltgeist, this plan can only fail. P.M. continues to read from the “Nachbemerkung des Verlags” which states that he disappeared on this evening from the commune and that neither the house nor the author, P.M., can be found (WG, 271). While all of this happens in the book that was mailed to P.M., it is clear that this is not the case. The disclaimer at the beginning that states that the author prefers to remain anonymous as well as the “interview” that takes place at the very beginning with P.M., “dem Autor von WELTGEIST SUPERSTAR,” are testament to the fact that the book does not, indeed, end as it does (WG, 9). Rather, the final lines of *Weltgeist Superstar* state:

⁶⁶ Simon, *Mail-Orders*, p. 123.

“Dann schloß ich das Buch. Niemand hatte zugehört” (WG, 272). The fact that no one was listening as P.M. read aloud from his own account is again the necessary determinant both for the planet of Tara as well as the book itself. Were it to transpire in the manner dictated by the already-written “Weltgeist Superstar,” then nothing would have come to pass. P.M.’s return is the prerequisite for the utopia of Tara that is made possible through literature – the return of the utopian traveler to write his story.

Conclusion: Literature as Utopia, Utopia as Paradox

It is no mystery that one of the main theoretical red threads running through the West German student movement – like every other student movement of the day – was a Western variant of Marxism. On the centrality of this particular theory in the political events of the day, Jan-Werner Müller recently contended that “the students [...] clearly held to the belief that their actions were inseparable from political theory.”⁶⁷ In 1968, it had indeed appeared as if the time had come for revolution, that all the key elements were in place with the students at the forefront, and that the situation in Europe combined with movements abroad (in the U.S., in Latin America, and in Vietnam) signaled a turning point and the inevitable end to the continued repression and imperialism wrought by capitalism. As Jeffery Herf states in a recent essay:

“1968,” like “1917” and “1945,” was one of the three key Hegelian moments in the history of twentieth-century Communism not only in Europe but around the world. That is, it was a moment in which parts of the international communist movement became convinced that the actual course of events was conforming to their

⁶⁷ Jan-Werner Müller, “What Did They Think They Were Doing? The Political Thought of (the West European) 1968 revisited,” in Vladimir Tismaneanu, ed., *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion, and Utopia* (New York: Central European University Press, 2011), pp. 73-102, p. 75.

understanding of a historical teleology pointing toward the fulfillment of revolutionary aspirations.⁶⁸

P.M.'s *Weltgeist Superstar* takes these two strands, Marxist theory and the historical, revolutionary Hegelian moment, as the starting point for its query of the fate of theory and utopia after 1968 and the answer is nothing less than heretical. Marxism has cashed in its critical, revolutionary currency for eternal life in the time and space of capital and his co-pilot in this affirmative, positivistic world is none other than Hegel's "Weltgeist."

P.M.'s novel is, however, more than just an exploration of theory and the death thereof in the wake of the student movement, and exercise in literary production and utopia. As with the other works in this project, it is a highly self-aware and self-reflexive text that is not only theoretically smart and savvy, responding to and critiquing Marx and Hegel, but it is also aware of itself as literature and places itself into this history as well. Its theoretical agility is matched only by its literary prowess that negotiates the realms of epistolary fiction, hard-boiled detective stories, myth, the passion play, science fiction, and utopian literatures and in doing so makes an argument for literature over theory as the inheritor and arbiter of a critical negativity. The various literary genealogies that are intertextually conjoined in *Weltgeist Superstar* are not a sign of a pretentious, hollow knowledge of literature. Rather they show that the novel is not only part of a bankrupt theoretical heritage, but a compromised aesthetic legacy in the service of the culture industry. *Weltgeist Superstar* does not, however, hide this fact. It wears it on its sleeve, in the title of the work itself as well as the opening disclaimer that offers itself for sale. In doing so, P.M.'s novel does not become the literary affirmative counterpart to Marxism's commodification, but its negation. That is,

⁶⁸ Jeffery Herf, "1968 and the Terrorist Aftermath in West Germany," in *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion, and Utopia*, pp. 371-386, p. 371.

it is a mimetic representation of the conditions of its production. The novel accomplishes what Marx in this spaceship cannot, namely create a critical and negative distance from itself. In *Weltgeist Superstar*, the fate of utopia and its relation to theory come face to face with their own dialectic, with paradox and contradiction, that rather than being sublated into a false reconciliation, a utopia in the here and now, exist in and through their very tension. The preservation of both theory and utopia can only be accomplished through their continual negation in literature.

This dialectic is what Marx has exchanged for immortality and what survives in *Weltgeist Superstar* as the literary utopian space of contradiction and paradox. Utopia, as both P.M.'s and More's work demonstrates, is always the place where one is never allowed the stay. In order for it to exist, it must constantly negate itself, its story must be told, and in doing so it becomes its own chimera. This is the inherent paradox of utopia—its existence is created by its fictionalization, its becoming an unbelievable account either of the shipwrecked sailor on an immaculate island or the outer space traveler discovering a pristine planet. Utopia is the text that is aware of its necessity as a text. This paradoxical self-reflexivity is the crux of Louis Marin's argument concerning the utopia's play with textual spaces, itself the child of the 1960s: "[...] utopia is the book in which the book has been deconstructed by showing the processes that constituted it. It is, in a manner of speaking, the book of the book where the act of reading encounters its accomplishment and end."⁶⁹ Indeed, it is through P.M.'s act of reading his own work at the end of *Weltgeist Superstar* that the text reaches its end, securing itself as a text and with it utopia by confronting it with its own

⁶⁹ Louis Marin, *Utopics: The Semiological Place of Textual Spaces* (New York: Humanity, 1984), p. 65. In his introduction, Marin continually stresses the importance of May 1968 in France as the impetus of his work. "In fact," he states, "we had much to learn about utopia in order to master its circular paths and the work it produces," p. 4. Published in 1973, it thus wrestles with similar questions about utopia after the 1960s.

paradox. Utopia in P.M.'s text demonstrates its dialectic, its simultaneous preservation and negation through which alone it is able to exist as a paradox and a contradiction. When Marxism and theory have become affirmative as was seemingly the case in central Europe by the late seventies, it is only in literature that utopia maintains its socio-critical force as a space of dialectical negativity.

Conclusion

Looking Backward, Looking Forward: From Other Worlds to Simulations of Alterity

Utopia Reconstructed

West Germany after sixty-eight was a period of unprecedented literary and theoretical production. On the one hand, New Subjectivity represented a much desired return to literature that gave speech back to what David Roberts calls the “literarisch sprachlose Generation” of sixty-eight.¹ On the other, new literary theories from the likes of Hans Robert Jauss, Wolfgang Iser, Karl Heinz Bohrer, Nicolas Born, and others challenged the role of literature as either a purely political, documentary endeavor (Enzensberger) or a negative one ultimately unable to communicate its critical intent to a mass audience (Adorno). Further, literature during this period was shown to know about and engage with other emerging cultural, political, and aesthetic theories outside of Germany. These ranged from postcolonialism (Said), ethnological reevaluations (Geertz), and spatial issues (Lefebvre) to photography (Sontag) and even prefigured others in interesting ways (Bhabha, Baudrillard). *Literature as Utopia* inserted itself into this cultural, literary, and intellectual history in order

¹ Roberts, “Tendenzwenden: Die sechziger und siebziger Jahre in literaturhistorischer Perspektive,” *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 56:2 (June 1982), pp. 290-313, p. 293.

to expose another side to the return to literature and the reevaluation of literary theory after the watershed of sixty-eight. Rather than posing a clean break between the two decades, this project challenged such caesuras that are quick to proffer large-scale changes and in doing so ignore other burgeoning trends. As I have argued throughout the course of this work, literature after sixty-eight was not solely invested in a “new” politics of the self and subjectivity, but interceded in investigations of other, alterior spaces. In short, the idea of utopia continued to exist in the wake of the student movement.

The texts chosen for this work illuminated the function of utopia as a literary space of contradiction and paradox related to knowledge and space. They also displayed the myriad ways in which literature not only began to know about and respond to new literary, political, and cultural theories, but also do theory. This was achieved by querying relative outliers to the post-68 literary landscape, namely postcolonial and science-fiction literature. The emergence of “good” science fiction and the beginnings of postcolonial literature signaled a renewed interest in other worlds that, along with new theoretical models, began to interrogate literature’s role in the creation and promulgation of knowledge about these spaces. In each case, *Literature as Utopia* demonstrated how the failed politicization of utopia as in the sixties gave way to the aestheticization thereof after sixty-eight. Particularly in the medium of literature, utopia reemerged as a mode of critical self-reflection and self-reflexivity concerning the representation of spaces of alterity. Rather than succumbing to an all-encompassing malaise, the aestheticization of utopia in literature after sixty-eight secured the survival of its fundamental *idea*—the contradiction and paradox of knowing and creating other worlds—even while the *term* utopia seemed to have lost its social, cultural, and political currency in the new emphasis on subjectivity.

Reconstructing the idea of utopia after sixty-eight necessitated a dialectical investigation of the epistemologies and representations of other worlds. On the one hand, postcolonial literature engaged in a critical, empirical epistemology that traced the limits of knowledge about other worlds and, on the other, science fiction probed the speculative epistemologies surrounding imaginary worlds. In the first section, it was shown how postcolonial literature began with a critique of the colonial underpinnings of knowledge and its promulgation through supposedly objective means and culminated in the idea of utopia as a space of contradiction and paradox anchored in and by the medium of literature. Nicolas Born detailed the imbrication journalism's and photojournalism's supposed benevolent neutrality in the continuing colonization of other, postcolonial worlds and proposed literature as a space in which the desire for other worlds confronts its own colonial shadow. Hubert Fichte and Leonore Mau's joint work traverses similar visual and literary terrain, though the perpetrator is ethnology and ethnographies. Their work demonstrated the possibility of literature and photography to create a space in which the reader/viewer confronts this colonial culpability and at the same time defuses it through the reflexivity and reciprocity produced by the work.

The following section detailed how science-fiction's utopian premises populated outer space with "this-worldly Other Worlds" in order to stage a critique of capital's exploitation and appropriation of these worlds.² Kluge's science-fiction text embarked on a voyage into the outer space of capital, in which its economic imperialism survives the catastrophic demise of Earth. At the same time, this work juxtaposed the future of extraterrestrial capital with its allegorical other, the terrestrial, spatial ruins of its past in order

² Suvin, *The Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), p. viii.

to perform a critique of the present spaces of capital. Lastly, P.M.'s novel brought these various trajectories and discourses together in an investigation of the fate and future of Marxism as a revolutionary philosophy. P.M. heretically shredded the potential of Marxist theory after 1968 by exploring myriad literary topographies on its way to espousing literature as the inheritor of utopia based on the paradox that the author, like the traditional utopian traveler, must always abandon the utopia of other worlds so that they may continue to exist. By staging its examination of literature's other worlds in such a dialectical manner, *Literature as Utopia* created a more complete picture of the intricacy and complexity of the idea of utopia after sixty-eight that neither science fiction nor postcolonialism alone could accomplish. Accordingly, the two chapters in each section further developed this picture in that the interplay between the two works spoke both with and against each other thereby elucidating the contradictory and paradoxical nature of the idea of utopia as it emerges and is exemplified in literature. In each case, it was shown that these texts are exemplars of a self-aware utopian literature that recognizes and constantly critiques its very premises, namely that to write about is to take part in the creation of other worlds. Rather than resolving this fundamental problem, each work lays its cards on the table simultaneously displaying and maintaining the paradoxical paradigm that drives it.

Beyond the Seventies: Postmodernism, Simulation, and Utopian Skepticism

The more pressing question at this juncture is, however, not so much where we have been but what the future holds for postcolonialism, science fiction, and, moreover, the idea of utopia after the seventies. The postcolonial and science-fiction literature discussed in

Literature as Utopia established a pivotal connection and reassessment of the sixties and seventies. These works not only underscored the utopias of the student movement but were springboards into a critical reexamination thereof that enabled us to reevaluate commonly-held presuppositions about the seventies. In short, just as an analysis of these texts shed light on the sixties from the vantage point of the following decade, it also opened up a different view of the seventies. In such a way, it is also possible to look forward into the next decade through the lens of these selfsame genres so as to query and similarly challenge what was “new” about the 1980s; looking forward by looking backward and vice versa. With the help of the idea of utopia established in this project we can potentially think the rise of postmodernism in the eighties and the accompanying utopian skepticism differently.

While New Subjectivity beginning in 1973 purportedly announced the official end of the spirit of the 1960s, accentuated by the passage of the Radicals Ordinance a year before, the 1970s are said to end in postmodernism, in general, and simulation, in particular. As Paul Michael Lützeler argues, the postmodern literature of the 1980s turned its back on the grand utopian projects of modernity:

Abschied genommen wurde auch von einem Engagement-Konzept unmittelbarer gesellschaftlicher Wirkungssuche, wie es die 68er Generation mit ihrer dokumentarischen Literatur eine Weile vertrat, dann aber selbst als unpraktikabel aufgab, um sich enttäuscht von der – schließlich für tot erklärten – Literatur vorübergehend abzuwenden. Auch die einseitige Konzentration auf Ich- und Selbsterfahrung, wie sie für die auf Authentizität pochende Literatur der Neuen Subjektivität in den siebziger Jahren kennzeichnend war, ist (inclusive ihrer dialogischen Variante, dem anheimelnden Sich-Verständigen mittels poetischem Text) inzwischen als zu schmale Basis für eine zeitgenössische Ästhetik erkannt worden.³

In Lützeler’s account, the literary aesthetic of the 1960s as well as the 1970s is no longer

³ Lützeler, “Einleitung: Von der Spätmoderne zur Postmoderne. Die deutschsprachige Literatur der achtziger Jahre,” *The German Quarterly* 63:3/4, (Autumn, 1990) pp. 350-358, p. 352.

viable for describing the postmodern literary turn of the 1980s that is, Lützel continues:

“weniger angestrengt und ambitiös, weniger totalitätssüchtig und mythosorientiert, weniger utopieversessen und manifesthaft, weniger einheitsfreudig und eurozentristisch, [...] weniger referentiell und repräsentativ, weniger stilrein und hochkulturell zugeht als in der Literatur der Moderne.”⁴ One of the principle presuppositions concerning the new postmodern literature of the eighties is the appearance of simulation that Jean Baudrillard defined at the beginning of the decade as “having no relation to any reality whatsoever” and “no longer of the order of appearance,” in essence a copy without an original.⁵

Herman Schlösser locates the breakthrough of postmodern simulation in West Germany in 1983 with the publication of Bodo Morshäuser’s *Die Berliner Simulation*.⁶

Schlösser summarizes:

Bodo Morshäuser’s Erzählung [...] erzählt eine merkwürdige verschobene, unsexuelle Liebesgeschichte, in der ein deutscher Schriftsteller und ein englisches Mädchen sich treffen, zusammenleben und auf den Straßen tanzen. Aber alles, was sie erleben ist “Simulation.” Glück, Unglück, Liebe, Haß und politische Aktion sind nur noch als Zitate vergangener Glücks-, Liebes-, Aktivitätserfahrungen möglich.⁷

Schlösser’s diagnosis of the shift to literature as a space of purely simulated experiences in Morshäuser’s story is echoed as well by Ulla Biernat in her analysis of West German literature’s encounters and representations of the foreign in the eighties. “Simulierte Authentizität und die paradoxe Verschränkung von Verstehen und nicht-Verstehen des Fremden,” Biernat explains, “sind die wesentlichen Kennzeichen des Reisediskurses in den

⁴ Ibid., p. 351.

⁵ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 6

⁶ Schlösser, “Literaturgeschichte und Theorie,” in *Gegenwartsliteratur seit 1968*, eds. Klaus Briegleb and Sigrid Weigel (München: DTV, 1992), pp. 385-403, p. 401ff.

⁷ Ibid., p. 401.

achtziger Jahren.”⁸ In Biernat’s analysis the desire for alterity in the seventies is replaced by simulated authenticity and alterity in the following decade that no longer has any basis in the reality of other worlds.⁹ If this is indeed the case, then we can push Schlösser’s date father back to 1981 with the publication of Peter Schneider’s essay *Die Botschaft des Pferdekopfs*. In this work, Schneider details his trip to and return from Latin America. Paul Michael Lützeler characterizes this work as a document of postmodern globalization, democratization, and utopian skepticism stating that

[Schneider hält] die Beobachtung fest, daß der Mythos von der westlichen Zivilisation von der Phantasie der Massen in den armen Ländern Besitz ergriffen habe. [...] Wir können, fährt Schneider fort, von den “armen” Völkern nur lernen, indem wir hören, was sie von uns lernen wollen.¹⁰

In Schneider’s account, then, any sense of the alterity of other worlds has evaporated under the sway of simulation. Accordingly, the alterity accorded to utopia as an other world disappears as well.

A pivotal piece of this process was the rise of new media in the 1980s. Biernat notes, for instance, the increased influence of especially television and computers in the simulated authenticity and alterity endemic of the decade:

Die 80er Jahre sind darüber hinaus das Jahrzehnt, in dem sich das Fernsehen und der Computer auf rasante Weise quantitativ und qualitativ differenzieren, neue Formen der medialen Rezeption und Kommunikation hervorbringen. Im Zuge der Neudefinition des Verhältnisses von Realität und Fiktion erhält auch die Frage nach dem Verstehen dieser Medien-Wirklichkeiten eine andere Dimension, nicht zuletzt in bezug auf den Kontakt zwischen den Kulturen.¹¹

⁸ Ulla Biernat, *Ich bin nicht der erste Fremde hier: Zur deutschsprachigen Reiseliteratur nach 1945* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004), p. 135.

⁹ Ibid. 138.

¹⁰ Lützeler, “Multikulturelles, Postkoloniales und Europäisches in der Postmoderne: Zur Internationalität der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur,” in *Kulturelle Grenzziehungen im Spiegel der Literaturen: Nationalismus, Regionalismus, Fundamentalismus*, eds. Horst Turk, Brigitte Schultze, and Roberto Simanowski (Göttingen: Wallenstein, 1998), pp. 104-121, p. 110, 116.

¹¹ Ulla Biernat, *Ich bin nicht der erste Fremde hier*, p. 138.

In Schneider's essay the role of these new media, television in particular, plays an integral part in the collapse of other worlds into simulated spaces. The central figure of his essay, the eponymous horse's head, signals for Schneider the ultimate demise of alterity. Welcoming him from a television advertisement, the message the horse's head delivers is one of the commercialization and commodification of other worlds, but also their simulation.¹² That is, other worlds have embraced the cultural products and new methods of cultural production and transmission of the First World to such an extent that they begin themselves to simulate the authenticity and alterity ascribed to them. The contact between cultures and worlds that Biernat mentions, becomes, then, one of mutual simulation: the First World creates simulations of the Third World while the Third, in turn, simulates itself through adopting this condition from the First. This process of simulation produces a situation in which other worlds are no longer alterior, but only re-presentations and recreations of the simulated authenticity and alterity produced about them. When simulation collapses the distinction between reality and appearance into the latter, other worlds cease to exist as such, becoming a referent without a foundation in reality.

Beyond Literature: Postcolonial and Science-Fiction Film after Sixty-Eight

Regardless of when one dates the shift to simulation in the eighties, the issue of simulation is not altogether new to the decade. Both postcolonialism and science fiction in the seventies foreshadow and tackle the idea and aesthetic of simulation and its consequences. In Chapter 1, for instance, I revealed how Nicolas Born's *Die Fälschung*

¹² Schneider, *Die Botschaft des Pferdekopfs und andere Essays aus dem friedlichen Jahrzehnt* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1981), p. 21.

already wrestled with the idea of simulation and its neocolonial effects in the image world of photography while demonstrating that literature had not yet succumb to this fate. While this dissertation explored literature as a medium of the aestheticization of utopia after sixty-eight, the aesthetic and medial specificity of utopia was by no means limited to this realm. In the 1970s, for instance, it was not literature, but rather film that became a crucial medium for interrogating and exploring the possibilities of simulation in the two genres not as a collapse of reality into mere appearance, but as upholding the two in its creation of other worlds. A case in point is Herbert Achternbusch's 1979 film *Der Komantsche*. *Der Komantsche* tells the story of its eponymous protagonist, a Comanche, who, after being shot by his wife, lies in a coma in a Bavarian sanitarium in which he is the sole patient. While unconscious, his dreams are taped and displayed on a monitor in his room and are subsequently sold to television by his wife. In one set of dreams the Comanche finds himself in Sri Lanka rousing a sleeping Buddha to query, "wo [er] eine Frau finde[t], die [er] lieben kann."¹³ The subsequent dream that forms the large part of the film follows the Comanche as he attempts to locate his tribesmen. With Achternbusch's clever play on words, the Comanche in a coma does not find the tribe (*Stammbrüder*) to which he belongs, but rather the camaraderie of drinking companions (*Stammtischbrüder*), who he attempts to band together as fellow Comanche. At the close of the film, the Comanche awakens and, as Gerd Gemünden summarizes, "paddles his canoe on the streets of Munich, as all water has turned into pavement."¹⁴ Achternbusch's Comanche thus seeks to transfer the simulated other worlds of his televised fantasies into the real world, ultimately preferring the former over the latter.

¹³ Herbert Achternbusch, *Der Komantsche*. Quoted from the reprinted screenplay in the volume *Es ist ein leichtes beim gehen den Boden zu berühren*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), pp. 43-71, p. 52.

¹⁴ Gemünden, "The Indianerphantasien of Herbert Achternbusch," *The Germanic Review*, 73:1 (Winter 1998), pp. 32-50, p. 35.

Subtending Achternbusch's film is an emphasis on the simulation and commercialization of other spaces. On the one hand, the other worlds in *Der Komantsche* have been reduced to televised and commodified images of his fantasies. Instead of stereotypical Native American feathers, the protagonist of the film wears antennas "to indicate," Gemünden argues, "that his mind is being exploited by the culture industry."¹⁵ On the other hand, the other worlds of Sri Lanka and the American West, the myth of the Wild West embodied by the Comanche, are mere simulations. They are little more than images in the mind reproduced on the television screens in the sanitarium. At the same time, however, Achternbusch plays with the ideas of alterity and the authenticity thereof by subverting the notion of primitivism through simulation. While his Comanche certainly "fit[s] into the long list of stereotypes established by modern Western tradition," Achternbusch foregrounds the "artificiality of their performance and the constructedness of their subjects" forfeiting any claim to authentic or illusory representations of alterity.¹⁶ Thus, the simulated or feigned authenticity of otherness becomes a method of both antirealism and anticolonialism.¹⁷ Simulation in the realm of film and television is, then, not unlike the postcolonial critiques made by both Born and Fichte. As I demonstrated, neither of these works aims to authentically represent other worlds, but, like Achternbusch's film, divulge the constructedness of representations of other worlds. Further, as with these two chapters that make up the postcolonial section of *Literature as Utopia*, Achternbusch's work begins with a critique of simulation and simulated authenticity regarding the knowledges and spaces of other worlds and arrives at the aestheticization of idea of utopia in the medium of film.

¹⁵ Gemünden, "The Indianerphantasien of Herbert Achternbusch," p. 35.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 34.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 37.

Simulation here performs a post- and anticolonial critique that reveals the very artificiality of Western notions of alterity thereby making an argument for film as a site of utopian alterity. That is, just as Born's and Fichte's revelation of literature's culpability in the creation and control of other worlds also opens up contradictory textual spaces of alterity, Achternbusch's *Der Komantsche* holds the colonial construction of other worlds up for view and simultaneously subverts it through the film's assertion and exposure of its own artificiality and simulation.

The same holds true for science fiction films in the seventies. Six years before Achternbusch's film toyed with the idea of simulated and televised other worlds, Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Welt am Draht* [1973] traversed similar terrain in the realm of science fiction. Based on the American science-fiction writer Daniel F. Galouye's novel *Simulacron-3* [1964], Fassbinder's *Welt am Draht* is a two part mini-series first aired on the German television station ARD (Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland). The story centers on Fred Stiller (played by Klaus Löwitsch) as the new director of the "Institut für Kybernetik und Zukunftsforschung," or the "IKZ." The "IKZ" has created a simulated computer world that is not only constantly displayed and observed through a system of television screens, but also into which the programmers can travel by means of a helmet-like contraption that plugs them to this computer world and interestingly emulates. While this simulated world is initially intended as a social experiment controlled by the state, it is revealed that private corporations have a particular interest in this simulation as potential a predictor of future's markets. After the mysterious death and disappearance of the former director of the institute, Professor Vollmer, Stiller begins to slowly discover that his world is, like the computer generated one, merely

the simulation, or simulacrum, of another world. Vollmer leaves behind one clue for Stiller, namely a drawing of Zeno's paradox. This philosophical conundrum that demonstrates the illusion of change and motion through the metaphor of a footrace between Achilles and a tortoise, acquires a different meaning in Fassbinder's work, namely the illusion and paradox of other worlds.

The film plays with the idea of other televisual and filmic worlds, both through its decidedly melodramatic performances that ooze inauthenticity, but also through its mise-en-scène. On the one hand, it emulates Stanley Kubrick's sci-fi aesthetic in *2001: A Space Odyssey* [1968] not only with wide shots of brightly lit, multicolored corridors, office complexes, and rooms of computer servers (see figures 1 and 2), but also with its close-ups of Stiller in the simulator helmet (see figures 3 and 4).



Figure 1: *Welt am Draht*



Figure 2: *2001: A Space Odyssey*



Figure 8: *Welt am Draht*



Figure 9: *2001: A Space Odyssey*

On the other hand, *Welt am Draht* creates a mise-en-abyme, framing the characters through medium and close shots around and reflected in mirrors (see figures 5 and 6).



Figure 10: *Welt am Draht*



Figure 11: *Welt am Draht*

In these ways—melodramatic acting, the emulation of science-fiction mise-en-scène, and the use of mise-en-abyme—Fassbinder's *Welt am Draht* is an exercise in the televisual, filmic, and computer creation and representation of other worlds. Similar to the two works that comprise the science-fiction discussion in this dissertation, Fassbinder's film uses utopia, the construction of other worlds through simulation, as a means to critique. With Kluge's

Lernprozesse, it shares a concern with science fictional other worlds as spaces of expansionist capitalism. Moreover, it echoes the insistence on the paradoxical nature of utopia in P.M.'s *Weltgeist*. That is, each of the simulated worlds in *Welt am Draht* is predicated on the continued existence of the others. Accordingly, as the inhabitants of the computer worlds become cognizant of their simulated existence and attempt to leave one world for the other, this act of escape threatens the viability of the other worlds. The constant mirroring at work in *Welt am Draht* signals the existence of other worlds and is at once a reminder of their inaccessible, paradoxical nature. Like the mirror images that can only exist so long as there is something, or someone, to be reflected, other, utopian worlds are only viable so long as there is someone to return to write about, film, or even program them, in this case. Thus just as P.M.'s death would be the end of the planet Tara, Stiller's death and his return to the "real world" in *Welt am Draht* begs the question of how many other simulated worlds there are as well as the fate of the simulated world one leaves behind. Similar to the other science fiction works discussed in *Literature as Utopia*, Fassbinder's *Welt am Draht* probes the idea of utopia by relying on techniques of simulation to display the paradoxes and contradictions at work in their creation. In this way, he upholds the mediums of film and television as potential spaces of alterity.

Literature as Utopia explored postcolonial and science fiction literature as a way to reassess the fate and legacy of the idea of utopia and to dialectically reconstruct it after sixty-eight. By locating the continuation of utopia as it manifested itself in the medium of literature in the seventies through the utopias of the sixties, I demonstrated that idea of utopia survived sixty-eight as a critical reassessment and reevaluation of literature, theory, and the idea of utopia itself. This was made possible by posing a dialectical relationship between

engagements with the epistemologies of space in the self-reflexive empirical knowledge of other worlds in postcolonialism and the speculative knowledge of imaginary worlds in science fiction. Further this project proposed a two-way street between the two decades such that the sixties shed new light on the seventies and the seventies in turn inform and reflect on the sixties. This path was one paved both by the *idea* of utopia as well as its subsequent aestheticization after its attempted policization in sixty-eight. The history of the idea of utopia as outlined throughout this dissertation and illuminated in postcolonial and science-fiction literature of the seventies can also help us understand the shift to simulation in the following decade by applying it both retrospectively and prospectively. In this way, simulation does not necessarily entail a foreclosure of the idea of utopia in the rise of postmodernism. Rather, tracing its medial incarnations and contestations in literature and film can aid in thinking both the idea of utopia as well as its aesthetic production and reflection differently, so to speak. This is only possible if we are open to not only questioning the caesura between the sixties and seventies, which was the basis of this project, but the purported paradigm shift between the seventies and eighties as well, one that divides the decades along the lines of modernism and postmodern simulation.

As I have shown throughout this project, other worlds as utopian spaces of alterity are founded on contradiction and paradox. Such attributes can also be found in the realm of simulation, which holds itself up as such and relishes in the paradoxes between the worlds and the realities that it creates. This is not to suggest that simulation in the eighties is merely an extension of the 1970s any more than the seventies was an uncomplicated continuation of the rebellious spirit of sixty-eight. Rather, the explorations of simulation in postcolonial and science-fiction works of the seventies challenge the notion of postmodernism as a clear-cut

break with the seventies that entails, moreover, a utopian skepticism rooted in the collapse of other worlds through simulation. By further examining these genres, particularly in film, we can further trace the history of the idea of utopia into the eighties, a time in which both postcolonialism and science fiction exploded beyond their humble, albeit groundbreaking, beginnings. The continued prominence of postcolonialism and science fiction necessitates an expanded medial framework that includes not only literature, but also film as a medium in which the aestheticization of the idea of utopia took firm hold after sixty-eight.

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