

**Transforming Suicides: Literary Heritage, Intertextuality, and Self-Annihilation in
GDR Fiction of the 1970s and 1980s**

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ABSTRACT

Transforming Suicides: Literary Heritage, Intertextuality, and Self-Annihilation in GDR
Fiction of the 1970s and 1980s
(Under the direction of Dr. Richard Langston)

This dissertation examines fictional suicides in the literature of the second half of the German Democratic Republic and questions the common assumption that these works represent a direct, realistic reflection of East German society. I point instead to intertextuality in these works and investigate the relationship between fictional suicide in the literature of the German Democratic Republic and the canonical literary works revered by that country's cultural authorities. These intertextual, fictional suicides disrupt the literary heritage of the GDR, a matter that is even more subversive than implying that people killed themselves in the GDR. Each of the four main chapters of the dissertation focuses on one GDR text and the literary heritage that it subverts. Ulrich Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* brings Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* into contact with GDR youth culture when the novel's main character reads Goethe's work without context and, like the main character in Goethe's work, kills himself. Werner Heiduczek's *Tod am Meer* gives its main character, who resembles the main character in Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig*, a voice for narrating his own suicidal downfall. Christa Wolf's *Kein Ort. Nirgends* describes a fictional meeting between the writers Heinrich von Kleist and Karoline von Günderrode, who reevaluate literary history before killing themselves, paralleling a reevaluation of GDR literary heritage. Christoph Hein's *Horns Ende* utilizes a ghost resembling that of Hamlet's father to instigate subversive memory of fascism and Stalinism.

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Introduction

Suicide and the Invention of Literary Heritage in the GDR

Serious transformation, or transposition, is without any doubt the most important of all hypertextual practices, if only because of the historical importance and the aesthetic accomplishment of some of the works that fall under its heading.

Gérard Genette¹

Fictional suicides from the German Democratic Republic have been greatly misunderstood. It might seem that suicide was rampant in the GDR, given the representations of suicide in GDR literature, and given the regime's attempt to hide suicide rates. It might seem too that writers used canonical literature as a secret code to communicate about the real problem of suicide. While suicide was a highly taboo topic in the GDR, the fictional suicides do not primarily reflect a perceived problem of suicide in GDR society. These fictional suicides are much more complicated. While intertextuality often allowed for smoother passage through the censors, this is far from the whole story. Suicide in GDR literature eventually advanced GDR literary heritage to erode that heritage, to highlight its own self-destructive nature. This dissertation examines the relationship between fictional suicides of the German Democratic Republic and the canonical literary works revered by that country's cultural authorities.

¹ Gérard Genette. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Trans.). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. 212. Originally published in 1982 by Editions du Seuil.

Comprehending this relationship requires an understanding of the central role that literary heritage in the GDR, which leads to the concept of *Kulturerbe*.

Kulturerbe

The cultural and literary heritage (*Kulturerbe*) of the German Democratic Republic was invented. Cultural and literary heritage had to be constructed in 1949 for the GDR as a new country, but also for the purposes of establishing a heritage different from that which had been invented by German fascism and different from the literary heritage claimed by the Federal Republic of Germany.² Officially, the process of inventing heritage was part of the “Programm der antifaschistisch-demokratischen Erneuerung” [Program of Antifascist-Democratic Revitalization] (1945-1949). Yet debates concerning German cultural heritage had already occurred in the 1930s and early 1940s among Germans in exile,³ but ideas about cultural heritage were turned into policy in 1946. As early as June 11, 1945, barely a month after the National Socialists capitulated, the German Communist Party (KPD) called for a “Weg der Aufrichtung eines antifaschistischen, demokratischen Regimes, einer parlamentarisch-demokratischen Republik mit allen demokratischen Rechten und Freiheiten für das Volk.”⁴ Not long thereafter, the cultural equivalent of this process was proposed, when Wilhelm Pieck

² Walter Ulbricht, in Elimar Schubbe (Ed.). *Dokumente zur Kunst-, Literatur-, und Kulturpolitik der SED*. Stuttgart: Seewald, 1972. 534. Wolfram Schlenker. *Das "kulturelle Erbe" in der DDR : gesellschaftliche Entwicklung und Kulturpolitik 1945-1965*. Metzler-Studienausgabe. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1977. 66-73.

³ David Pike. *German Writers in Soviet Exile, 1933-1945*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982.

⁴ Invocation of the Central Committee of the German Communist Party to the German people on June 11, 1945. Published in *Deutsche Volkszeitung* on June 13, 1945. Appears in Matthias Judt (Ed.). *DDR-Geschichte in Dokumenten: Beschlüsse, Berichte, interne Materialien und Alltagszeugnisse*. Berlin: Christoph Links, 1998. 45.

declared, “[d]aß nun wirklich einmal die erhabenen Ideen der besten unseres Volkes ... zu den beherrschenden Mächten in unserem Kulturleben werden und ebenso zu lebendigen Kräften, die unser gesamtes politisches und gesellschaftliches Leben richtunggebend gestalten.”⁵ In his speech at the Erste Zentrale Kulturtagung on February 3, 1946, Anton Ackermann stated, “Die Erneuerung des deutschen Kultur- und Geisteslebens nach zwölfjähriger Nazibarbarie und Knechtschaft gebietet stärker denn je die restlose Verwirklichung einer der grundlegendsten humanistischen Forderungen, nämlich der Forderung nach Freiheit der wissenschaftlichen Forschung und der künstlerischen Gestaltung.”⁶ Although Ackermann’s use of words such as “humanism” and “freedom” ring false for Western readers, such key words nevertheless played a large role in the creation of GDR cultural heritage. Adherence to these original policies regarding the invented cultural heritage in the GDR held fast until the early 1970s.

Although the cultural heritage of the GDR was invented for that country, the germ thereof can be identified much earlier. “Wozu brauchen wir das klassische Erbe?”⁷ asked Georg Lukács as early as the 1930s in the context of the Expressionism Debate.⁸ His answer was, in short, that the classical heritage is needed to fight fascism. He wrote that

⁵ Wilhelm Pieck. *Zur Bildungspolitik der Arbeiterbewegung: Reden und Schriften*. (Ed.). Rudi Schulze. Berlin: Volk und Wissen, 1981. 212.

⁶ Anton Ackermann. Collected in Elimar Schubbe (Ed.). *Dokumente zur Kunst-, Literatur- und Kulturpolitik der SED*. Stuttgart: Seewald, 1972. 55.

⁷ Georg Lukács. “Wozu brauchen wir das klassische Erbe?” *Literaturtheorie und Literaturkritik in der frühsowjetischen Diskussion: Standorte – Programme – Schulen*. Anton Hiersche and Edward Kowalski (Eds.). Bern: Peter Lang, 1993. 422-427. Lukács originally wrote it in the Soviet Union in 1938.

⁸ For an overview of the Expressionism Debate, see Stephen Eric Bronner. “Political Aesthetics in the 1930s”. *Of Critical Theory and Its Theorists*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2002. 116-136. For a cross section of primary material from the Expressionism Debate, see Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht, and Georg Lukács. *Aesthetics and Politics*. London; New York: Verso, 2007.

a type of classical heritage was necessary that would make the fascists uncomfortable but would be difficult for them to forbid. He went on to describe the classical heritage as an “antifaschistischer Büchmann,”⁹ referring to the nineteenth-century philologist Georg Büchmann, who collected often stated quotations with traceable origins in the volume *Geflügelte Worte* (1864). The “wir” in Lukács’s question refers to antifascists, but specifically to communists, and even more specifically to German communists. By “das klassische Erbe,” furthermore, he meant the tradition of bourgeois realism: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Leo Tolstoy, Honoré de Balzac, Walter Scott, and Thomas Mann, for example.¹⁰ He also posited Maxim Gorky as the sole communist to have successfully engaged the bourgeois realist tradition. Because these writers reflect a dialectical totality of reality,¹¹ Lukács posited, they worked against the mythology common to fascist aesthetics. In his 1938 essay “Es geht um den Realismus,” Georg Lukács, responding to the aesthetic-political debates about Expressionism in the journal *Das Wort* and in particular to criticism by Ernst Bloch, laid out his aesthetic philosophy of critical realism. Lukács, placing himself largely in the tradition of classicism and bourgeois realism, aimed for an aesthetic of totality. In doing so, he described two extremes that parted from the totalizing effect of realism. The first is naturalism, the aesthetic school of Gerhardt Hauptmann and Emile Zola that describes the details of everyday life to such an almost voyeuristic extent that any central message is lost. The second of the non-totalizing extremes is expressionism or, closer to Lukács’s point, formalism. The

⁹ Georg Lukács. Anton Hiersche and Edward Kowalski (Eds.). *Literaturtheorie und Literaturkritik in der fröhsowjetischen Diskussion: Standorte – Programme – Schulen*. Bern: Peter Lang, 1993. 422.

¹⁰ Lukács had already made a similar argument in 1934 with his essay “Große und Verfall,” the essay that more or less initiated the Expressionism Debate.

¹¹ Lukács worked in the philosophical tradition of Hegelian Marxism.

problem Lukács had with formalism (and here he is particularly critical of James Joyce) is that it so heavily emphasizes literary devices such as montage and stream-of-consciousness that it, similarly to naturalism in Lukács's view, loses focus on content. In responding to the Marxist-expressionist argument given by Bloch that life in capitalism is so fragmented that the reality of it can only be reflected through Modernist literary devices of fragmentation, Lukács countered that the real Marxist writer should go beyond the seeming fragmentation of capitalist life to the heart of existence to restore the totalized, healthy life. In order to achieve this, he posited, writers should take as their models the works of realist writers such as Gorky. Socialist writers should also think of themselves, he argued, as using realism to counter capitalism in the same way that bourgeois writers before them used realism to counter feudalism.

But Lukács not only had to fight what he thought to be fascist aesthetics, he also had opponents in the communist world. On the one hand, Lukács battled the proponents (primarily Andrei Zhdanov) of a dogmatic "socialist realism"¹² that Lukács disregarded as naturalism¹³ and carefully separated from what he called "critical realism." As the discourse on "socialist realism" indicates, the construction of a communist literary heritage does not begin in 1938. In 1934, at the First Convention of Soviet Writers, "socialist realism" became the official aesthetic doctrine in the Soviet Union, as Zhdanov used the term, citing Maxim Gorky's 1905 novel *Mother* as the model for "socialist realism." Before that, Ivan Gronskey used the term in 1932 in the context of preparation

¹² This type of realism is even called by some "Zhdanovism." See: Fredric Jameson. "Reflections in Conclusion" in Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht, and Georg Lukács. *Aesthetics and Politics*. London; New York: Verso, 2007. 196-213.

¹³ Lukács was openly opposed to the naturalism that called itself naturalism, the plays of Gerhard Hauptmann, for example, but he also, at times, refers to Zhdanovist „socialist realism“ as naturalism.

for the 1934 convention.¹⁴ In 1946, the doctrine of “socialist realism” was officially implemented in the Soviet Occupation Zone (SBZ).¹⁵ Even though the cultural authorities of the SBZ/GDR drew heavily on Lukács’s theories, Lukács nonetheless struggled constantly against the mandates of “socialist realism.”

While battling with Zhdanovism, Lukács also wrestled with other German leftists—who maintained positions very far from that of Zhdanov—over socialist aesthetics in the Expressionism Debate. Lukács declared expressionism to be an irrationalist form that does not represent reality in its totality and, therefore, runs the risk of leading towards fascist or capitalist aesthetics, regardless of the political intentions of the author. Lukács’s former friend Ernst Bloch, however, saw utopian potential in expressionism and modernism. Bertolt Brecht found Lukács’s Realism outdated and sought to establish an anti-Aristotelian aesthetics lessens the emphasis on mimesis and instead focuses on establishing critical distance. Theodor Adorno saw anti-fascist potential in certain forms of modernist music, for example. Anna Seghers insisted upon the relativity of realism. Lukács, however, never strayed from his conviction that realism is both fixed and the only possible anti-fascist aesthetics.

Staid and problematic as Lukács’s aesthetics are, they form, in large part, the theoretical basis for the invention of GDR cultural heritage. The cultural-political authorities in the SBZ/GDR, especially from 1946-1971, drew much more heavily on Lukács’s aesthetics than from those of Brecht or Bloch, although both Brecht and Bloch lived in the GDR, Brecht from 1949 until his death in 1956, Bloch from 1948 until 1961.

¹⁴ Piotr Fast. *Ideology, Aesthetics, Literary History: Socialist Realism and its Others*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999. 31-41.

¹⁵ David Pike. *The Politics of Culture in Soviet-Occupied Germany, 1945-1949*. Stanford University Press, 1993. 200-245.

Communist authorities viewed modernism as a Western phenomenon. Indeed, many proponents of modernism spent part or all of their exile period in the West. The accepted literature established for the GDR consisted of a combination of the literary heritage proposed by Lukács with that implied by the architects of “socialist realism” and literature written by German writers who had been in exile during the Second World War, the latter category consisting of, with a few exceptions (such as Brecht), “socialist realist” writings.¹⁶ Lukács continued to develop his prescriptive, literary-historical paradigm in works such as *Fortschritt und Reaktion in der deutschen Literatur* (1947) and *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* (1954). The cultural authorities of the GDR were more invested in maintaining the literary heritage, as constructed by Lukács and others, than they were in the production of literature in the GDR.¹⁷ This literary heritage, in short, consisted primarily of the literature of the German bourgeoisie from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century. It especially consisted of literature from Enlightenment, Weimar Classicism, *Vormärz*, and nineteenth-century bourgeois realism. The literary heritage of the GDR was also called “bürgerlich-humanistisch,” emphasizing its trajectory. It did not consist of Romanticism or *Biedermeier*, as those epochs were not considered humanistic or enlightened.¹⁸

Although it is difficult to pinpoint a singular, official list of works and authors deemed worthy of advancing into GDR literary heritage, it is possible to sort through which works were performed and read and how they were received, both by the

¹⁶ Wolfgang Emmerich. *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*. Berlin: Aufbau, 2000. 84-86.

¹⁷ Ibid. 85.

¹⁸ Ibid. 84.

authorities and by writers. Both the first play produced in the SBZ and the play most often produced in the GDR was Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*.¹⁹ Other frequently produced plays included Goethe's *Iphigenie* and *Egmont* and Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*. The explicit idea subtending the composition of the literary heritage was that the trajectory from humanism to the enlightenment to bourgeois realism had been severed by the historical onset of fascism and that returning to this trajectory would allow for a humanist socialist aesthetics. There was a sense that the history of the bourgeoisie was a stepping-stone from feudalism to socialism, especially in the realm of aesthetics. Even given the communist laudatory for bourgeois aesthetics, however, the inclusion and exclusion of some authors and titles on the roster GDR literary heritage may be quite difficult to understand. For example, theologians such as Luther and Klopstock were lauded, while committed leftist, "naturalist" writers such as Emil Zola and Upton Sinclair were dismissed. And the literary heritage was not merely a matter of accepting Germans and Eastern Europeans, while discarding Western writers. Honoré de Balzac and Walter Scott were lauded—especially by Lukács—while Heinrich von Kleist was deemed unhealthy. William Shakespeare was often lauded, while Fyodor Dostoevsky was not. Thomas Mann was lauded, while Franz Kafka was dismissed.²⁰ Explanations for many of these decisions can be found, but the decisions often remain counter-intuitive.

Although neither GDR cultural policy nor new GDR literature in the Ulbricht era, 1949-1971, comprised one homogenous block, both did conform by and large to a

¹⁹ Thomas Fox. *Stated Memory: East Germany and the Holocaust*. Rochester: Camden House, 1999. Wolfgang Emmerich. *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*. Berlin: Aufbau, 2000. 85.

²⁰ In fact, Lukács wrote an essay entitled "Franz Kafka oder Thomas Mann," in which he contrasts these two authors, declaring that Thomas Mann is healthy, while Franz Kafka is unhealthy. It appeared in the volume *Wider den missverstandenen Realismus*. Hamburg: Classen, 1958.

reverential stance regarding the centrality of GDR literary heritage. One point of evidence for this was the memorialization and canonization of acceptable German writers and composers. Nearly every year saw an anniversary celebration for a German cultural icon.²¹ 1949 was the Goethe-Jahr. 1950 was the Bach-Jahr. 1952 was the Beethoven-Jahr. 1955 was the Schiller-Jahr. In 1959, another Schiller-Jahr, at the Festakt zur Schiller-Ehrung in Weimar, Alexander Abusch declared, “Wir verwirklichen die humanistischen Ideale des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts.”²² The following year, at the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Goethe-Nationalmuseum and the Goethe-Schiller-Archiv in Weimar, Abusch continued this rhetoric: “Wir sprechen bei uns mit Recht von einer Goethe-Schiller-Renaissance, weil durch die Kulturpolitik unseres sozialistischen Staates zum ersten mal in der deutschen Geschichte das humanistische Werk Goethes, Schillers, Lessings, Herders und all der Großen dem ganzen Volk nahegebracht und zu seinem lebendigen Besitz gemacht wird.”²³ When Abusch spoke of realizing humanistic ideals or of a Goethe-Schiller-Renaissance (rebirth), he implied that the humanistic ideals of Goethe and Schiller had not already been realized; in short, they needed to be reinstated. This literary heritage was thus reintroduced under the rubric of (socialist) realism. The literature produced in the GDR from the beginning of the country’s history until the early 1970s, by and large, does not disrupt this reinvented literary heritage.²⁴

²¹ Wolfgang Emmerich. *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*. Berlin: Aufbau, 2000. 85.

²² Elimar Schubbe (Ed.). *Dokumente zur Kunst-, Literatur-, und Kulturpolitik der SED*. Stuttgart: Seewald, 1972. 590.

²³ *ibid.* 675.

²⁴ Wolfgang Emmerich. *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*. Berlin: Aufbau, 2000. Wolfgang Emmerich “Gleichzeitigkeit: Vormoderne, Moderne und Postmoderne in der Literatur der DDR.” *Bestandsaufnahme Gegenwartsliteratur*. Heinz Ludwig Arnold (Ed.). Munich: edition text und kritik, 1988. 193-211.

In the early 1970s, however, the cultural heritage of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) experienced a crisis that was never resolved.²⁵ In December 1971, First Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party (SED), Erich Honecker, who had just ascended to power in May 1971, announced that there were to be no taboos in the literature and art of the GDR, as long as the author started firmly from the standpoint of socialism. Seemingly overnight, the role of literary heritage in the literary production of the GDR was disrupted. One of the early ways that writers tested the murky waters of Honecker's rhetoric was by subverting literary heritage via literary production. This allowed for new readings of works involved in the literary heritage, both by scholars and by lay readers. In 1972, Horst Haase admitted that literary heritage was not easily accessible to workers in the GDR and that the workers saw literary heritage as having little to do with their daily lives.²⁶ On July 6 of the same year, Kurt Hager maintained in his speech at the Sixth Meeting of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party that the literary heritage was important but that it should be engaged critically and not fossilized as an archive.²⁷ He also declared the socialist project to be more than a simple continuation of the humanist-bourgeois trajectory.²⁸ He thereby lessened the value of the bourgeois tradition and transformed the Party's approach to its literary heritage. New discussions about the literary heritage culminated around the publication of Ulrich Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* in 1972/1973, as will be discussed in chapter two. After the

²⁵ Wolfgang Emmerich. *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*. Berlin: Aufbau, 2000. 86. Theo Honnef. *Heinrich von Kleist in der Literatur der DDR*. New York: Peter Lang, 1988.

²⁶ Theo Honnef. *Heinrich von Kleist in der Literatur der DDR*. New York: Peter Lang, 1988. 19.

²⁷ *ibid.* 19.

²⁸ *ibid.* 19.

early 1970s, critical engagement with accepted literary heritage as well as with outside works that did not belong to the literary heritage became commonplace in GDR literature. For example, Christa Wolf engaged German Romanticism, Goethe, and the ancient Greeks. Werner Heiduczek engaged many writers and philosophers as varied as Kant, Schopenhauer, Goethe, Thomas Mann, and Josef Stalin, for example. Christoph Hein engaged William Faulkner and Walter Benjamin. Heiner Müller engaged writers as varied as Shakespeare, Brecht, Lessing, the ancient Greeks, and Fyodor Gladkov, for example. Two trends can be seen here. On the one hand, writers began to engage works who had been previously off limits, such as those by Faulkner and the Romantics. On the other hand, writers began to engage previously acceptable figures, such as Goethe and the ancient Greeks, in previously unacceptable ways.

Apparent in the crisis of GDR literary heritage of the early 1970s was the always already ambiguous nature of literary heritage. This ambiguity was obvious, for example, in the fact that it was referred to by various names—all of which implied different sources, ideologies, and intended outcomes—such as: *kulturelles Erbe*, *klassisches Erbe*, *humanistisches Erbe*, *nationales Erbe*, *realistisches Erbe*, *sozialistisches Erbe*, and *revolutionäres Erbe*.²⁹ The problem of heritage, furthermore, applied not only to literature, but also to music, visual art, and philosophy from several centuries. The various names required to describe it indicate its splintered nature. Given both its different names and referents, it represented an imagined totality, a fabricated cultural currency constructed by East German and Soviet communists in order to avoid the feared

²⁹ See “Erbe” in the index to Elimar Schubbe (Ed.). *Dokumente zur Kunst-, Literatur-, und Kulturpolitik der SED*. Stuttgart: Seewald, 1972. 1806.

effects of what they perceived as fascist and capitalist aesthetics. In part a result of such fear, the communists planned their aesthetics just as they planned their economy. While the goal of preventing the reemergence of fascist aesthetic³⁰ would seem admirable, aesthetic planning inadvertently brought with it aesthetic resistance. The multi-faceted literary heritage naturally invited dissent, as there were inevitably different ways to read texts and traditions. The fragile nature of literary heritage in the GDR was, indeed, received in varying ways by both readers and writers. These writers illuminated the fact that the literary heritage was invented and ambiguous, constructed and fragile, stifling and doomed to failure. These writers' engagement with literary heritage revealed that such heritage was a double-edged sword.

Suicide in the GDR

One topical vehicle through which literary heritage in the GDR was subverted was suicide. Indeed, suicide was a taboo topic in the GDR, in both journalism and literature.³¹ As the topic of suicide emerged in GDR literature, the literary heritage of the GDR began to unravel. Rather than describing suicide in the GDR as an indicator that life in the GDR was unbearable, this study questions the notion that suicides in GDR fiction constitute a realistic, sociological reflection of GDR society, as is commonly assumed. Instead these fictional suicides engage suicides from within and without the

³⁰ Fascist aesthetics were defined in the GDR largely through the works of Georg Lukács, who perceived literature that did not fit into his concept of realism to be dangerous. This, however, is not the entire picture. GDR definitions of fascist aesthetics are complicated and could be the topic of an entire essay.

³¹ Udo Grashoff. *"In einem Anfall von Depression ...": Selbsttötungen in der DDR*. Berlin: Christoph Links, 2006. 269-270.

GDR literary heritage and, in doing so, erode that heritage. These disruptive, fictional suicides, more so than real suicides, are a site of dissent in the GDR.

The primary challenge facing this study is the state of research on suicide; most of it is focused on empirical data. Suicidology, as it is often called, asks: who, when, where, how, and, most often, why do people kill themselves.³² It is concerned with statistics that reflect objectively under what circumstances—whether psychological, sociological, or historical—suicides take place. Apart from this statistical orientation, there are also studies with legalistic, theological, or philosophical arguments regarding if and when one ever has the right to commit suicide. There are, however, relatively few studies that query the *meaning* of suicide, the *semiotics* of suicide, or the *rhetorical* or *metaphorical* nature of suicide. Exceptions exist, however. Two of the most notable include: Georges Minois's *History of Suicide: Voluntary Death in Western Culture*³³ and Irina Paperno's *Suicide as a Cultural Institution in Dostoevsky's Russia*.³⁴ Minois sets out to write a cultural/intellectual history of the way people think about suicide. He starts with the Middle Ages, exposes a sharp caesura with the Renaissance and another with the Enlightenment. He then briefly traces the matter through to the twentieth century, noting himself that his work does not do justice to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.³⁵

³² Edwin S. Shneidmann. *Definition of Suicide*. New York: Wiley, 1985. Antoon A. Leenaars (Ed.). *Suicidology: Essays in Honor of Edwin S. Shneidman*. Northvale, N.J.: Aronson, 1993. Danuta Wasserman and Camilla Wasserman (Eds.). *Oxford Textbook of Suicidology and Suicide Prevention: A Global Perspective*. Oxford UP, 2009.

³³ Georges Minois. *History of Suicide: Voluntary Death in Western Culture*. Lydia G. Cochrane (Trans.). Johns Hopkins UP, 1999. (originally published in 1995).

³⁴ Irina Paperno. *Suicide as a Cultural Institution in Dostoevsky's Russia*. Cornell UP, 1997.

³⁵ Georges Minois. *History of Suicide: Voluntary Death in Western Culture*. Lydia G. Cochrane (Trans.). Johns Hopkins UP, 1999. 328.

Paperno's project might also be seen as a contribution to that of Minois. She offers a semiotic approach to suicide in nineteenth-century Russia, a time and place that certainly influenced cultural developments in the GDR. Her approach is similar to the one used in this study. Her study represents the best example available of a focus on the semiotics of suicide. This dissertation on the literary utility of suicide in the GDR may be seen as another contribution to these studies, filling in an important part of the cultural/intellectual history of twentieth-century Germany.

Before turning to the question of semiotics of suicide in the GDR, it is, however, an overstatement to say that there exists an abundance of research, empirical or otherwise, on suicide in the GDR. The topic remains largely unexplored. In 2006, Udo Grashoff published a monograph that constitutes the first comprehensive history of suicide in the GDR³⁶. Querying the commonly held belief (that arose in part since the authorities in the GDR stopped publishing GDR suicide rates in 1962), Grashoff comes to the conclusion that the territory that became the GDR in 1949 (previously known as *Mitteldeutschland*) has had relatively constant suicide rates since at least the early nineteenth century. Due to other factors such as climate and the responsibility placed on the individual in Protestant theology,³⁷ suicide rates in that territory have historically been high. Grashoff goes on to explain that about half of the cases of suicide in the GDR involved senior citizens and that many other cases involved the chronically ill, that the majority of cases of suicide in the GDR were only peripherally political, and that the

³⁶ Udo Grashoff. *"In einem Anfall von Depression...": Selbsttötungen in der DDR*. Berlin: Christoph Links, 2006.

³⁷ *ibid.* 50-54.

notion most people have about widespread suicide as political protest in the GDR is mostly the result of the SED's inflated, propagandistic, and polarizing fear that such might be the case.³⁸ Grashoff's historical research disqualifies the reality of lived lives, regarding suicide, as a theme for East German literature, which asks the question: If the fictional suicides in GDR literature are not a realistic reflection of real, mass suicide enacted as political protest, what else might be at work in those literary works?

Before belaboring that question, it is worthwhile to view suicide rates in the GDR from another angle. Before Grashoff, Matthias Matussek published a small journalistic volume in 1992 that set out to explore the phenomenon of the "Wende" suicide, that is, suicide as a melancholy reaction to the disappearance of the GDR and the collapse of the Eastern European communist project. Matussek concluded that suicide rates in East Germany actually declined slightly with the "Wende."³⁹ He comes to this conclusion largely via letters that he received from family members of those who killed themselves in East Germany. The change that Matussek detects, however, is very slight and largely confirms that real suicides in East Germany have little to do directly with politics. Although most of the book is concerned with empirical reality and examines case studies of real suicides, the brief third chapter discusses suicide as a possible metaphor for the self-destructive nature of the GDR, a matter that often emerged in his correspondence with family and friends of those who killed themselves. This metaphor is also implicit in

³⁸ *ibid.* 265-268, 470-474.

³⁹ Matthias Matussek. *Das Selbstmord-Tabu: Von der Seelenlosigkeit des SED-Staates*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1992.

a few of the literary works that deal with suicide in the GDR, and it emerges on several occasions in this study.

Like this scant historical work, literary scholarship on suicide in the GDR is also meager. Already in 1969, Fritz J. Raddatz declared the death of Christa T. in Christa Wolf's 1968 novel *Nachdenken über Christa T.* to be a case of suicide and cited high suicide rates in the GDR as part of what the novel reflects.⁴⁰ In 1983, Michael Rohrwasser published an article on the matter, in which he cited Raddatz, as well as numerous literary works, as evidence that suicide has long been abundant in GDR literature.⁴¹ Rohrwasser went on to outline briefly the history of socialist silence regarding (mostly real) suicide. He then briefly posited a limited topography of literary suicide in the GDR and concluded that suicide in GDR literature from the late 1960s onwards is not a matter of hope as Ernst Bloch might have argued in his *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, but rather is a matter of doubt about the future and a realization of meaninglessness in GDR socialism. Udo Grashoff and Dieter Sevin both briefly discuss literary suicide in the GDR in sections of their monographs. Grashoff, a historian, explores the cultural ramifications of historical suicide. Sevin, a literary scholar, is interested in suicide as one of many possible narrative strategies.⁴²

Although Rohrwasser's reading of suicide in GDR literature represents the common assumption that suicide in GDR is a realistic representation of politically

⁴⁰ Fritz J. Raddatz. "Mein Name sei Tonio K." *Spiegel*. 23 (1969) 153. Raddatz claims that 27 out of every 100,000 citizens of the GDR killed themselves.

⁴¹ Michael Rohrwasser. "Das Selbstmordmotiv in der DDR-Literatur." *Probleme deutscher Identität: Zeitgenössische Autobiographien: Identitätssuche und Zivilisationskritik*. Bonn: Bouvier, 1983.

⁴² Udo Grashoff. "In einem Anfall von Depression...": *Selbsttötungen in der DDR*. Berlin: Christoph Links, 2006. 448-469. Dieter Sevin. *Textstrategien in DDR-Prosawerken zwischen Bau und Durchbruch der Berliner Mauer*. Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1994. 88-89.

motivated suicide in GDR society, seeds of other ideas regarding suicide in GDR literature exist. In an essay on death and hope (but not specifically on suicide) in GDR prose, Magdalene Mueller lists numerous literary works in the GDR in the early to mid 1980s that deal with the theme of death.⁴³ Mueller alludes to the 52nd chapter of Ernst Bloch's *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, the chapter that deals with the theme of death, and, seemingly in contradistinction to Michael Rohrwasser, posits that a lengthier engagement with Bloch's philosophy could shine much light upon the emergence of death as a frequent theme in GDR literature of the 1980s. Such a project, were it to mine deeply both Bloch's interpretation of Hegel and the reception of Bloch's philosophy in the GDR, might, indeed, highlight dark portrayals of hope in GDR literature. Mueller's brief prolegomena to such a project, however, leaves much to be desired. She does not propose examining works by Christa Wolf, many of whose works deal with death, and who has been influenced by Bloch perhaps more so than most GDR authors,⁴⁴ nor does she engage in depth the philosophy of Ernst Bloch. Although Mueller's article is little more than an idea that is never developed, and although it does not deal with suicide, it provides a subtle parallel to the study of fictional suicide in the GDR in the 1970s and 1980s. It uses a similar periodization, and it asks why there is so much fictional death in that period.

⁴³ Magdalene Mueller. "Alltagserfahrung? Bemerkungen zur Darstellung des Todes in der neueren DDR-Literatur." *Studies in GDR Culture and Society*. Vol. 8. Margy Gerber (Ed.). Landham, Md.: UP of America, 1988. Mueller lists six GDR works that deal with death: Jurij Brezan's *Bild des Vaters* (1983), Egon Richter's *Der Tod des alten Mannes* (1983), Uwe Saeger's *Noehr* (1980), Guenter de Bruyn's *Neue Herrlichkeit* (1984), Charlotte Worgitzky's *Heute sterben immer nur die andern* (1986), and Christoph Hein's *Der fremde Freund* (1982).

⁴⁴ For more on Bloch influence on Christa Wolf, see: Andreas Huyssen. "Traces of Ernst Bloch: Reflections on Christa Wolf." *Responses to Christa Wolf: Critical Essays*. Marilyn Sibley Fries (Ed.). Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1989. 233-247.

Michael Douglas Schleihauß Zimmermann claims that GDR novels that involve suicide largely constitute a homogenous block, maintaining that they all revolve around the conflict between the individual and GDR society.⁴⁵ Zimmermann's argument is solid when GDR fictional suicides are contrasted with those of West Germany. Such a view, however, does not illustrate a nuanced picture of the literary history of suicide within the GDR. By examining numerous texts from both Germanys over a period of forty-five years, Zimmermann, furthermore, sacrifices close-readings, focusing instead on what the basic plots of those numerous texts indicate about the societies of the two Germanys. Indeed, Zimmermann relies on Shneidman's suicidology as his primary theoretical tool, thereby slipping back into Rohrwasser's contention that GDR fictional suicides are merely a reflection of the role of historical suicide in GDR society.

What is missing in those studies of suicide in GDR literature is an attendance to the literariness of the literary works. None of the scholars mentioned examines the fictional suicides as fiction. None of them sees the fictional suicides as a literary device, whether metaphor, metonym, intertext, or otherwise. The very fictionality of these suicides, however, ought to invite examination of the semiotic, metaphorical, rhetorical, and intertextual nature of them. Unlike these scholarly claims that repeatedly return to the realm of social historical, my dissertation focuses on the relationships these fictional suicides have with other fictional suicides, thereby examining the subversive character of their intertextuality. Although there are many recent noteworthy studies on East German

⁴⁵ Michael Douglas Schleihauß Zimmermann. *Suicide in the German Novel, 1945-1989*. doctoral dissertation. University of Waterloo (Canada), 1997.

literature, there is until now a distinct lack of secondary literature on the distinctive role of intertextuality.

GDR Literature Studies

Much secondary literature written since 1989 on GDR literature can be sorted according to questions regarding the relationship between literature and history. Three main lines of inquiry come into play here: How are GDR works of fiction to be arranged historically? What is the relationship between fiction and reality? How can fiction function as resistance. Critics who engage such questions include: Wolfgang Emmerich, David Bathrick, Julia Hell, Thomas Fox, and Benjamin Robinson. Unlike these critics, there are many more critics that are seemingly unaware of its theoretical consequences in relation to these questions. Such secondary literature includes, for example, much biographical criticism on writers such as Christa Wolf and will not be further belabored. Other works of secondary literature have followed Wolfgang Emmerich's call for the application of literary methodology to GDR literature⁴⁶ and respond to his trajectory of GDR literary history.

Wolfgang Emmerich has been, at least since the nineteen-eighties, one of the most informed literary historians to write about the German Democratic Republic. His book *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, a six-hundred plus page book, is packed with details about texts, authors, and literary movements of the GDR. It is without doubt an indispensable standard work on the topic. Emmerich has also published several articles

⁴⁶ Wolfgang Emmerich. "Für eine andere Wahrnehmung der DDR-Literatur: Neue Kontexte, neue Paradigmen, ein neuer Kanon." *Geist und Macht: Writers and the State in the GDR. German Monitor*. Axel Goodbody and Dennis Tate (Eds.). Amsterdam; Atlanta: Rodopi, 1992. 7-22.

that highlight theses from *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*. Emmerich's main thesis in his magnum opus is that the literature of the GDR progressed from its early period of socialist realism through a period of modernism from the late 1960s until the 1980s culminating in a group of postmodern, anti-utopian poets of the mid to late 1980s. Despite Emmerich's undeniable wealth of knowledge about the literature of the GDR, other literary historians have argued that the major conclusions he draws are somewhat misguided. Criticism of Wolfgang Emmerich falls into two categories, both of which are related to some extent to Emmerich's overly positive treatment of the Prenzlauer Berg poets of the 1980s. Before delving into criticism of Emmerich, however, a closer look at his core position is necessary.

Already in 1988, Emmerich published an article entitled "Gleichzeitigkeit: Vormoderne, Moderne und Postmoderne in der Literatur der DDR," in which he explicitly laid out the aesthetic trajectory that informed his *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*. Responding to the conservative West German view that the literature of the GDR is a single, homogenous block, Emmerich ends the first paragraph of the article by emphasizing: "DDR-Literatur muß **in sich historisiert** werden" [emphasis in the original].⁴⁷ Emmerich's call to historicize GDR literature within itself leads him – as the title of his article suggests – to divide the literary history of the GDR into three parts: premodern, modern, and postmodern. The premodern GDR literature, frequently described as socialist realism, is the literature of the 1950s and early 1960s, which usually includes a linear narrative, a strong hero, and a hopeful ending with a positive portrayal

⁴⁷ Wolfgang Emmerich. "Gleichzeitigkeit: Vormoderne, Moderne und Postmoderne in der Literatur der DDR." *Bestandsaufnahme Gegenwartsliteratur*. Heinz Ludwig Arnold (Ed.). Munich: edition text und kritik, 1988. 193.

of communism. From the early to mid-1960s through the 1970s and into the 1980s, the primary mode of aesthetics in GDR literature, Emmerich posits, is one of GDR modernism. Such literature both questions the notion of progress implied by the “Neues Ökonomisches System der Planung und Leitung der Volkswirtschaft” (NÖS or NÖSPL) (1963-1970) and begins to use literary techniques often associated with modernism such as stream-of-consciousness and multiple narrative perspectives. Many GDR modernist writers—at least those who remained in the GDR—were critical of the state of affairs in the GDR but nonetheless remained more or less true to the cause of socialist utopia. Finally, Emmerich concludes, in the mid-1980s, younger writers (mostly born in the 1950s in mostly urban areas such as the Prenzlauer Berg area of Berlin) began to develop an anti-utopian, postmodern poetry focused on language and the free-play of signifiers. For Emmerich, the development of GDR literature through these three phases represents a positive evolution from affirmation of GDR communism to partial criticism of the GDR to utter withdrawal from the realm of communist thought. In his articles following the *Wende*, Emmerich more or less maintains this view of GDR literature as progressing along this aesthetic trajectory.

In 1991, Emmerich published two similar articles, in which he retraced the trajectory laid out in his 1988 article in order to locate the genesis of what he calls *furor melancholicus*, that is, the profound melancholy of certain East German writers such as Christa Wolf and Stefan Heym in the face of the collapse of the GDR.⁴⁸ In addition to

⁴⁸ Wolfgang Emmerich. “Affirmation - Utopie - Melancholie. Versuch einer Bilanz von vierzig Jahren DDR-Literatur.” *German Studies Review*. Vol. 14, No.2 (May 1991). 325-344. “Status melancholicus. Zur Transformation der Utopie in der DDR-Literatur.” *Literatur in der DDR. Rückblicke. Text + Kritik*. Sonderband. München 1991. 232-245.

the loss of their lofty status as writers in the GDR, Emmerich posited, many GDR modernist writers, those of the middle generation, have become melancholic at the loss of the dream of socialist utopia. Such melancholy does not begin with the *Wende*, Emmerich maintains, but rather has been with the GDR modernist writers since they first realized that GDR communism had become staid with regard to their ideals, that is, the GDR progressed technologically and economically (for a time at least) but not so much towards a socialist utopia. Contrary to the GDR modernist writers, the poets of Prenzlauer Berg, Emmerich claims, are not melancholic because they were not plagued by utopian desires, but rather were able to break out of the socialist system of utopian thought.

In 1992, Emmerich called for a new approach to GDR literature. He described how previous studies of German literature have been unable to separate literature from politics. That is, they have sought either to defend the GDR or to attack it. In doing so, they have disregarded the wealth of methodological possibilities which may be able to shed new light on GDR literature qua literature. To be sure, Emmerich is not so naïve as to think that purely apolitical literary scholarship is possible or even desirable. Rather, he wants multiple methodological approaches, complete with their own plurality of political baggage. Emmerich sets himself apart from those scholars of GDR literature who focus primarily on the relationship between literary texts and important political dates and West German critics and feuilleton writers who have flippantly argued against any serious reading of GDR literature. The simultaneous application of varied literary methodologies

to GDR literature, Emmerich posited, will allow scholars to take GDR literature seriously without becoming bogged down in Cold War rhetoric.

The reception of Emmerich's essential scholarship has been variegated. David Bathrick, for example, has taken issue with Emmerich's use of Foucault to glorify the Prenzlauer Berg poets as resistance based on the fact that they stepped outside of the official discursive system of the GDR (that is, instead of giving modernist elements to a socialist literature, they abandoned socialist utopian thought all together and took discursive refuge in a postmodern, anti-utopian poetics).⁴⁹ These poets—and Emmerich with them—latched onto Foucault's criticism of discursive binaries to criticize the SED's dichotomous rhetoric of anti-fascist socialist realism versus fascist aesthetics (rhetoric derived largely from the literary criticism of Georg Lukács). Bathrick's criticism, which uses Foucault against Emmerich and the Prenzlauer Berg poets, maintains that any departure from a discursive system entirely—were it even possible—does not constitute resistance, but rather establishes a new binary of inside and outside. Bathrick's contention is that Foucault's paradigm omits the possibility for discursive subversion. Bathrick counters that writers such as Heiner Müller and Christa Wolf were actively working to change the discursive system by changing the code within the system. Bathrick uses Müller as his prime example largely because Müller, who had traveled to the United States, was familiar with Foucault and Foucauldian theories of discourse and power. Bathrick further extends this point by narrating the relationship that top Prenzlauer Berg poets Sascha Anderson and Rainer Schedlinski had with the *Stasi*.

⁴⁹ David Bathrick. *The Powers of Speech: The Politics of Culture in the GDR*. University of Nebraska Press, 1995. 22-23.

While Heiner Müller and Christa Wolf worked briefly with the *Stasi* and provided them with little useful information, Anderson worked with the *Stasi* for twenty years and provided them with incriminating information about fellow Prenzlauer Berg poets. Anderson continued providing the *Stasi* with information even after he emigrated to the West. Similarly, the Prenzlauer Berg poet, Rainer Schedlinski worked with the *Stasi* for about fifteen years and provided them with a wealth of incriminating information.

Bathrick describes instead the works of those writers—whom Emmerich would call modernists—who work within the frame of Marxism.⁵⁰ Heiner Müller and Christa Wolf, for example, were consciously working inside of the realm of Marxism in order to open up an alternative discursive space for it to operate anew. The alternative space was needed to propel Marxism forward, especially since Stalinism had rendered it static. The middle and largest section of Bathrick's book describes the theater of Heiner Müller and explains how Müller's break with his teacher Brecht is not an instance of Müller leaving the family of socialist thought, but is rather—in the words of Müller himself—*Vatermord* [patricide]. Having realized that Brechtian methods had become shopworn and inefficient within the context of the GDR, Müller thought that the Brechtian move would be to be to expand those methods until they created something new altogether. Bathrick also describes the events surrounding the punishments of dissidents such as Robert Havemann, Wolf Biermann, and Rudolph Bahro, each of whom intended not to sabotage GDR socialism but rather, as devout socialists, wished to provide it with constructive

⁵⁰ Bathrick's argument is to some extent foreshadowed by Martin Kane in his article, "From Oobliadooh to Prenzlauer Berg: Literature, Alternative Lifestyle and Identity in the GDR." *Geist und Macht: Writers and the State in the GDR*. German Monitor. Axel Goodbody and Dennis Tate (Eds.). Amsterdam; Atlanta: Rodopi, 1992. 90-103.

criticism. Furthermore, Bathrick describes the reception of two ostensibly unrelated bodies of writing in the GDR: the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm and the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. The act of receiving these two bodies of writing more positively in the later GDR, Bathrick argues, was to provide an avenue for stepping outside of Lukacs's dichotomy of rationalism, Classicism, realism, socialism, and Marxist-Leninism, on the one hand, and irrationalism, Romanticism, modernism, capitalism, and fascism, on the other hand. The positive, thoughtful, and cautious reception of fairy tales and Nietzschean philosophy by some socialist thinkers in the GDR was not an attempt to overthrow socialist thought with capitalism or fascism, Bathrick claims, but rather an attempt to appropriate these modes of thought for socialism in order to reinfuse socialist thought with a sense of progress and utopia.

Like Bathrick, Julia Hell also takes issue with Emmerich's teleological view of GDR literary history. Whereas Bathrick criticizes the later part of the progression conceived by Emmerich, Hell takes issue with Emmerich's simplified view of the earlier GDR writings. For Hell, socialist realist literature never existed in the GDR in a pure form. In other words, most GDR literature of the 1950s also contained some elements of modernism. In her 1997 book *Post-Fascist Fantasies: Psychoanalysis, History, and the Literature of East Germany*,⁵¹ Hell explodes the dichotomy of socialist realism versus modernism long applied to GDR literature by Western critics in order to separate "good" GDR literature from the affirmative literature of *Parteilichkeit*. According to Hell, such a teleological dichotomy is limiting. She argues that there are some elements of

⁵¹ Julia Hell. *Post-Fascist Fantasies*. Duke UP, 1997.

modernism in the GDR classics of socialist realism and even questions the existence of a pure socialist realist aesthetic within the context of the GDR. Instead of reading the literature of the GDR as a dichotomy of socialist realism versus modernism, Hell proposes a psychoanalytic reading that locates subconscious, corporeal, sexual, and oedipal elements in the founding narratives of anti-fascism and posits later literary works of the GDR as subconscious responses. The *Ankunftsromane* comprise a first wave of such responses. The works of Christa Wolf comprise a second such wave.

Hell's psychoanalytic reading of GDR literary history is equally important in that it locates ideology outside of aesthetic prescriptions that have been debated since the 1930s. Hell's book is also insightful, as it lays out the contours of literary historical scholarship of the GDR since German reunification. It discusses the rush to condemn authors such as Christa Wolf as Stalinist collaborators and to dismiss GDR literature in its entirety as having no aesthetic value. She goes on to discuss Emmerich's call to historicize within GDR literature that led to a useful, yet ultimately artificial, periodization of GDR literature, a teleological literary history taken up later by feminists, Hell observes, who wished to parse feminist modernist texts from earlier socialist realist texts. Like Emmerich, Hell's calls readers to see GDR literature in a variety of new ways, one of which is her psychoanalytic reading. If Hell can be seen in this way, then it opens the door for scholars to locate ideology in other places in GDR literature besides in a state sanctioned aesthetics (as many have done). Hell's call for a radical rereading of GDR literature and David Bathrick's (Bathrick is not mentioned in Hell's book) response to Wolfgang Emmerich that real dissent means rewriting ideological code from within the code both lead the way for scholars to read the ideological code that has been written and

rewritten in a wide variety of objects, events, and spaces. Thus, the literature of the GDR should not be forgotten as many post-“Wende” critics have asserted. Instead, the richness of GDR literature should be excavated anew.

Like Bathrick and Hell, Thomas Fox provides a reading of GDR literature that would not have been possible before 1989. He is interested in what is absent in early GDR literature. In *Stated Memory: East Germany and the Holocaust*,⁵² Fox illustrates the relatively large absence of Jews and Judaism in the GDR discourse on the Holocaust. Although Fox also examines this absence in political rhetoric, museums, and classrooms, the volume's lengthiest chapter deals with literary and cinematic representations of the Holocaust in the GDR. Due to the nature of the GDR and its “stated” discourse, however, Fox must trudge through swamps of history and rhetoric before he can appropriately situate the literary and cinematic works in their context. After all, these works, in part, help constitute (and at times complicate) the “stated” discourse.

Fox's book shows a trajectory from anti-fascist “stated” works on the Communist hero and an absence of the Jew (except as an infantilized being that is rescued by Communists) to more complicated narratives and a greater willingness to address the role of Jews in the Holocaust. This trajectory almost parallels the one that Wolfgang Emmerich creates in several of his works, but it is, at the same time, quite different. Whereas Emmerich outlines many texts in the GDR historical context, Fox reads a few texts for the way that they remember events that happened before the advent of the GDR. Fox's book may be seen as providing a flipside of Hell's argument. Hell focuses on what is included in the “post-fascist fantasy,” while Fox focuses on what is absent from that

⁵² Thomas Fox. *Stated Memory: East Germany and the Holocaust*. Rochester: Camden House, 1999. Wolfgang Emmerich. *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*. Berlin: Aufbau, 2000.

fantasy, namely the murder of six million Jews by Germans including some Germans who were later citizens of the GDR. Fox does not make use of Hell's psychoanalytic theoretical framework. Instead, he uses a subtly New Historicist approach. Fox's willingness to admit the complication of GDR discourse on the Holocaust in the 1970s and 1980s, along with his explicit mention of Foucault, touches base with David Bathrick's book *Powers of Speeches: The Politics of Culture in the German Democratic Republic*. Fox and Bathrick both argue that, at times, the complication and ambiguity of the GDR's "stated" discourse were capable of creating dissent. My dissertation shares much with the studies by Bathrick, Hell, and especially that by Fox. Before elaborating those connections and discontinuities, it is in order to mention a study that responds to Emmerich in an entirely different way.

Unlike Emmerich, Bathrick, Hell, and Fox, Benjamin Robinson⁵³ does not consider the historical distance between current scholars and GDR to be solely virtuous. Instead, Robinson wishes to understand socialist modernity, particularly in its GDR form, on its own terms. Robinson uses the works of Franz Fühmann to understand the alternate modernity of the GDR, particularly its economic system. Robinson turns to Niklas Luhmann and systems theory, as well as to Plato, Aristotle, and other ancient Greek philosophers, to examine the long overlooked author Franz Fühmann for the sake of understanding the possibility of systemic economic change, given Fühmann's biographical sudden conversion from fascism to socialism and his representation of such conversions in his fictional works. Whereas Christa Wolf is concerned with pinpointing the subject, coming to oneself, Franz Fühmann, Robinson maintains, is concerned with

⁵³ Benjamin Robinson. *The Skin of the System: On Germany's Socialist Modernity*. Stanford UP, 2009.

disrupting the subject, getting outside of oneself, conversion. Fühmann's sensitivity to subjects submitting to systems and his literary representations of such submission allows Robinson to better understand the system of GDR modernity. Robinson's work appears to follow Emmerich's call to use developments in literary methodology to study GDR literature. Indeed, Robinson's systems theory approach to GDR literature offers unparalleled insight into competing modernities: fascism, socialism, capitalism. He is able to show that each of these economic systems is held together by an enforcement mechanism: for fascism the camp, for socialism the plan, and for capitalism the law. Robinson's study also shares with that of Emmerich an implicit disdain for writers such as Christa Wolf, that is, those who are interested in subjectivity. However, Robinson's study also represents a sharp break with Emmerich, in that Robinson wishes not to use hindsight to historicize GDR literature in itself, but is, instead, concerned with understanding the GDR (economic) system itself on its own terms.

My contribution to GDR literary history, in part, continues Fox's narrative of the use of canonical literary texts as monuments. Both Fox and I insist that heritage is invented and fluid. Whereas Fox is concerned primarily with the construction of "stated" memory, I am concerned with its unraveling. There are, however, other distinctions between these two studies that are worth mentioning. These distinctions stem, in part, from the respective literary historical periods under examination. Whereas the topic of Fox's study is "stated" representations of the Holocaust, the topic of this study is un-"stated" literary representations of suicide. Fox is concerned with the role of the heritage in developing ways of not mentioning taboo topics. This study is concerned with the role of the literary heritage in mentioning the taboo topic of suicide, a process that thereby

disrupted the literary heritage. In short, this study focuses on stories and the ways in which they are transformed. Such an approach also aligns somewhat with those of Bathrick (with his interest in the coopting of stories), and Hell (with her rendering of the transformation of family narratives). Although Emmerich led the way for rereading GDR literature with new methodologies, and although Robinson's approach provides an unparalleled study of GDR society, Bathrick, Hell, and Fox, in part, guide this study's assumptions about the relationship between history and literature. This study, however, also utilizes a different methodology.

Methodology

In order to illuminate the ways in which GDR fictional suicides disrupted the literary heritage of the GDR, the dissertation examines relationships among texts both canonical and non-canonical. The theoretical approaches used in this study are indebted primarily to the French structuralist and father of narratology, Gérard Genette, whose taxonomy of the relationships among texts is broadly called transtextuality. Equally important for this dissertation's methodology is Soviet literary historian and semiotician Yuri Lotman's dynamic, historically-informed semiotics. Genette's transtextuality expands Julia Kristeva's intertextuality to explicate relationships among texts beyond the scope of intertextuality. Kristeva, influenced by Bakhtin's notion of dialogism, coined the term intertextuality in 1966. Her term was quickly taken up by post-structuralists such as Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, who along with Kristeva celebrated the "death of the author" and made a large ideological step, but did not necessarily do much in terms of creating methodological tools with which the literary critic can differentiate

among different types of intertextual relationships or determine the greater ramifications of such varying relationships. Whereas Kristeva's "intertextuality" illustrates that the textual is always inherently intertextual, Genette's "transtextuality" allows for the explanation of specific types of transformation in specific texts. This taxonomy belongs to the greater methodology known as narratology that has done much to taxonomize various literary elements and devices and, more recently, has stepped outside of the narrow realm of the synchronic to ask what sorts of implications various narrative elements have for history and memory (most notably Mieke Bal and Ansgar Nünning). The intersection of narratology and intertextuality thus provides a starting point for defining, excavating, and distinguishing among different types of intertextual relationships. This intersection is represented largely by the French theorist Gérard Genette, who expands the notion of intertextuality and distinguishes among five different types of transtextual relationships:

- 1) "Kristevan" intertextuality (allusion, quotation, plagiarism);
- 2) paratextuality ("a title, a subtitle, intertitles; prefaces, postfaces, notices, forewords, etc.; marginal, intrapaginal, terminal notes; epigraphs; illustrations; blurbs, book covers, dust jackets, and many other kinds of secondary signals, whether allographic or autographic");⁵⁴
- 3) metatextuality (commentary);
- 4) hypertextuality (which is further explained below);
- 5) architextuality (genre, structures).

⁵⁴ Gérard Genette. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Trans.). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. 3-4.

Of these five forms of transtextuality, it is the fourth category that is most important for this study. Hypertextuality for Genette is complex. He focuses on distinguishing among various types of relationships within the type of transtextuality that he calls hypertextuality, within which he distinguishes among parody, travesty, pastiche, caricature, forgery, and serious transformation, the latter of which is the subject of the second half of *Palimpsests*. Serious (serious as opposed to humorous) transformation is the primary type of hypertextual relationship that is examined in this study in order to describe fictional, transtextual suicides in the GDR. Serious transformation is also divided into several subcategories. The subcategories that are most important for this study include proximation, vocalization, and transvaluation. Genette's typologies provide a starting point into defining the ways that the texts at hand make use of other texts to explore the defiant possibilities of fictional suicide in the context of the GDR in the 1970s and 1980s. Genette writes that works of serious transformation are usually of great historical importance, and the works included in this study confirm Genette's statement. In other words, Genette's open structuralist, preliminary approach can dig into deeper, more relevant issues of memory, fictionality, and power.⁵⁵

Although Genette's taxonomy of hypertextuality is a rich toolbox for this study, I augment it with the works of the Russian/Estonian semiotician and literary historian Yuri Lotman, as they are useful for explaining the subversive political ramifications of what Genette calls serious transformation. Indeed, Julia Kristeva claimed that Lotman's works brought down the Berlin Wall.⁵⁶ Kristeva was in a unique position to appreciate Lotman,

⁵⁵ This is a point made on several occasions by the German narratologist Ansgar Nünning.

⁵⁶ Julia Kristeva. "On Yuri Lotman." *PMLA*. Martha Noel Evans (Trans.). 3 (May 1994). 375.

as she had been exposed to both Russian formalism and French structuralism and could read Lotman in the original. Of course, Kristeva did not mean that Lotman had damaged the Wall with a hammer and chisel, but rather that his work on semantic border-crossings and dynamic sign systems and his engagement with both Eastern and Western models of semiotics had made it increasingly difficult to maintain an intellectual iron curtain. Indeed, Lotman realized that signs are dynamic and contextual. That is, they are situated in history and in space, and they are constantly being transformed.

Already in 1970,⁵⁷ Lotman posited that signs change as they cross borders certain borders and that such metamorphoses of signs comprises the *sujet* (the event), the basic building block of narrative. Spatial directions (up/down, left/right, north/south), as well as specific spaces always have associations attached to them. Thus, as Gustav von Aschenbach, for example, travels from north to south, his characteristics change with the changing landscapes.⁵⁸ Such a notion of spatial semantics has far-reaching implications for narratology. It views narrative not solely as temporal but also as spatial. Lotman's theorizing of signs in space, however, developed far beyond this notion.

In *Universe of the Mind*,⁵⁹ Lotman maps out what he calls the semiosphere, the space that makes semiosis, the creation of meaning, possible. Lotman defines the semiosphere as follows: "the semiotic space necessary for the existence and functioning of languages, not the sum total of different languages; in a sense the semiosphere has a

⁵⁷ Yuri Lotman. *The Structure of the Artistic Text*. Ronald Vroon and Gail Vroon (Trans.). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977. Originally published in 1970.

⁵⁸ Matias Martinez. "Cholera and regressive Transcendence. Thomas Mann, *Der Tod in Venedig* (1912)." *Doppelte Welten: Struktur und Sinn zweideutigen Erzählens*. 162-165.

⁵⁹ Yuri Lotman. *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*. Ann Shukman (Trans.). Indiana UP, 1990.

prior existence and is in constant interaction with languages. [...] a generator of information.”⁶⁰ The semiosphere has five characteristics. Edna Andrews summarizes them as follows: “*heterogeneity* of the space, *asymmetry* of internal structures, *binariness* of internal and external spaces, *boundaries* defined as bilingual filters that allow for the exchange of semiotic processes, and the ‘development of a metalanguage’ as the final act of the system’s structural organization.”⁶¹ In short, the semiosphere is the space in which signs interact in order to generate meaning. *Universe of the Mind* is divided systematically into three parts: “the text as a meaning-generating mechanism;” “the semiosphere;” and “cultural memory, history, and semiotics.” These topics of these three parts may be described respectively as: the sign, the space around the sign, and historical semiotics, the latter section providing a philosophy of history that takes into account alternate possibilities, a philosophy of history radically different from the teleological one generally associated with the Eastern European communist tradition. Lotman would later go on to elaborate on the dynamic nature of signs.

In *Culture and Explosion*,⁶² Lotman further investigates unpredictability. He divides semiotic change into two categories: gradual and explosive. Explosion, Lotman describes, is the radical, unpredictable semiotic change that is possible when two semiospheres collide. While Lotman uses examples primarily from 18th and 19th century Russian literature, it is clear that his theories also describe changes at work in contemporary Russian history, as he composed the volume the year after the collapse of

⁶⁰ *ibid.* 123, 127.

⁶¹ Edna Andrews. “Introduction.” *Culture and Explosion*. Wilma Clark (Trans.). Berlin; New York: de Gruyter, 2009.

⁶² Yuri Lotman. *Culture and Explosion*. Wilma Clark (Trans.). Berlin; New York: de Gruyter, 2009.

the Soviet Union, an event that was certainly an explosive change. In fact, Lotman makes this relevance explicit.⁶³ Lotman's notion of explosion, combined with his notions of the semiosphere and dialogue mechanisms—the latter being a way of understanding patterns in cultural production—are useful for this study in it allows for clearer understanding of the ways in which the intertextual relationships under examination affect both GDR literary heritage and the idea of suicide in the GDR.

Using Genette's hypertextuality and Lotman's semiotics, I attempt to answer the questions: How are the suicides in GDR fiction transformations of other suicide narrative? And furthermore, how do these narratives subvert the literary heritage of the GDR? What is transformed in these narratives of suicide, and how are the transformations narrated? How, furthermore, is the literary heritage itself transformed? In other words, how does the reception of classic works in Western literature dealing with suicide combined with the GDR literary heritage form a notion of suicide in the GDR imagination, and how do literary works that deal with suicide in the GDR after Honecker's "no taboos" speech perpetuate, complicate, or otherwise make use of that discourse? In short, there are two major concerns that inform the queries in this dissertation: 1) the transformations in the works, and 2) the transformations in literary heritage instigated by the transformations in the works. A narratological toolbox is applied to both of these two priorities. Whereas a narratology of *sujet* (the narrative event, what is narrated) is used to approach the first issue, a diachronically informed narratology of the relationships among texts (transtextuality) is used to approach the second issue. The latter approach, however, can also be explained in terms of *sujet*. If

⁶³ *ibid.* 171.

the *sujet* is, as Yuri Lotman explains, the crossing of a border and the semiotic ramifications thereof, then the reception of texts and the creation and manipulation of literary heritage is also a narrative, as the changes in the ways these texts are read have wide-ranging semiotic ramifications.⁶⁴ The relationship between these two matters confirms transtextuality's place in narratology. As historical research engages the archive of political documents, communiqués, speeches, and census records, this study delves into the archive of (canonical) European literature that would have been read by the writers and readers of the works that under examination in this study. It is then asked: What are the relationships between such texts and the texts under examination? Such an emphasis on the transtextual allows for an approach to dealing with the role of suicide in the East German literary imagination without ignoring the literariness of literary works and without completely ignoring history. And, furthermore, it allows us to look at the challenges to literary heritage that frame core concerns for GDR studies—power and resistance—in new and illuminating ways.

Using these methods and theories, my unique contribution to GDR literature studies consists of close readings of four fictional texts that appeared in Honecker's GDR in order to show qualitatively that these texts are not such simple exercises in literary realism, but that these fictional suicides engage other fictional suicides, thereby disrupting GDR literary heritage. In other words, these transtextual works about suicide are political, and they do interact with history, although not in the vein of realism, as Rohrwasser and Zimmermann imply. Again, the strength of the defiance involved in fictional suicides in the GDR—as with many defiant narratives in the GDR—derives

⁶⁴ Jurij Lotman. *Die Struktur literarischer Texte*. Rolf-Dietrich Keil (Trans.). Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1993. 356.

largely from transtextuality. In a (literary) culture so heavily laid out in terms of “kulturelles Erbe,” where the Lukacsian dichotomy of realism versus modernism was, on the surface, so pervasive, it should come as no surprise that subtle uses of transtextuality (by both the writer and the reader) provided a weighty source of dissent. Through their relationship to both sanctioned and unsanctioned literary texts, these fictional suicides subvert the official literary heritage of the GDR.

Text Selection

The texts under examination in this study include those written in the GDR between Honecker’s ascendance to power and subsequent “No Taboos” speech in 1971 and the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, although the publication of the final work under examination parallels historically the ascendance of Mikhail Gorbachev to power in the Soviet Union in 1985 and his subsequent implementation of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*. This is the period in which the overwhelming majority of GDR works dealing with suicide were written and published. I also argue that it is also a period of severe crisis in GDR literary heritage. As will be shown, the works under examination all have strong transtextual elements that disrupt the official literary heritage of the GDR. They are all works of narrative fiction. The reason for focusing on narrative is two-fold. First, the focus is on transformation, and narrative is by definition transformation. Suicide, furthermore, is a narrative event with narrative consequences and, often, represents a node of transformation. Second, the small amount of work that nearly

approaches intertextuality and suicide in GDR literature focuses on poetry and drama,⁶⁵ while most of the work on suicide in GDR narrative fiction focuses on direct reflections of GDR society. Thus, the focus on transformation, both in the individual works and in the GDR literary heritage, regarding suicide and narrative fiction fills in a glaring gap in the study of GDR literature. This study also focuses necessarily on works of fiction, as opposed to accounts of real suicide, and works written by writers in the predicament of living in the GDR who were – although they may have been committed socialists – not apparatchiks. In short, I focus on works of narrative fiction in Honecker’s GDR with strong transtextual elements dealing with suicide.

The foci of this study necessarily neglect many GDR works that deal with suicide. Most such works that lie outside of the scope of this study, however, do so on multiple grounds. There are works of poetry and drama that include literary suicides and merit study. Examples of this abound in the works of Heiner Müller. However, the study of these works requires a different lens than the narratologically informed approach that I propose. These works are also substantial enough to require a separate study. Works of non-fiction such as Sybille Muthesius’s book *Flucht in die Wolken* (1981) are also excluded. Muthesius’s work, however, also lacks a strong transtextual component. Works written and published in the Federal Republic of Germany by authors who had previously lived in the German Democratic Republic – for example, Thomas Brasch’s *Vor den Vätern sterben die Söhne* (1977), Jurek Becker’s *Aller Welt Freund* (1982), and Einar Schleef’s *Die Bande* (1982) – are not included in the study. However, they also do

⁶⁵ Ruth J. Owen. “Claiming the Body: The Ophelia Myth in the GDR.” *The Germanic Review*. 82.3 (2007). 251-267. Jonathan Kalb. “Müller as Mayakovsky.” *The Theater of Heiner Müller*. Cambridge UP, 1998. 57-86.

not tend towards strong transtextuality. Also, these authors, while living and writing in the Federal Republic, did not have to face censorship in the way that authors living and publishing in the GDR did. This is perhaps related to their relative lack of transtextuality. Due to the nature of the questions asked in this study, works written by apparatchiks, works that deal with suicide but which do so in a largely Party-affirmative manner, such as Günter Görlich's novel *Eine Anzeige in der Zeitung* (1978), are not included in the study. While studies of the suicides in these works are much needed, they, however, necessarily lie outside of the methodological scope of this current study.

This dissertation is comprised of four main chapters. Each chapter focuses on one GDR author and its primary hypotext: Ulrich Plenzdorf (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe), Werner Heiduczek (Thomas Mann), Christa Wolf (Heinrich von Kleist), and Christoph Hein (William Shakespeare). Chapter One deals with Plenzdorf's novel *Die Leiden des jungen W.* (1973), which emerged two years after Erich Honecker told writers and artists that there were to be no taboos, so long as they started from the standpoint of socialism. It is the first major instance of fictional suicide in East German literature, responding to Erich Honecker's "No Taboos" Speech of December 1971 as well as to other aspects of the transformation of power from Ulbricht to Honecker. It tells the story of seventeen year-old Edgar Wibeau, who after quarreling with his boss, leaves his apprenticeship and moves into his friend's gardenhouse (*Wohnlaube*) where he finds a copy of Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (1774). Edgar finds the small, paperback version of the book in the bathroom in the dark. After a bowel movement, Edgar uses the first few pages of the book, that is, the title page, the copyright page, and any commentary as toilet paper. Later Edgar reads the epistolary novel, without knowing even the title or author of the

book. This context is flushed down the toilet for Edgar, but not for the reader. After killing himself trying to create an electric paint machine to help his construction brigade, Edgar tells his story—with the help of several documents and several people who knew Edgar—from beyond the grave. Focusing on the shared trope of fluidity, I examine how the hypotext to Plenzdorf's work serves as the very means of subverting literary heritage.

Chapter Two queries Heiduczek's 1977 novel *Tod am Meer*, which is a reworking of Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* in which the dying main character narrates his own downfall. It is an epistolary novel consisting of a lengthy letter preceded by a fictional editor's introduction and followed by three statements about the letter writer, Jablonski, by people who knew him personally. The reader is informed, both in the first sentence by the fictional editor and by the last sentence of the last of the three statements, that Jablonski is dead. Jablonski's death, however, is somewhat ambiguous. A physician declares Jablonski's official cause of death to be a hemorrhage of the brain. The reader is also led to ponder, however, whether Jablonski's death might be a suicide, given his seemingly hopeless state of existence and his allusions to two other famous victims of suicide: Werther and Mayakovsky. In light of the obvious titular (paratextual) relationship of Heiduczek's novel with Thomas Mann's novella, *Tod in Venedig*, I argue that the former as a hypertextual transformation of the latter. It is imperative to read *Tod am Meer* alongside Aschenbach's vainglorious insistence upon staying in Venice despite the epidemic outbreak of Asiatic cholera, in order to be around the boy that he knows he cannot have. Jablonski, like Aschenbach, is a writer who travels to the beach for vacation and recuperation. Jablonski's reluctance to leave the hospital, combined with his painful life story, then, becomes a metaphor for the dogmatic and suicidal path of Marxism-

Leninism in the GDR. Furthermore, Jablonski is trained as a biographer of Stalin, whose life, much like that of Jablonski, has much to say about the self-destructive nature of the Party.

Chapter Three examines radical transvaluation in Wolf's *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, written in 1977 and published in 1979, describes a fictional meeting in 1804 between the early Romantic writers Heinrich von Kleist and Karoline von Günderode both of whom committed suicide. The book contains virtually no plot. Instead, the writers—along with other historical figures such as Kleist's personal doctor Wedekind, Clemens Brentano, and Bettina von Arnim—discuss issues such as reasons for writing, emotions versus pragmatism, Kleist's trip to Paris, the Prussian fatherland, and so on. Kleist and Günderode, who upon meeting for the first time feel as though they have some connection to one another, leave the group to converse alone. They reevaluate Goethe's classism and also discuss *Werther* and suicide. The narrator finally informs the reader at the end of the book, "Wir wissen, was kommt" (151). This event that the reader knows is to come is the double suicide of Kleist and Günderode. *Kein Ort. Nirgends* is quite explicit about the event of suicide. Having appeared at a time in which GDR writers led a difficult existence (i.e., after the Biermann Affair), *Kein Ort. Nirgends* has traditionally been read, at least in part, as either a feminist text or as an allegory of the GDR writers' existence and the end of utopia. The title of the book even alludes to the non-place of utopia. Kleist and Günderode were largely outsiders in German society of their day. Wolf's tale may also be seen, however, as a rather complicated form of serious transformation. It rips two historical characters with clear historical contexts partially out of those contexts, fictionalizes parts of their biographies, has them plagiarize themselves,

and sets them into the context of the GDR. In addition, these two characters all the while reevaluate literary heritage of their own day. This study examines how the novel and portrays Kleist and G nderrode querying literary history in a way that parallels the novel.

Chapter Four examines Hein’s 1985 novel *Horns Ende*, with its five characters’ accounts of the time surrounding Horn’s suicide in the 1950s. In addition to the chopped up and interspersed narrative accounts of Horn, there is a dialogue in eight sections (one for each chapter) between Thomas and the long-dead Horn, who demands that Thomas not forget the past. The titular character, Horn, who is not one of the narrators, except in the dialogue, is the director of the museum in Bad Guldenberg, the small town where the novel takes place. Horn is reprimanded for creating a museum display that some of the authorities find to be opposed to the project of socialism. The key to reading *Horns Ende* is the interspersed dialogue between the long dead Horn (who speaks from the dead) and the now aging Thomas. A focus on this dialogue reveals that Horn’s suicide leads to an act of communication with a ghost that ultimately propels change. His museum project is perhaps an attempt at communication. When it fails, he hangs himself. Horn’s suicide communicates something to each of the five narrators and especially to Thomas. Each of the narrators—and even the town of Bad Guldenberg— has been changed by Horn, his suicide, and his haunting. Reading Horn’s ghost’s statements requires inquiry into the nature of haunting. Horn’s ghost’s haunting is remarkably similar to that of the ghost of Hamlet’s father. “Erinnere dich,” the ghost of historian and museum director Horn commands Thomas, the boy who finds Horn’s body, in the first two words of the novel. These are virtually the same words that the ghost of Hamlet’s father utters to his son:

“Remember me”.⁶⁶ My reading of the novel thus sees Horn’s ghost as a vessel of subversive, intergenerational memory, a way of disturbing, not dissimilar to that of the ghost of Hamlet’s father. While Lukács views *Hamlet* as a play about history, I show how the novel utilizes aspects of the play that emphasize memory.

The final chapter serves as a conclusion, asking what role suicide played in the GDR narrative fiction of the 1970s and 1980 and shows that these fictional suicides, rather than being mere historicist reflections of suicides in GDR society, function to transform and disrupt the official literary heritage of that country. The title of this dissertation, “Transforming Suicides,” has at least four meanings: 1) fictional suicides that proximate and transform fictional suicides from European literature into the context of the GDR, 2) suicides that, as narrative events, transform—or function as a catalyst for the transformation of—something intradiegetically, that is, within the narrative world at hand, 3) fictional suicides that transform the role of suicide in the East German imagination, and 4) suicides that transform the literary heritage of the GDR. These four meanings, however, are all interconnected. They all indicate that the narrative event of suicide has narrative, but also literary historical, consequences. Such narrative and literary historical transformation, I ultimately argue, is much more subversive than the admittedly subversive act of implying that people killed themselves in the GDR.

Such transforming suicides, however, were not always present in GDR literature. This dissertation picks up the narrative of fictional suicides in GDR literature at the point at which they become transforming suicides. This is also the point at which the history of fictional suicides in GDR literature and the history of the unraveling of the official

⁶⁶ William Shakespeare. *Hamlet*. 1.5.95.

literary history of the GDR begin to run closely parallel to one another, namely after Honecker's "No Taboos" speech. Honecker's nominal dispensing of taboos in GDR literature opened the way for both suicide in GDR literature and the reevaluation of GDR literary history through works of GDR fiction.

Chapter One

Literary Heritage and Fluidity: Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*

...the habitual movement of diegetic transposition is a movement of proximation: the hypertext transposes the diegesis of its hypotext to bring it up to date and closer to its audience (in temporal, geographic, or social terms).
Gérard Genette⁶⁷

Rereading Literary Heritage

The publication of Ulrich Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* caused an uproar.⁶⁸ While many young adult readers, in East Germany and West Germany alike, awarded the book cult status, many GDR apparatchiks lambasted it. The division of opinion in early GDR criticism of the novel may be demonstrated by juxtaposing lawyer and mystery writer Friedrich Karl Kaul's letter to the editor of *Sinn und Form*, Wilhelm Girnus, on June 12, 1972. Kaul makes his opinion clear:

Um mein Urteil knapp zu fassen: Mich ekelt geradezu—um keinen anderen

Ausdruck zu benutzen—die von einem unserer professionellen Theaterkritiker

⁶⁷ Gérard Genette. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Trans.). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. 304.

⁶⁸ Dieter Sevin declared: "Neben Christa Wolfs erstem erfolgreichen Werk *Der geteilte Himmel* wurde kaum ein anderes literarisches Werk bei seiner Veröffentlichung in der DDR mit so viel Furore rezipiert wie Ulrich Plenzdorfs *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*". Dieter Sevin. *Textstrategien in DDR-Prosawerken zwischen Bau und Durchbruch der Berliner Mauer*. Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1994. 82. Gundula M. Sharman went so far as to compare the impact of the publication of Plenzdorf's novel with that of Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*. Gundula Sharman. *Twentieth-century Reworkings of German Literature: An Analysis of Six Fictional Reinterpretations from Goethe to Thomas Mann*. Rochester: Camden House, 2002. 124.

sogar noch „mehr als ein hübscher Einfall“ laudierte Inbezugsetzung eines verwehrlosten—der Fachmann würde sagen: „verhaltensgestörten“ Jugendlichen mit der Goetheschen Romanfigur an; von dem Fäkalien-Vokabular, in dem des langen und breiten über die innige Funktionsverbindung von Niere und Darm der Plenzdorfschen Figur abgehandelt wird, ganz zu schweigen.⁶⁹

Kaul does not like the juxtaposition of Goethe with youth culture and with scatological images. This is indicative of the extent to which Goethe had become a “sacred cow” in GDR cultural politics, in part as a result of the writings of Georg Lukács. It is paradoxical, furthermore, that Kaul uses an abjective metaphor in order to describe his disgust with the abjection in Plenzdorf’s novel. Kaul goes on to declare that Edgar Wibeau is not representative of the youth in the GDR, indicating perhaps how distant GDR cultural authorities had become from both GDR youth culture and the works of literature that those authorities so fiercely defended.

Writer Stephan Hermlin’s response to Kaul in *Sinn und Form* in 1973⁷⁰ and with a statement made about the novel by a secondary school student named Monika Sch. Stephan Hermlin’s response makes two points. First, that the dichotomy of healthy versus sick literature is problematic, as each person views himself as healthy. Second, that Kaul, whom Hermlin knew personally, was, in fact, profoundly out of touch with young people in the GDR. In the Federal Republic, the journalistic criticism tended to argue that Plenzdorf had created a new style of writing, a new relationship to language (Fritz J. Raddatz), or that the novel is of questionable literary value, but is still important

⁶⁹ Friedrich Karl Kaul. Letter. *Sinn und Form*. 24 (1972) 219-220.

⁷⁰ Stephan Hermlin. *Sinn und Form*. 25 (1973). 244.

as it articulates a new type of subversion (Marcel Reich-Ranicki). The most telling of journalistic pronouncements on the novel is a statement by a secondary school student named Monika Sch. During an interview by the periodical *Neue Deutsche Literatur* with Monika, two university students, and a construction apprentice. Monika declares:

Zum erstenmal haben die unter die Tischdecke geguckt! Sonst sieht alles immer von oben so schön glatt aus und so schön weiß! [...] Edgar will eben nicht immer alles nach Plan machen. Bei uns ist alles zu sehr im voraus organisiert, die Ausbildung, der ganze Lebensweg. [...] Immer den geraden Weg so langgehn, der so schön vorgeschrieben ist und glatt, das hat ihm nicht gefallen, deshalb ist er in diese Laube gegangen nach Berlin.⁷¹

Monika describes an act of looking under the proverbial tablecloth that takes place with Plenzdorf's novel. Although she likely means a tablecloth of GDR youth culture, an idea that is not inaccurate, her statement also applies entirely to the tablecloth of GDR literary heritage. Building upon Hermlin and Monika Sch., I read Plenzdorf's novel as an indication that readings of canonical texts change over time with the changing perspective of the reader, a fact that proved problematic for the staid literary heritage of the GDR. Peter J. Brenner posited that large impact of Plenzdorf's novel can be traced back to two issues: its exposure of the problem between the individual and society in the GDR, especially the role of the youth individual in GDR society, and its use of a classic text for as a tool for dealing with contemporary problems.⁷² Michael Douglas Schleihau

⁷¹ "Der neue Werther. Ein Gespräch." *Neue Deutsche Literatur*. 21.3 (1973). 139.

⁷² Peter J. Brenner. *Plenzdorf's "Neue Leiden des jungen W."* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982. 21.

Zimmermann has addressed Brenner's first point, but the second point is crucial and demands examination.

In May 1971, Erich Honecker—at the time relatively young—came to power in the GDR, replacing Walter Ulbricht as the First Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party (SED), and promised a new approach to cultural politics. In 1965, at the infamous Eleventh Plenum, Ulbricht had declared, for example, that rock-and-roll music is the “Monotonie des Je-Je-Je”⁷³ and virtually wiped out the GDR's entire year's production of film. In December 1971, in an apparent effort to enliven GDR cultural production in the aftermath of Ulbricht's heavy-handed censorship, Honecker, the former leader of the Free German Youth (FDJ), declared that there were to be no taboos in German literature as long as the writer started firmly from the standpoint of socialism.

Wenn man von der festen Position des Sozialismus ausgeht, kann es meines Erachtens auf dem Gebiet von Kunst und Literatur keine Tabus geben. Das betrifft sowohl die Fragen der inhaltlichen Gestaltung als auch des Stils—kurz gesagt: die Fragen dessen, was man die künstlerische Meisterschaft nennt.⁷⁴

This declaration only thinly concealed who (the Party) would decide which authors begin from the standpoint of socialism. As is often pointed out in scholarship on *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*, the novel is in part a response to Honecker's declaration. Suicide was no doubt a taboo topic in the GDR, one that Plenzdorf also addresses in the film he

⁷³ “Ist es denn wirklich so, dass wir jeden Dreck, der vom Westen kommt, nur kopieren müssen? Ich denke, Genossen, mit der Monotonie des Je-Je-Je, und wie das alles heißt, ja, sollte man doch Schluss machen.” The allusion “Je-Je-Je” is to the Beatles's 1963 song line “She loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah.” Walter Ulbricht. SED Archives (IfGA/ZPA). IV 2.1. 190.

⁷⁴ Cited in *Neues Deutschland*. December 18, 1971.

made with Heiner Carow *Die Legende von Paul und Paula*.⁷⁵ With *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*, Plenzdorf was also flirting with the taboo of reading canonical texts in a humorous, though entirely serious, light.

Edgar's reading of Goethe is a subversive case of proximation. In fact, Gérard Genette also notes this matter. He uses Plenzdorf's novel in his taxonomy of hypertextuality, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, which is in turn part of his five-part taxonomy of transtextuality. For Genette, the novel is an example of the type of "serious transformation" called "proximation."⁷⁶ For Lubomir Dolezel, in a similar vein, the novel is a "transposition", a term that Genette uses seemingly synonymously with "serious transformation." For Dolezel, however, a "transposition" is a type of "postmodern rewrite." Although Dolezel's theory of fictional worlds has much to contribute, calling a text from the GDR from 1972 "postmodern" is problematic, as is his assumption that transpositions have to be postmodern. Genette points out correctly that such "diegetic transpositions" occur more or less throughout literary history, giving examples such as Joachim Heinrich von Campe's *The German Robinson* (1779) and Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* (1947), neither of which can be called "postmodern." As will become evident, Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* also entails its own series of proximations, including that of Klopstock. Plenzdorf's novel, then, in proximating Goethe's novel to the context of early 1970s GDR, brings both the

⁷⁵ West German critic Dieter E. Zimmer also makes a comparison between *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* and *Die Legende von Paul und Paula*. For Zimmer, both works represent a thaw in the restrictions on GDR cultural production, but he does not mention the suicide in both works. Dieter E. Zimmer. "Nicht mehr so dogmatisch: Ulrich Plenzdorf, sein neuer Film *Paul und Paula* und sein Werther-Roman als Symptome einer neuen Offenheit." *Die Zeit*. April 20, 1973.

⁷⁶ Gérard Genette. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Trans.). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. 303-311, especially 306.

proximation and the rhetorical suicide from Goethe's *Werther*—a work lauded as part of the GDR literary heritage, thanks in part to Lukács's positive reception of it—into the rhetorically charged discourse of GDR literary heritage. This proximation, furthermore, instigated the type of semiotic change that Lotman calls explosion, that is, a sudden, sharp semiotic change resulting from the collision of two semiotic systems. This semiotic explosion occurs, in part, through Edgar's reading of *Werther*, but it also occurs at the moment when Edgar's electrical painting machine explodes, killing Edgar. These metaphors of currents in the text provide a model of intertextuality and allow the novel to subvert GDR literary heritage.

Edgar's Currents

Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* narrates the events leading up to the death of Edgar Wibeau, who leaves home, finds refuge in a garden shed, creates abstract paintings, and works with a construction brigade. Edgar finds a copy of Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* in the garden shed, uses the title page and the introduction pages as toilet paper, later reads the volume without knowing the title or author or anything about the reception of the work, is amused by Goethe's language, reads excerpts from Werther's letters aloud and records them onto cassette tapes, which he then sends to his friend Willi. Edgar strikes up a friendship with a pre-school teacher named Charlie and desires an amorous relationship with her, but she is engaged with Dieter, who has recently returned from military service and is beginning to study German literature at the university. Edgar tries to develop an electric painting machine to help his work brigade and is electrocuted. The reader is informed in the novel's final sentence: "Nach dem, was

die Ärzte sagten, war es eine Stromsache.”⁷⁷ The novel has several narrators: the posthumous voice of Edgar, the tapes of Edgar quoting Werther, obituaries from newspapers, Willi, Edgar’s parents, Edgar’s colleagues, and Charlie.

Edgar Wibeau’s autopsy report states that his death was a “Stromsache.” This is true on several levels. One type of current that kills Edgar is electrical; Edgar electrocutes himself. The obituary in the *Berliner Zeitung* from December 26th—already of the first page of the novel—declares that Edgar is “mit elektrischem Strom umgegangen.”⁷⁸ And this current is powerful. The machine’s engine runs on 380 volts. Rather than leave the outmoded machine with its high voltage alone, Edgar thinks as follows: “Das heißt, ich mußte die zweihundertzwanzig in der Laube erst hochtransformieren.”⁷⁹ Edgar is well aware of the danger of high voltage and of the transformation of the voltage, a factor that, combined with the allusions to Werther, leads many, if not most, readers to consider Edgar’s death suicide. After describing how he transformed the voltage with Ersatz tools—“die halbvergammelte Rohrzange,”⁸⁰ for example—Edgar describes how dangerous the machine is as he pushes tries to turn it on pushing the button that he adapted from the doorbell button on the garden shed: “Auf die Art mußte die Spannung natürlich ungeheuer hochgehen, und wenn einer die Hand daran hat, kommt er nicht wieder los. Das war’s. Machts gut, Leute!”⁸¹

⁷⁷ Ulrich Plenzdorf. *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* West Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1978. 148. Originally published in the journal *Sinn und Form* in 1972 and by Rostock: Hinstorff, 1973.

⁷⁸ Ulrich Plenzdorf. *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* West Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1978. 7.

⁷⁹ *ibid.* 142-143.

⁸⁰ *ibid.* 144.

⁸¹ *ibid.* 145.

Edgar also works with hydraulic current. One of the obituaries cited at the beginning of the novel is signed “VEB (K) Hydraulik Mittenberg.”⁸² Edgar’s brigade is trying to design a painting machine that does not spray mist but rather a fine stream. Edgar’s colleague Addi tries to design such a machine with air pressure, a design that fails. Edgar, in the meantime, tries to salvage a hydraulic painting machine he finds under the brigade’s trailer, a design that he defends before he even tries it, and a design that likewise fails. As it turns out, Edgar’s insistence on using hydraulics turns out to be not an allegiance to hydraulics as such but rather an annoyance of the hydraulic machine being otherwise in his way as well as a curiosity about it. “Es lag da unter unserem Salonwagen rum. Ich war schon mindestens dreimal darüber gestolpert und hatte es auch schon beschnarcht. Aber ich hätte mir doch lieber sonstwas abgebissen, als einen danach zu fragen, was das für ein Apparat war und so.”⁸³ But Edgar finds out what kind of machine it is. The machine paints without creating a cloud of mist, but the pressure is too great and a hose bursts, creating a mess. The air-compression painting machine creates a cloud of mist, and the pressure involved in the hydraulic machine is too great for the hoses to contain.

When Honecker came to power in the GDR, changes were made not only in cultural policy but also in economic and technological policy.⁸⁴ Technology had long been an important part of Eastern European communist policy. The latter part of the

⁸² *ibid.* 8.

⁸³ *ibid.* 97.

⁸⁴ These changes, especially the technological ones, are described at length in: Raymond G. Stokes. *Constructing Socialism: Technology and Change in East Germany 1945-1990*. Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000. Such changes are also mentioned in: Dolores L. Augustine. *Red Prometheus: Engineering and Dictatorship in East Germany 1945-1990*. MIT Press, 2007. 305.

Ulbricht years saw the technological and economic push known as the Neues Ökonomisches System der Planung und Leitung (NÖS or NÖSPL), which lasted from 1963-1970, was intended both to offer incentive for technological advancement and to jumpstart the economy, and was a reaction both to economic crisis and events and discussion in the Soviet Union.⁸⁵ The program (NÖSPL) involved optimistic, economic planning and an interdependency between technology and political rhetoric. With the switch from Ulbricht to Honecker came, as Benjamin Robinson fondly points out, a switch from political planning to cybernetics, and, as Raymond G. Stokes demonstrates at length, a switch from investment in high-technology to an investment in consumer goods production, a switch that left the field of electronics in a particularly staid condition. This technological, economic regime-change helps in part to set the stage for Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*

As historian Dolores L. Augustine observes, technology plays a large role in the East German literary imagination starting at least in the 1960s. Augustine points out how writers such as Christa Wolf and Volker Braun are critical of East German teleological technophilia, but she goes on to read Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* as being affirmative of such technophilia. Although technology plays a large role in the novel, seeing the novel as affirmative of utopian technophilia—although Augustine's monograph is otherwise admirably well thought-out and well written—is simply a dubious reading of the novel. On a basic plot level, it is technology that kills Edgar

⁸⁵ For a general overview of the state of scholarship on economics in the GDR, see: Corey Ross. "The East German Economy: 'Planned miracle,' victim of circumstance or fundamentally flawed?" *The East German Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR*. London: Arnold, 2002. For an examination of the influence of NÖSPL on GDR literature and culture, see: Günter Erbe. *Verfemte Moderne: Die Auseinandersetzung mit dem "Modernismus" in Kulturpolitik, Literaturwissenschaft und Literatur der DDR*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1993.

Wibeau. Moreover, the garden shed in which Edgar finds refuge is being demolished in the name of technological advancement. Edgar uses a tape-recorder to play music and to send quotations from Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* to his friend Willi, and he likes cinema, but this is no gesture towards advancing East German technological prowess. Edgar likes technology the same way he likes blue jeans and slang and J. D. Salinger and Louis Armstrong. He likes technology because it is fun, because it ties into his youth culture. Edgar's abstract paintings, moreover, are critical of scientists. "Wir malten durchweg abstrakt. Eins hieß Physik. Und: Chemie. Oder: Hirn eines Mathematikers" (20).⁸⁶ Edgar's mother wants him to find an "ordentlichen Beruf" (20).⁸⁷ But he wants to be a painter, and he mocks the practical careers with his paintings. Edgar works as a painter with a construction brigade, but he works in construction not because he is interested in a technophilic, communist utopia, but rather because he needs money and has no practical skills. As the posthumous Edgar puts it:

Klar wollte ich Geld verdienen! Wenn einer keine Tonbänder mehr kaufen kann, muß er Geld verdienen. Und wo geht er in diesem Fall hin? Zum Bau. Motto: Wer nichts will und wer nichts kann, geht zum Bau oder zur Bahn. Bahn war mir zu gefährlich. Da hätten sie garantiert nach Ausweis und Aufenthaltsgenehmigung gefragt und dem Käse. Also Bau. Auf dem Bau nehmen sie jeden. Das wußte ich.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Ulrich Plenzdorf. *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* West Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1978. 20.

⁸⁷ *ibid.* 20.

⁸⁸ *ibid.* 88.

Edgar's relationship to technology, construction, and engineering is playful, youthful, but not teleological or affirmative. Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* simply does not "depict engineering as a higher calling," as Augustine maintains.⁸⁹

If technology in the novel is not a hymn to the great prowess of East German engineering, what role does technology play in the novel, besides Edgar's youthful enjoyment of it? Technology, especially electric current, in (and) the novel is a transformer. It transforms Edgar into a human electrical transformer, thereby electrocuting him. It transforms Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* by allowing it to collide with the context of GDR youth culture. When Edgar's electric painting machine explodes, killing Edgar, the literary heritage of the GDR also explodes. Yuri Lotman divides semiospheric changes—the semiosphere always changing—into gradual changes and explosions, the latter being a sharp and rather unexpected shift. The appearance of Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* represents an explosion in the literary heritage of the GDR. It sharply changed the reception of *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* and, more generally, Goethe in the GDR and fundamentally disrupted the dichotomous, Lukàcsian paradigm. Although Lotman's diachronically-informed theory of semiotics is both groundbreaking and useful, it is not difficult—even without Lotman—to see the appearance of Plenzdorf's novel, with its literal, diegetic explosion, as an abstract explosion. Indeed, Peter J. Brenner writes that "die Plenzdorf-Debatte den engeren literaturkritischen Rahmen sprengte."⁹⁰ In keeping with the metaphor of explosion to explain the transformations surrounding Plenzdorf's novel, it is in order to

⁸⁹ Dolores L. Augustine. *Red Prometheus: Engineering and Dictatorship in East Germany 1945-1990*. MIT Press, 2007. 246.

⁹⁰ Peter J. Brenner. *Plenzdorf's "Neue Leiden des jungen W."* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982. 44.

explain the state of semiospheric matter before the explosion, the catalyst of the explosion, and the state of semiospheric matter after the explosion.

Before the appearance of Plenzdorf's novel, the reception of *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* in the GDR was set, in large part, by Lukács's chapter on that novel in *Goethe und seine Zeit*, in which he downplays the influence of Sturm und Drang on romanticism and counter-intuitively emphasizes the relationship between Sturm und Drang and the Enlightenment.⁹¹ He portrays the novel as a work of realism, viewing it as a forerunner of nineteenth-century realism. He appreciates the fact that Goethe based the work loosely around real events, and he praises Werther's admiration of Homer, Klopstock, Goldsmith, and Lessing. Lukács, furthermore, sees the novel as one of social rebellion against feudalism. He sees it as the expression of rebellion against arbitrary, social norms that only aid the aristocracy. Lukács, the philosopher, however, uses almost no textual evidence to support his claims. Peter Müller's 1965 dissertation on Werther performs a close reading and favors the novel as a prized piece of literary heritage for the GDR. There was some backlash against Müller's dissertation, claiming that while he remained true to the text, he did not remain true to Marxism-Leninism (Brenner 82-85).⁹² Such criticism of Müller leads, chronologically at least, to Plenzdorf's novel. All in all,

⁹¹ Bruce Duncan and Jürgen Scharfschwerdt also see Lukács as the central figure in shaping GDR literary criticism on *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*. Bruce Duncan. *Goethe's Werther and the Critics*. Rochester: Camden House, 2005. 80-82. Jürgen Scharfschwerdt. "Werther in der DDR: Bürgerliches Erbe zwischen sozialistischer Kulturpolitik und gesellschaftlicher Realität." *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schillergesellschaft*. 22 (1978). 238-257. Daniel J. Farrelly (1998, 54-63), however, while noting Lukács's influence avoids defining any singular GDR stance on *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*, seeing instead a plurality of stances. Daniel J. Farrelly. *Goethe in East Germany, 1949-1989: Toward a History of Goethe Reception in the GDR*. Rochester: Camden House, 1998.

⁹² Peter J. Brenner. *Plenzdorf's "Neue Leiden des jungen W."* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982. 82-85.

however, the reception of Werther in the GDR until the early 1970s was overwhelmingly positive.

Edgar, however, reads somewhat differently. Edgar reads several texts in the novel. He declares that Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* (1951) and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) are his two favorite books. In addition to reading, he listens to the songs of Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald, and he watches the film *To Sir, With Love* (1967), starring Sidney Poitier. What function do these texts play in the novel? Kirsten Scherler notes that Edgar's two favorite books, *Catcher in the Rye* and *Robinson Crusoe*, both portray a main character who is isolated: Crusoe literally stranded on a island and Holden Caulfield socially isolated.⁹³ Edgar's affinity for jazz and the blues creates an incongruous juxtaposition with the GDR and allows Edgar to associate with rebellion. Priscilla Layne argues that Edgar associates with figures of black culture as a means of establishing rebellion.⁹⁴ There is, however, another function that these intertexts, especially *Catcher in the Rye* and *Robinson Crusoe*, play in the novel: they also contain readers, namely readers who set the state for Edgar's reading practices. Holden Caulfield mishears the song "Comin' Through the Rye" by Robert Burns. This mishearing allows Holden to use the song as an anthem for protecting angst-ridden youth. Robinson Crusoe has only the Bible to read, symbolizing the Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura*. There is surely a connection between these figures' isolation and their reading practices. They are reading alone with no dialogue or access to previous readings of the texts that they are

⁹³ Kirsten Scherliner. *"Wie froh bin ich, dass ich weg bin!": Werther in der deutschen Literatur*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010. 108-109.

⁹⁴ Edgar Wibeau comprises one example of Layne's claim that post-war Germans have often associated with black culture as a means of rebellion. *The Stranger Within: Black Voices, German Rebels*. Unpublished dissertation. University of California, Berkeley. 2011.

reading. There is, however, another crucial text that Edgar reads that contains misreadings: Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*. And Edgar reads the text without any context. He does not know anything about the GDR reception of that work. In fact, he defecates on that context. He finds that novel in the bathroom in the garden shed, as he realizes that there is no toilet paper there. "Ich hatte das aus dieser alten Schwarte oder Heft. Reclamheft. Ich kann nicht mal sagen, wie es hieß. Das olle Titelblatt ging flöten auf dem ollen Klo von Willis Laube."⁹⁵ He later describes what he does with this "Reclamheft" in greater detail:

Und kein Klopapier, Leute. Ich fummelte wie ein Irrer in dem ganzen Klo rum. Und dabei kriegte ich dann dieses berühmtes Buch oder Heft in die Klauen. Um irgendwas zu erkennen, war es zu dunkel. Ich opferte also zunächst die Deckel, dann die Titelseite und dann die letzen Seiten, wo erfahrungsgemäß das Nachwort steht, das sowieso kein Aas liest. Bei Licht stellte ich fest, dass ich tatsächlich völlig exakt gearbeitet hatte.⁹⁶

Edgar uses exactly the cover, the title page, and the afterword as toilet paper, flushing them then down the toilet. He then has only the text to read with no title, author name, or commentary. He does not know when the text was written or what the cultural authorities in the GDR had written about it. He then reads the text in the context of his life as a teenage in East Germany in the early 1970s. But Edgar is not the only character in literary history to read a text without context or commentary.

⁹⁵ Ulrich Plenzdorf. *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* West Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1978. 19.

⁹⁶ *ibid.* 35.

Werther's Currents

Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* was always already, in part, an exploration of proximation and the fluidity of literary reception.⁹⁷ Werther reads Homer, Ossian, Lessing, the Bible, and Klopstock, among other texts. Werther's readings highlight fluidity. In addition to transforming the role of *Werther* in GDR literary heritage—or rather as a way of transforming it—Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* reads as Werther reads: as an interpreter who proximates literary texts with his contemporary context and, in the process, often highlights fluidity. Secondary literature on *Werther* that focuses on Werther's readings tends to accuse Werther of misreading or reading selectively. Bruce Duncan maintains: "The reader of Goethe's novel becomes—or should become—aware that Werther experiences these works inappropriately."⁹⁸ Arnd Bohm even goes so far as to assert that: "Werther betrays his obligations as a Christian reader ..."⁹⁹ Similar claims have been made about Edgar Wibeau's reading of *Werther* and other texts. Both Werther and Edgar Wibeau, furthermore, focus on

⁹⁷ Others have made this point: Clayton Koelb. "'The Heavenly Revelation of Her Spirit': Goethe's *The Sorrows of the Young Werther*." *The Revivifying Word: Literature, Philosophy, and the Theory of Life in Europe's Romantic Age*. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008. 47-67. Eberhard Bahr. "Unerschlossene Intertextualität: MacPherson's Ossian und Goethe's Werther." *Goethe-Jahrbuch*. 124 (2007) 178-188. Arnd Bohm. "'Klopstock!' Once More: Intertextuality in Werther." *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies*. 38.2 (May 2002) 116-133. Martin Swales. *Goethe: The Sorrows of the Young Werther*. Landmarks of World Literature. Cambridge UP, 1987. 39-44. Bruce Duncan. "'Emilia Galotti lag auf dem Pult aufgeschlagen': Werther as (Mis-)Reader." *Goethe Yearbook*. 1 (1982) 42-50. Erdmann Wanick. "*Werther* lesen und Werther als Leser." *Goethe Yearbook*. 1 (1982) 51-92. Carol E. W. Tobol and Ida H. Washington. "Werther's Selective Reading of Homer." *MLN* 92.3 (1977) 596-601. However, given the percentage of the novel in which Werther is reading, intertextuality in the novel is mentioned surprisingly little in secondary literature on *Werther*.

⁹⁸ Bruce Duncan. "'Emilia Galotti lag auf dem Pult aufgeschlagen': Werther as (Mis-)Reader." *Goethe Yearbook*. 1 (1982) 44.

⁹⁹ Arnd Bohm. "'Klopstock!' Once More: Intertextuality in Werther." *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies*. 38.2 (May 2002) 129.

metaphors of fluidity. Before returning to Edgar Wibeau's readings, then, it is in order to examine Werther's readings.

Werther reads Homer enthusiastically—mentioning the poet seven times—and, as Tobol and Washington indicate, selectively. Werther admires Homer as an ancient poet concerned with nature and mythology. His reading of the poet's works, however, indicates much more about Werther. Tobol and Washington are particularly concerned with Werther's assertion, in his May 13 letter to Wilhelm, that Homer's works provide him with a much-needed lullaby [Wiegengesang].¹⁰⁰ The poet's works, they note, are full of gruesome battles and dangerous adventures, scenes not typically thought to be conducive to lullabies. In his June 21 letter, Werther tells Wilhelm that he sees himself in Penelope's suitors in Homer's *Odyssey*, as he waits with Lotte while Albert is away. The suitors are described in Homer's work, however, as being greedy, impatient, and arrogant. Werther's unconventional reading of Homer is also reflected in his reading of the Westein edition with no commentary.¹⁰¹ Just as Edgar Wibeau reads a copy of *Werther* that has no introduction pages or title page, Werther begins on August 28 to read the more portable two-volume Westein edition of Homer that has no commentary, a gift from Albert, rather than his five-volume Ernesti edition with commentary by Ernesti, a matter that allows Werther to read Homer without the literary historical baggage attached to the poet. On October 12, however, after Lotte and Albert have wed, Werther puts aside Homer and begins to read Ossian.

¹⁰⁰ Carol E. W. Tobol and Ida H. Washington. "Werther's Selective Reading of Homer." *MLN* 92.3 (1977) 598-599.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.* 598-599.

In the letter from October 12, Werther tells Wilhelm that he is now reading Ossian rather than Homer [“Ossian hat in meinem Herzen den Homer verdrängt”], a change in reading that reflects Werther’s change in affect. Indeed, as Goethe remarked to Henry Crabb Robinson in 1829, Werther reads Homer “while he retained his senses” and that he reads Ossian “when he was going mad.”¹⁰² As Swales, Duncan, Bahr, and Koelb all indicate, much more is involved in Werther’s reading of Ossian. Indeed, twelve pages of *Werther* are dedicated to narrating Goethe’s reading of Ossian. Eberhard Bahr demonstrates that Werther reads Ossian (with Lotte) to index the parallels of women in Ossian’s text, first Colma then Daura, who are torn between rivals and the situation among Lotte, Werther, and Albert. Werther also focuses on duels between rival men over women, a theme that parallels the tension between Werther and Albert over Lotte.¹⁰³ Werther, furthermore, reads his own translation of Ossian, a matter that amplifies the interpretive nature of his reading of the text.¹⁰⁴ Werther thus reads Ossian selectively, and, as Bahr maintains, Werther’s Ossianism is quite different from Ossian.¹⁰⁵ But Homer and Ossian are certainly not the only authors that Werther reads.

Werther had also read Lessing’s *Emilia Galotti*, a play in which a father kills his daughter in order to protect her honor. The play is open on Werther’s lectern as he shoots himself in the head. The same play, it should be noted, was open in Karl Wilhelm

¹⁰² Martin Swales. *Goethe: The Sorrows of the Young Werther*. Landmarks of World Literature. Cambridge UP, 1987. 40.

¹⁰³ Eberhard Bahr. “Unerschlossene Intertextualität: MacPherson’s Ossian und Goethe’s Werther.” *Goethe-Jahrbuch*. 124 (2007) 183-188. Duncan briefly made this point in “‘Emilia Galotti lag auf dem Pult aufgeschlagen’: Werther as (Mis-)Reader.” *Goethe Yearbook*. 1 (1982) 44.

¹⁰⁴ Bruce Duncan. “‘Emilia Galotti lag auf dem Pult aufgeschlagen’: Werther as (Mis-)Reader.” *Goethe Yearbook*. 1 (1982) 45.

¹⁰⁵ Eberhard Bahr. “Unerschlossene Intertextualität: MacPherson’s Ossian und Goethe’s Werther.” *Goethe-Jahrbuch*. 124 (2007) 188.

Jerusalem's room when killed himself in November 1772. Goethe based *Werther*, in part, on Jerusalem's suicide, and Werther's reading of *Emilia Galotti* was surely influenced by reports that Jerusalem had read it before killing himself.¹⁰⁶ Duncan demonstrates that Werther's reading of Lessing's play, like Werther's other readings, allows him an ironic association with Emilia Galotti. That is, Werther sees parallels between Emilia Galotti's situation and his own, when in fact such parallels are difficult to construct. Odoardo kills his daughter Emilia in order to save her honor and restore order. Werther kills himself, a suicide that is difficult to perceive as restoring order. Werther's readings of Homer, Ossian, Goldsmith, and Lessing indicate instability in literary reception. Werther proximates the works to his contemporary situation, thereby working against the grain of established literary history. Other readings by Werther go beyond such ironic interpretations to focus on metaphors of fluidity within those works, further indicating that literary heritage is fluid.

Metaphors of fluidity abound in *Werther*. While Werther and Lotte read Ossian, for example, tears flow from their eyes, and in Werther's translation of Ossian, he uses the word "Waldstrom." But two works that Werther reads provide myriad metaphors of fluidity: the Bible and Klopstock. Werther's allusions to the Bible relate, for the most part, to flowing water and to drinking. Werther describes young girls, as well figures from "ehemals" fetching water from a well.¹⁰⁷ Clayton Koelb indicates that this is surely

¹⁰⁶ Bruce Duncan. "'Emilia Galotti lag auf dem Pult aufgeschlagen': Werther as (Mis-)Reader." *Goethe Yearbook*. 1 (1982) 42-43.

¹⁰⁷ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. *Sämtliche Werke*. Vol. 1.8. Waltraud Wiethölter (Ed.). Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker, 1985. 16-17.

an allusion to the story of Rachel and Jacob from the Hebrew Bible (Genesis 29:1-20).¹⁰⁸ Werther's allusion to that story juxtaposes it with his desire to court, as Jacob and Rachel meet and court at the well. In addition, the allusion to the well directly precedes a passage in which he mentions his reading, subtly indicating that his readings are also fluid. Werther's other allusions to the Bible, for the most part, deal with drinking fluids, all allusions to the Gospels of the New Testament. These allusions mention drinking from a bitter cup and drinking "the transport of death." In these allusions, Werther is undoubtedly comparing himself to Christ,¹⁰⁹ foreshadowing his own death. In addition, he is subtly implying that Biblical meaning is fluid, as his renditions of Biblical passages are willful.¹¹⁰ Werther's incorporation of metaphors of fluidity is even more evident in his reading of another author.

Werther and Lotte have both read Klopstock with great enthusiasm. This becomes evident in Werther's letter to Wilhelm written on June 16, Werther describes a rain and lightning storm that befalls Wetzlar during an evening ball. At the height of the storm, Lotte touches Werther's hand and says "Klopstock!" Werther recalls to Wilhelm how he (Werther) immediately understood the allusion. "Ich erinnerte mich sogleich der herrlichen Ode, die ihr in Gedanken lag, und versank in dem Strome von Empfindungen, den sie in dieser Losung über mich ausgoss".¹¹¹ The ode to which Lotte refers is Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock's "Frühlingsfeier" (1771), which celebrates the divine

¹⁰⁸ Genesis 29:1-20.

¹⁰⁹ Martin Swales. *Goethe: The Sorrows of the Young Werther*. Landmarks of World Literature. Cambridge UP, 1987. 42-43.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.* 45.

¹¹¹ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. *Sämtliche Werke*. Vol. 1.8. Waltraud Wiethölter (Ed.). Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker, 1985. 36-55.

interconnectivity of everything through images of a storm with rain, thunder, lightening, heavy winds, flooding, and finally a little worm. Lotte mentions the ode in connection with the storm, and Werther then associates the ode with interconnectivity he feels with Lotte. He then bends down, kisses her hand, and cries.

Again, Werther appropriates the poem about fluidity for his contemporary situation. Klopstock's work is about the pervasiveness and sublime nature of the divine, and Lotte juxtaposes Klopstock's consideration of the sublime nature of the divine with the sublime nature of the thunderstorm, Klopstock's ode also using imagery of a thunderstorm. Werther, however, juxtaposes the ode with his affection for Lotte, proposing a reading of the poem that is quite different from the established one. Just as the poem uses metaphors of water and fluidity ("Ozean der Welten," "Tropfen am Eimer," "Strom des Lichts," "zusammenströmen," "ich weine," "diese Thräne," "Ergeuß," "schwül," "durchströmen," "dampft," "Regen"), so too does Werther's description of his interaction with Lotte at the moment when Lotte mentions Klopstock. Werther describes sinking into a current of emotions that Lotte pours over him. The currents in the Klopstock ode also describe the way that Werther allows texts to flow, to change meaning based on his contemporary situation. As will become evident, metaphors of currents, reading without literary historiographical baggage, and Werther's reception of Klopstock play a large role in Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*

Klopstock's Currents

Secondary literature on Plenzdorf's novel that addresses intertextuality tends to focus on Goethe's *Werther*, a clear and important hypotext for Plenzdorf's work, or on

Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*. However, *Werther* is not the only canonical work to appear in Plenzdorf's novel. One text that Werther and Lotte discuss in *Werther* is also an important—and entirely overlooked—hypotext in Plenzdorf's work: Klopstock's poem "Frühlingsfeier." Neither Klopstock nor his famous ode is mentioned by name in Plenzdorf's novel, but its presence, as will become evident, is unmistakable. But what was the role of Klopstock in the GDR?

Klopstock, the theologically minded father of *Sturm und Drang*, was received positively in the GDR. Three of Klopstock's poems are included in the one hundred and eighty-three works that comprise the *Deutsches Lesebuch: Luther bis Liebknecht* edited by Stephan Hermlin and published in 1976 by the Leipzig-based Reclam publisher. Compared with the eight poems by Goethe, the three poems by Andreas Gryphius, and the two poems by the first Minister of Culture in the GDR Johannes R. Becher, Klopstock is represented strongly. And one of those three poems by Klopstock included in the volume is "Frühlingsfeier." Klopstock had heavily influenced early GDR poets such as Johannes Bobrowski, Erich Arendt, Georg Maurer, and Karl Mickel.¹¹² And evidence of his influence can be seen in Volker Braun as well.¹¹³ In 1971, one year before Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* appeared in the East German literary journal *Sinn und Form*, a one-volume edition of Klopstock's works with an introduction by Karl-Heinz Hahn was published.¹¹⁴ And in 1974, Klopstock's 250th birthday was

¹¹² Wolfgang Emmerich. *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*. Berlin: Aufbau, 2000. 168, 171, 233, 371.

¹¹³ Emmerich points out Braun's 1977 poem "Müggelsee" is a rewriting of Klopstock's "Zürichersee." Wolfgang Emmerich. *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*. Berlin: Aufbau, 2000. 225, 372-373.

¹¹⁴ Klopstocks Werke in einem Band. Berlin; Weimar: Bibliothek Deutscher Klassiker, 1971.

celebrated in the GDR, complete with a Klopstock conference in Halle.¹¹⁵ Indeed, Klopstock, with his anti-feudalism and anti-absolutism, was salvaged for the GDR and, despite his deep religious faith, put to work for political purposes as part of the GDR's "kulturelles Erbe."¹¹⁶

Flowing water is present in Plenzdorf's novel in ways that are remarkably similar to the water in Klopstock's ode. Klopstock is not explicitly mentioned in *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*, but then neither is Goethe. In any case, water is abundant in *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* The bulk of it comes when Edgar touches and kisses Charlie, just as the bulk of the water in Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* comes at the ball when Lotte touches Werther's hand and Werther kisses Lotte's hand. Charlie wants to go boating, despite the fact that it is raining, with Dieter, her fiancé who has recently returned from the army and is now studying *Germanistik*. Dieter maintains that it makes no sense to go boating in a rainstorm and continues typing up a *Germanistik* seminar paper. Charlie then angrily leaves and goes boating with Edgar. As they are in the boat being soaked by rain, Charlie puts her arm around Edgar and leans her head on his shoulder. Edgar in the meantime drives the boat in sharp turns so that centripetal force causes Charlie to be pressed firmly against him. Then, as if not enough fluids are being tossed around, Charlie has to urinate, or as the posthumous Edgar puts it: "Sie mußte mal. Das verstand ich. Wenn es regnet, geht einem das immer so."¹¹⁷ Finally,

¹¹⁵ Harro Zimmermann. *Freiheit und Geschichte: F. G. Klopstock als historischer Dichter und Denker*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1987. 43.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.* 39-44.

¹¹⁷ Ulrich Plenzdorf. *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* West Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1978. 133.

Charlie asks Edgar: “Willst du einen Kuß von mir?”¹¹⁸ Just as the kiss in Goethe’s *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* comes just after tears begin pouring from Werther’s eyes, the kiss in Plenzdorf’s *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* comes just after Charlie urinates. In both cases, transtextuality is present and transformations occur.

Key to understanding the how the appearance of Plenzdorf’s *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* creates an explosion (Lotman) is Gérard Genette’s notion of proximation, a type of serious transformation that involves transposing a story from an older setting into a more contemporary setting. Genette himself uses Plenzdorf’s novel as an example of proximation.¹¹⁹ The narrative is plucked out of 18th-century Germany and placed into the setting of East Germany in the early 1970s. The effects of this temporal change in setting are radical. This transposition implies that there are arbitrary laws in the GDR that do not support workers. It implies that there are outsiders in the GDR. It also implies that perhaps young people in the GDR did not read canonical texts in the ways that the regime had intended, or that young people did not even recognize such texts. These implications, furthermore, demonstrate the arbitrariness of literary heritage.

As electrical current passes through Edgar’s body, he is a transformer. The current connects and transforms at once. When Edgar pushes the button on his electric painting machine, much changes. He is an electrical transformer, a “Schaltstelle.”¹²⁰ The

¹¹⁸ *ibid.* 133.

¹¹⁹ Gérard Genette. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Trans.). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. 307-310.

¹²⁰ Karin Leeder has developed the metaphor of the “Schaltstelle” as way of thinking of the (trans)textuality involved in poetry in her edited volume *Schaltstelle: Neue deutsche Lyrik im Dialog*. Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2007. As part of this project Gerrit-Jan Berendse uses the term “Transitorik” in his essay “‘Dank Breton’: Surrealismus und kulturelles Gedächtnis in Adolf Endlers Lyrik.” *Schaltstelle: Neue deutsche Lyrik im Dialog*. Karin Leeder (Ed.). Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2007.

moment when Edgar describes the current passing through his body is also the moment when he mentions that he almost understands Werther, saying that he (Edgar) would never have returned to Mittenberg. This is the point at which the allusions to Werther cease to be silly and instead become quite serious. When Edgar stops poking fun at Werther and himself dies, the intertextual inertia of *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* collides more forcefully with the culture of the GDR. And the inertia of *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* also includes the works of those writers to which Werther alludes: Homer and Ossian, for example, and, in this case, especially Klopstock. Klopstock's ode is about the interconnectedness of nature and the divine. Werther reads Lotte's naïve allusion to it as pointing towards the interconnectedness between him and Lotte. And interconnectedness in the sense of transtextuality is already at work in *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*. Edgar, furthermore, realizes, although in a superficial way, that texts are interconnected: "Sowieso sind meiner Meinung nach in jedem Buch fast *alle* Bücher" (32) [italics are Plenzdorf's].¹²¹ Klopstock's fluid current, which flows through *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* and into *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*, is modernized into an electrical current, being transformed and transforming all along the way. In fact, Edgar's declaration, "Das heißt, ich mußte die zweihundertzwanzig in der Laube erst hochtransformieren,"¹²² might be read as a description of the process by which the electrical current is transformed by the Klopstock current, and that current is explosive.

¹²¹ Ulrich Plenzdorf. *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* West Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1978. 32.

¹²² *ibid.* 142-143.

Explosion

With its proximation and fluidity of intertexts, Plenzdorf's novel is largely about border crossings and their ramifications. But the border crossings in the novel are not limited to the intertextual. There are three others: abjection/dejection, epistolarity, and haunting, all of which, in the context of Plenzdorf's novel, are related to proximation. Edgar is a deject. That is, following Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection and the deject, he abjects and flees spatially.¹²³ Things inside of his body cross the border of his body (abjection), and he himself crosses borders. Kristeva posits that representations of corporeal elements, such as feces or vomit, leaving the body indicate a symbolic act that "disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules."¹²⁴ She goes on to write that the person whose corporeal borders are being outwardly permeated, the deject, also does not respect borders, but is in a constant state of flight. Edgar fits this description. He urinates and defecates, namely at the same time: "An sich wollte ich mich bloß verflüssigen, aber wie immer breitete sich das Gerücht davon in meinen gesamten Därmen aus. Das war ein echtes Leiden von mir. Zeitlebens konnte ich die beiden Geschichten nicht auseinander halten. Wenn ich mich verflüssigen mußte, mußte ich auch immer ein Ei legen, da half nichts."¹²⁵ The abject is at work here in that Edgar urinates and defecates. Parts of his body are disrespecting the borders of his body, as it were. But in this passage things are even more complicated. Two bodies of abject

¹²³ The abject plays an even greater role in the chapter on Werner Heiduczek's *Tod am Meer*.

¹²⁴ Julia Kristeva. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Leon S. Roudiez (Trans.). New York: Columbia UP, 1982. 4.

¹²⁵ Ulrich Plenzdorf. *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* West Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1978. 35.

matter, urine and feces, lose some of their particularity and blend together, further disrupting order. Most telling, however, is Edgar's use of the word "Geschichten" to describe the two types of abject matter. Again, two types of currents, as it were, connect, representing transtextuality. And if urine were not already "Strom" enough for such an interpretation, Edgar reports, "Ich hätte einen Trocknen machen können in jeden See,"¹²⁶ mixing again solid excrement with fluid.

Furthermore, the first time that Edgar defecates and urinates together ("die beiden Geschichten nicht auseinander halten") in the novel, is also the first time that he comes in contact with Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*. In addition to not being able to keep his urine and feces separate, Edgar cannot keep *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* separate from other stories, including his own. Part of the reason for this is that he uses the title page of book and any pages that would give him a context for Goethe's epistolary novel as toilet paper. As he literally shits on the context of Goethe, he opens the text of *Werther* to new interpretations, proximating it with his contemporary situation in the early 1970s in the GDR. Had Edgar read the introduction to *Werther*, he might not have taken the text seriously. Edgar reads the novel, furthermore, shortly after fleeing to the garden shed. He allows the text to cross borders when he crosses borders. Just as abjection "disturbs identity, system, order,"¹²⁷ so too does textual proximation.

Edgar's electronic epistolarity, that is, his act of recording his readings of *Werther* onto cassette tapes and mailing them to his friend Willi, also represent a disruptive border crossing. The tapes cross a physical border as they are mailed, but they also represent

¹²⁶ *ibid.* 46.

¹²⁷ Julia Kristeva. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Leon S. Roudiez (Trans.). New York: Columbia UP, 1982. 4.

changes made in the text through proximation. Just as Edgar's painting becomes electrical, electrifying Werther's hobby, Edgar's letter writing, Werther's other activity, also becomes electrical. Edgar's modernizing of epistolarity parallels the modernizing of his reading of the text. This is fitting, as Edgar's letters are Werther's letters. They are not just Werther's letters, however, they are Edgar's recordings of Werther's letters. They change as Edgar records them. They are also different as Willi receives them and listens to them, as opposed to Wilhelm receiving them and reading them. With the changed medium, the changed addresser, the changed addressee, and the changed historical context, the letters are now quite different.

Not only does Edgar cross borders by fleeing to the garden shed,¹²⁸ by reading Goethe's text, and by sending recordings of that text to Willi, he also crosses "über den Jordan,"¹²⁹ that is, into death. He never settles down, at least not in life, and even in death he seems like something of a vagabond. Edgar speaks from the dead. Edgar hints that haunting is something that occurs in the minds of the living (which is not to say that it does not exist): "Ansonsten ist Bedauern jenseits des Jordan nicht üblich. Wir alle hier wissen, was uns blüht. Daß wir aufhören zu existieren, wenn ihr aufhört, an uns zu denken" (16-17).¹³⁰ Stephen Greenblatt writes that "... the making of what is absent to speak ... is the rhetorical device behind all haunting."¹³¹ If Edgar would otherwise be

¹²⁸ See Fritz J. Raddatz. "Ulrich Plenzdorf's Flucht nach Innen." *Merkur*. 27 (1973) 1174-1178. Also in Peter J. Brenner (Ed.). *Plenzdorf's neue Leiden des jungen W.* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982. 303-309. Raddatz describes Plenzdorf's novel in terms of a rediscovery of the subject, but the spatial terms in the title are telling.

¹²⁹ Ulrich Plenzdorf. *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* West Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1978. 135.

¹³⁰ *ibid.* 16-17. Horn says something remarkably similar in Christoph Hein's *Horns Ende*, as will become evident in the chapter on that novel.

¹³¹ Stephen Greenblatt. *Hamlet in Purgatory*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton UP, 2001. 251.

absent, were he not speaking, is Edgar's posthumous narration not a matter of haunting? Greenblatt might go on to say that intertextuality is haunting. Or haunting is intertextuality. In any case, haunting is proximation. It is the juxtaposition of the dead with the living. Lotman suggests that the crossing of the border between life and death, in either direction, is often a border crossing with great semiotic ramifications.¹³² One reason for this is the radical proximation that occurs with that border crossing.

These border crossings and the proximation of Goethe's Werther with the GDR of the early 1970s, culminating in the explosion of Edgar's electric painting machine, create the kind of semiotic change that Lotman calls explosion. Lotman writes: "The moment of explosion is the moment of unpredictability."¹³³ He goes on to explain that explosion is a juxtaposition of signs or sign systems that leads to new possibilities. Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* represents a turning point in GDR cultural politics and literary production in that it creates the possibility of rereading GDR literary heritage against the context of everyday life in the GDR. The explosion caused by the proximation in Plenzdorf's novel led not only to changes in cultural politics and literary production, but, related to those changes, it also led to literary historiographical changes. That is, the works of writers such as Goethe and Klopstock were viewed differently. In particular, the homogenous, uncritical affirmation of Goethe was questioned. After the appearance of Plenzdorf's novel, Goethe's position as the GDR's "sacred cow" was never fully restored, a matter that will become evident again in the chapter on Wolf's *Kein Ort. Nirgends*. The novel instigated both a debate in cultural politics and a

¹³² Jurij Lotman. *Die Struktur literarischer Texte*. Rolf-Dietrich Keil (Trans.). Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1993. 338.

¹³³ Juri Lotman. *Culture and Explosion*. Marina Grishakova (ed.). Wilma Clark (trans.). Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009. 123.

movement in literary production toward subversively rereading canonical texts, disrupting the official literary heritage of the GDR. In the realm of cultural politics, Kurt Hager attempted to lead a movement to restrict literary production to the limitations in place before Honecker's "No Taboos" speech. And in May 1973, Honecker spoke again before the Central Committee of the SED, trying to retighten GDR cultural restrictions. Such a movement, however, was in vain, as the cat was already out of the bag, as it were. At the 7th Writers' Congress in November 1973, the easing of restrictions regarding literary production was confirmed. In the realm of literary production, there were initial reactions to Plenzdorf's novel that attempted to provide a different view of the teenage outsider in the GDR. Peter Brenner lists three such novels: Wolfgang Joho's *Der Sohn*, Rolf Schneider's *Reise nach Jaroslaw*, and Volker Braun's *Unvollendete Geschichte*.¹³⁴ In Joho's novel, generational conflicts are solved through communication and self-criticism, largely in the context of a courtroom trial. In Schneider's novel, the problematic of the teenage outsider is belittled and rendered comical. Braun's novel, through one character's reading of Plenzdorf's novel, hints that Plenzdorf's novel poses appropriate questions about the individual versus society but does not fully answer the questions. That is, it does not probe to the core of the matter. Although, as Brenner correctly notes, these novels appear in the wake of Plenzdorf's novel, engage the problematic of individual versus society, and would be unthinkable without Plenzdorf's novel, there are other works in the less immediate wake of Plenzdorf's novel that nonetheless respond to that work. Most important of these are those that engage the

¹³⁴ Peter J. Brenner. *Plenzdorf's "Neue Leiden des jungen W."* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982. 46-51.

literary heritage of the GDR. The next of these to be examined here is Werner Heiduczek's often overlooked novel *Tod am Meer*.

Chapter Two

Writing and Self-Destructive Memory: Heiduczek's *Tod am Meer*

... vocalization ... substitutes an I ... (i.e., a person, a narrating character) for the nonperson of a narrator who had previously been external to the story, impersonal and transparent. ... a shift from the third to the first person.

Gérard Genette¹³⁵

On June 9, 1978, the Soviet ambassador to the GDR, Pjotr Andrejevich Abrassimov and his Bulgarian counterpart showed up at the home of none other than Erich Honecker to protest the appearance of Werner Heiduczek's novel *Tod am Meer* in December of 1977.¹³⁶ Although censorship was rampant in the GDR, appeals for censorship made directly in the residence of the First Secretary of the SED were rare. What is it about this novel that Abrassimov found so subversive? In his official statement, Abrassimov cites the portrayal of Soviet soldiers as "ungehobelte Grobiane, als brutale Leute und Ignoranten."¹³⁷ He goes on to cite passages in which Soviet soldiers rape German women and otherwise insult the German people. And he reports an absence of the atrocities committed by German Fascists in the Soviet Union during the

¹³⁵ Gérard Genette. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Trans.). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. 290.

¹³⁶ Carsten Wurm. "'Uneigenützige Hilfeleistung': Ein Dokument zu Werner Heiduczek's Roman *Tod am Meer*." *Neue Deutsche Literatur: Zeitschrift für deutschsprachige Literatur*. 44.6 (Nov.-Dec. 1996) 147.

¹³⁷ Ibid. 149.

Second World War. Indeed, as Carsten Wurm indicates, the novel was barely approved by the censors, and was likely approved as a result of censors being unwilling to cause another stir in the immediate wake of the Biermann affair.¹³⁸ As Michael Hametner states, the novel was, for many readers “ein Kultbuch—für die Zensur in der DDR ein Ärgernis.”¹³⁹ Abrassimov’s visit to the Honecker residence had consequences. The novel was banned and not rereleased until 1987 in the wake of Mikhail Gorbachev’s *glasnost* and *perestroika*. From Abrassimov’s appeal to Honecker in 1978 until the collapse of the GDR, Heiduczek published only children’s literature.¹⁴⁰

While Abrassimov’s observations of the novel’s offensiveness are accurate, *Tod am Meer* is also subversive in its rewriting of Thomas Mann’s *Tod in Venedig*, Thomas Mann being an otherwise accepted writer in the Lukácsian realist paradigm. Much is subversive in the novel’s relationship to Mann’s novella. One could point to the fact that the novel’s main character, Jablonski, kills himself rather than having to return to the so-called workers’ and peasants’ paradise on German soil. In addition, the novel is subversive in its constant hinting that the Stalinist system is itself self-destructive. These three points 1) the rewriting of Mann, 2) Jablonski’s suicide, and 3) Stalinist self-destruction are, furthermore, all interconnected. A narratological matter allows each of these three points to come to the fore: vocalization, that is, the textual transformation

¹³⁸ Ibid. 147.

¹³⁹ Michael Hametner. “Die Literatur von heute wird schnell vorbeigehen.” (interview with Werner Heiduczek). *Kunststoff*. 3 (2006).
http://www.ploettnerverlag.de/fileadmin/redaktion/Presse/InhaltsPDF/Kunststoff_Interview_Heiduczek.pdf

¹⁴⁰ Heiduczek’s children’s literature, it should be stated, is also rich and merits study in its own right.

from a third-person narrator to a first-person narrator.¹⁴¹ Whereas Mann's *Tod in Venedig* is narrated by a third-person narrator, *Tod am Meer* is narrated largely by the novel's main character and Aschenbach figure, Jablonski. This distinction is crucial, as it allows the reader to see Jablonski's life through Jablonski's commentary, revealing Jablonski's past, his suicidal character, and his analysis of the self-destructive nature of Stalinism. All of this is only possible through the text's reworking of Thomas Mann.

Jablonski

Werner Heiduczek's 1977 *Tod am Meer* needs to be viewed through three main lenses, each of which helps arrive at the same conclusion. The first of these lenses involves a conscious reading of the relationship between Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* and Heiduczek's *Tod am Meer*. The second involves reading *Tod am Meer* as detective fiction, an approach that allows for an examination of Jablonski's eyewitness account of his own life and his detective-like search in his past for the moment at which his life went awry. The third compares Jablonski's autobiographical work to his biographical work on Stalin, both being self-destructive and both officially dying of cerebral hemorrhaging. These three approaches combined lead to the conclusion that Jablonski's death is a case of suicide, that Jablonski's suicide represents the self-destructive nature of Stalinism, and that the narratological concept of vocalization is key to understanding how the novel demonstrates as much.

The reader of Heiduczek's *Tod am Meer* is informed, both in the first sentence by the fictional editor and by the last sentence of the last of three statements by people who

¹⁴¹ Gérard Genette. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Trans.). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. 290.

knew Jablonski, that Jablonski is dead. Jablonski's death, however, is ambiguous. A physician declares Jablonski's official cause of death to be a hemorrhage of the brain. The reader is also led to ponder, however, whether Jablonski's death might be a suicide, given his seemingly hopeless state of existence and his allusions to Werther (Goethe's fictional character who shoots himself in the head), Majakowski (the Russian futurist poet and painter who shot himself to death in 1930), and Schopenhauer (the nineteenth-century philosopher who wished to decriminalize, if not encourage, suicide), not to mention the novel's titular allusion to Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* (in which the main character remains in cholera-infested Venice knowing that it would lead to his death). This chapter reads Jablonski's death as a suicide and asks what his suicide represents.

Jablonski narrates his own downfall. In his lengthy, yet fragmentary letter written to his former hospital roommate, Jablonski, who is recovering from illness (among other things) in a hospital on the Black Sea in Bulgaria, writes of his life at the end of the war and throughout the 1950s. He describes an abusive army officer and his first girlfriend, who later killed the officer and was hanged for murder. He laments how he joined the SPD only in order to receive 100 Marks and how, only a couple of weeks after he joined the SPD, it merged with the KPD. He writes about his experience in a postwar teacher-training curriculum with a woman he loved, a prostitute he knew before the end of the war, and a potential lover who attempted suicide. He regrets how he was coerced by a young professor to confront a respected Kantian philosophy professor with questions about Stalin that led to the philosophy professor's dismissal. He describes his experience with the workers' uprising of June 17, 1953 and how a young Stalinist professor

attempted to quell the protestors and was accidentally killed by a protestor who threw a rock at him. Jablonski's anecdotes are telling, but they do not fit together into a coherent whole. They are fragmentary and do not lead to a climax. Jablonski's letter only makes much sense with the intervention of the fictional editor and Jablonski's three acquaintances. The fact that there is no clear central message in Jablonski's letter leads perhaps to the main point of the novel: Jablonski feels a need to communicate, but he cannot for a variety of reasons. He is a professional writer who can no longer write; he experiences writer's block. The main doctor in the hospital forbids him from writing. Perhaps worst of all, he cannot seem to find the heart of the matter. He cannot find the language to explicitly express what it is that bothers him so. Jablonski's inability to write parallels Werther's inability to paint and, more so, Aschenbach's inability to write. Indeed, *Tod am Meer* fits into the category of anti-Bildungsroman, in which *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* and *Der Tod in Venedig* are prime examples. Jablonski's narration illustrates the self-destructive nature of himself and of the society in which he lives.

Little has been written about *Tod am Meer*. A handful of reviews of the novel were written shortly after the novel's appearance, the most worthy of mention being those by Werner Liersch¹⁴² and Hans Jürgen Geerdts,¹⁴³ as those critics approach the novel as a work of literature. Achim Trebeß includes two pages on the novel in his 2001 essay on the motif of death in GDR literature.¹⁴⁴ Trebeß accurately notes the text's non-linear

¹⁴² Werner Liersch. "Wann die Wahrheit." *Neue Deutsche Literatur*. 26.3 (1978). 139-144.

¹⁴³ Hans Jürgen Geerdts. . "Werner Heiduczek: Tod am Meer." *Weimarer Beiträge: Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft*. 24.5 (1978). 143-151.

¹⁴⁴ Achim Trebeß. "Zum Todesmotiv in der DDR-Literatur." *Weimarer Beiträge: Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft*. 47.1 (2001). 82-84.

narration and compares the structure of the novel to that of a fairy tale, a matter that is not readily evident. Udo Grashoff briefly mentions the novel in his monograph on the history of suicide in the GDR, noting the novel's dark tone.¹⁴⁵ These works serve their purposes and will be mentioned further later in this chapter. Of these critics, only Werner Liersch has mentioned Heiduczek's allusion to Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig*, and he does so only to separate Heiduczek's novel from Mann's novella, damning the former and praising the latter. Nor has anyone dared to read Jablonski's death as a case of suicide, even though suicide is suggested in the novel by the fictional editor of Jablonski's diary. Trebeß calls Jablonski's death "ein Krankheitstod, der auf Konflikte des Individuums mit sich und mit der Gesellschaft hinweist."¹⁴⁶ Grashoff discusses the novel in the context of suicide, mentioning the suicide of a minor character whom Jablonski calls "die traurige Habicht," but failing to read Jablonski's death as a suicide. This chapter combines Liersch's observation that the novel alludes to Mann's novella with Trebeß's observation that the narrative situation of Heiduczek's novel is peculiar. A juxtaposition of the narrative situations of Mann's novella and Heiduczek's novel reveals much about Jablonski's narration and self-destruction. As none of the critics see Jablonski's death as a case of suicide, however, this point deserves to be clarified first.

Before examining what Jablonski's suicide represents, it is necessary to show that it is no mere assumption that Jablonski might have killed himself, but rather that he did commit suicide. First, there is no doubt that Jablonski is, for the bulk of his life, suicidal.

¹⁴⁵ Udo Grashoff. *"In einem Anfall von Depression...": Selbsttötungen in der DDR*. Berlin: Christoph Links, 2006. 456.

¹⁴⁶ Achim Trebeß. "Zum Todesmotiv in der DDR-Literatur." *Weimarer Beiträge*. 47.1 (2001). 86. This fits largely into the argument Zimmerman makes in his dissertation, namely that suicides in GDR literature represent a conflict between the individual and society.

Even as a young *Flakhelfer* [anti-aircraft artillery assistant] in the Second World War, Jablonski considered suicide and mulled over which method of suicide would be best.

Ich spielte mit dem Gedanken, mir das Leben zu nehmen. Aber ich wußte nicht, wie ich es anstellen sollte. Mich aufzuhängen schien mir schrecklich, und mich vom Dachgarten des Admiralspalastes auf das Steinpflaster zu stürzen, dazu hatte ich zuviel Angst. Ich stellte mir vor, wie ich da aufknallen würde, und die bloße Vorstellung nahm mir jeglichen Mut. Der beste Tod schien mir der Tod durch eine Kugel. Aber ich hatte keine Pistole. Ich hätte sie dem Oberleutnant stehlen müssen, doch ich fand keine Gelegenheit dazu.¹⁴⁷

Jablonski did not kill himself as a young man, because he did not have the means to shoot himself (unlike Werther, Mayakovsky, and Kleist) and because he did not like the other methods. Whether he would have shot himself had he had the means, the reader cannot know. What is clear, however, is that he considered the possibility of suicide in detail. To be sure, that is not the last time that Jablonski considers suicide. After the war, while thinking about his friend Ellen, who was dismissed from a teacher training program after the administration found out that she had worked as a prostitute during the war, Jablonski was in a state of depression that he describes as follows: “Ich befand mich in einer Stimme, in der man Schlaftabletten nimmt oder den Gashahn aufdreht.”¹⁴⁸ Jablonski finds himself in such a self-destructive state often throughout his life. After Jablonski’s death, his colleague M. confirms this as he states: “Er war niemals frei von Depression und

¹⁴⁷ Werner Heiduczek. *Tod am Meer*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1999. 49. Originally published in 1977.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.* 93.

Zweifel.”¹⁴⁹ As Jablonski repeatedly visits the theater to see his wife, an actress who has left him, perform, he is repeatedly beaten by the henchmen of the theater director who is Jablonski’s wife’s boyfriend. Thinking back on the situation, Jablonski writes, “Sollen sie mich totschiagen, dachte ich. Manchmal wünschte ich es geradezu.”¹⁵⁰ Later, in the clinic in Burgas in Bulgaria, Jablonski stands on the third floor balcony, looks down, and, having apparently overcome his fear of death by jumping off of a building, confesses “ich möchte mich hinabstürzen.”¹⁵¹ Again, he is denied the chance to follow through with the act, as he is interrupted by the nurse Weska. At another point, he considers leaping off of a cliff.¹⁵² He also ponders jumping out of a window.¹⁵³ It is no secret that he ponders death in Burgas. He contemplates: “Vielleicht ist Burgas meine letzte Station. Fast wünsche ich es.”¹⁵⁴ As his doctor warns him of the seriousness of his condition, Jablonski sums up his suicidal position as follows: “Ich fürchte nicht den Tod, den Dr. Assa mir androht, ich fürchte das Leben, wie ich es bisher gelebt hatte.”¹⁵⁵ He later formulates this in a more urgent manner: “Ich möchte sterben und muß leben. Und weiß nicht, wie. Und weiß nicht, wie ...”¹⁵⁶ Fictional commentators on Jablonski also suggest that he is suicidal. The playwright M. describes Jablonski as a “Grübler” who was never

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.* 307.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.* 179.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.* 85.

¹⁵² *ibid.* 183.

¹⁵³ *ibid.* 183.

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.* 86.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.* 180.

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.* 295.

free of doubt and depression and who suffered increasingly from the inner conflict between his personal naivete and his political intuition.¹⁵⁷ Anissa states that Jablonski suffered from his art and fell ill due to his own doubt about himself.¹⁵⁸ There can be little doubt, then, that Jablonski, throughout much of his life, was suicidal.

The fact that Jablonski wanted to die, one might argue, is no proof that he, in fact, killed himself. Although the official cause of Jablonski's death is cerebral hemorrhaging, there is ample textual evidence that suggests that Jablonski's death is a case of suicide. Already in the first two pages of the novel, the fictional editor suggests repeatedly that Jablonski's death is a case of suicide. "Mir will jedoch scheinen, Jablonski ist nicht an den Folgen eines Gefäßrisses gestorben, sondern an dem Versuch, sein Leben zu korrigieren."¹⁵⁹ Although, Jablonski is ill, the fictional editor suggests that Jablonski might have lived longer had he returned to Leipzig, as demanded by Dr. Assa. "Ich glaube, er blieb in Burgas, obwohl er wußte, daß Hitze und Feuchtigkeit hier ihm den Tod bringen konnten,"¹⁶⁰ a statement that alludes to the case of Gustav von Aschenbach, who remained in Venice, rather than returning to Munich, knowing that remaining in Venice meant his death. The fictional editor goes on to elaborate on his position that Jablonski remained in Burgas despite knowledge that he might die there. "Und je länger ich über Jablonski und sein Ende nachdenke, um so stärker drängt sich mir der Verdacht

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.* 307.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.* 309.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.* 5. The question of what is wrong with his life and how he tries to fix it shall be dealt with later.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.* 6.

auf, daß er Angst hatte, in sein gewohntes Leben zurückzukehren.”¹⁶¹ As we will see, there are several reasons why Jablonski’s accustomed life is not pleasant. In the next sentence the fictional editor makes his point more explicitly. “Vielleicht suchte er den Tod.”¹⁶² After reading Jablonski’s manuscript and the commentary by the fictional editor and the three other commentators on Jablonski, it would be difficult to argue that Jablonski did not successfully seek death. Citing Kant, as Jablonski does in his manuscript, the fictional editor posits that Jablonski sought death, “um sich aus der ‘selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit’ zu befreien.”¹⁶³ To this end, as the fictional editor writes, Jablonski did not passively wait for death, but rather, in the course of three months, he wrote himself to death (“sich ... geradezu in den Tod schrieb”).¹⁶⁴

The fictional editor’s statement that Jablonski wrote himself to death is more than mere speculation. Dr. Assa sees that writing is destructive for Jablonski and forbids him from doing so. Still Jablonski continues to write. Jablonski himself even writes of the self-destructive force in writing. “Immer wenn ich schreibe, fühle ich mich gehetzt, trinke, rauche und habe Kreislaufstörungen.”¹⁶⁵ In spite of—perhaps because of—this knowledge, Jablonski writes more and more. He is fully committed to writing his manuscript to the end, both to the end of the manuscript and to the end of him. In a passage somewhat reminiscent of Hamlet’s famous “to be or not to be” monologue, in

¹⁶¹ *ibid.* 6.

¹⁶² *ibid.* 6.

¹⁶³ *ibid.* 6.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.* 6.

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.* 285.

which Hamlet weighs the sleep-like state of death against the pains of life, Jablonski writes: “Ich weiß nicht, was auf mich wartet. Das Leben oder der Tod.”¹⁶⁶ He then adds, as a subtle nod towards the choice of death: “Aber ich habe keine andere Wahl. Sieben Tage. Anissa soll kommen [in order to take him back to Leipzig]. Sie soll kommen. Bis dahin werde ich das Letzte aufgeschrieben haben.”¹⁶⁷ In this passage, Jablonski weighs the pros and cons of life and death and then makes the decision to write himself to death before Anissa arrives in Bulgaria to take him back to his accustomed life in Leipzig. At the end his manuscript—it is ambiguous whether it is written by Jablonski or the fiction editor—there is the following sentence is written in all capital letters: “DER TOD IST EXAKT.”¹⁶⁸ Below that is the name “Rainer Maria Rilke,” hinting that the sentence may be a quotation from Rilke.¹⁶⁹ The pronounced quotation, in any case, implies that Jablonski’s death is no accident. But the allusion to Rilke is not the only allusion to writing of the early twentieth century.

Jablonski and Aschenbach

Heiduczek’s novel is a reworking of Thomas Mann’s novella *Der Tod in Venedig*. Mann was received favorably in the GDR, a matter that may seem baffling, given Mann’s early defense of German imperialism, his positive reception of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, and his writings’ emphasis on decadence, illness, and self-destruction.

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.* 273. Earlier in his manuscript, Jablonski explicitly cites *Hamlet* (185).

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.* 273.

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.* 304.

¹⁶⁹ To my knowledge, this quotation appears nowhere in Rilke’s oeuvre.

Indeed, Bertolt Brecht, a committed socialist, held Mann's bourgeois aesthetics in contempt, writing, for example, that he could not understand why the German people "nicht nur die untaten des hitlerregimes, sondern auch die romane des herrn mann geduldet hat."¹⁷⁰ Brecht's aesthetics and his opinions of Thomas Mann, however, were markedly different from those of Georg Lukács. Mann's aesthetics were notably bourgeois, but Lukács viewed the German bourgeoisie as an important part of the trajectory from humanism to socialism. Lukács, furthermore, believed that Mann represented all that is best in the German bourgeoisie. And Lukács's views of Mann took precedence in the GDR reception of Mann. Alfred Kurella, an important cultural functionary in the SED, similarly revered Mann, writing, for example, "ich persönlich habe Thomas Mann erlebt als den Höhepunkt der letzten großen Welle der realistischen deutschen Prosa des 19. Jahrhunderts."¹⁷¹ Although, there were attacks on Thomas Mann in later GDR literary criticism, Lukács's and Alfred Kurella's positive evaluation of Mann remained largely intact throughout the course of the GDR.

Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig*, in particular, was valued in the GDR. Again Lukács was key in shaping the GDR reception of *Der Tod in Venedig*. Between 1944 and 1955, Lukács wrote five essays praising the novella. In the first of these, the novella's main character represented the lack of any future for the German bourgeoisie.¹⁷² That is, Lukács sees Aschenbach largely as a personification of bourgeois Prussia, ill and dying.

¹⁷⁰ Bertolt Brecht. *Arbeitsjournal*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973. 599.

¹⁷¹ Alfred Kurella. "Gespräch mit Alfred Kurella." *Sinn und Form*. 2 (1975). 232.

¹⁷² Georg Lukács. "Preußentum in der deutschen Literatur." *Internationale Literatur*. 14.5 (1944).

In the second essay, he perceives social criticism embedded in the novella.¹⁷³ He then praises Aschenbach's composure and self-criticism.¹⁷⁴ In the last two of these essays, Lukács claims that the Aschenbach's self-criticism and artistic tendencies foreshadows those of the German bourgeoisie during and after the First World War.¹⁷⁵ In all of these essays, Lukács sees Aschenbach as representing the dying bourgeoisie, both its positive aspects and its lack of a future. Lukács's essays on Mann's novella were not the only ones to shape the GDR reception of that work, but they were by far the most influential. So how does Heiduczek's *Tod am Meer* subvert the GDR reception of Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig*?

The relationship between Heiduczek's *Tod am Meer* and Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* must be examined. Following Gerard Genette's typology of transtextuality, *Der Tod in Venedig* is a paratext to *Tod am Meer*. That is, there is an allusion to the former in something that is attached to latter but not in the body of the text itself. In this case, the allusion to *Der Tod in Venedig* is in the title *Tod am Meer*. The word "Tod" is included in both titles, and—excluding the definite article in the former—both titles consist of three words, and in each case the last of the three words is a place. In addition, the titular prepositional phrase "am Meer" also describes the location of Aschenbach's death in *Der Tod in Venedig*, that is, on the Lido in Venice, next to the Adriatic Sea. The titular paratextuality (paratextuality being that type of textual relationship, in which the link between the texts lies not in the hypertext, but rather in

¹⁷³ Georg Lukács. "Die deutsche Literatur im Zeitalter des Imperialismus." *Internationale Literatur*. 15.3 (1945). 53-65.

¹⁷⁴ Georg Lukács. "Auf die Suche nach dem Bürger." *Internationale Literatur*. 15.6-7 (1945). 58-75.

¹⁷⁵ Georg Lukács. "Die tragödie der modernen Kunst." *Thomas Mann*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1949. 49-113.
Georg Lukács. "Das Spielerische und seine Hintergründe." *Aufbau*. 11.6 (1955). 501-524.

something peripheral to it, the title, for example) invites readers to compare *Tod am Meer* with *Tod in Venedig*. In this case, it is not a difficult comparison. The two novels are similar enough that one may consider their textual relationship to be one of hypertextuality. Both novels involve an older, German writer experiencing writers' block who dies near a sea in southern Europe. In both cases, the protagonists' deaths can be read as an illness-related suicide. And both deaths can be read metonymically as the downfall of something greater than the protagonist himself.

Indeed the titular paratextuality also indexes a contrastive hypertextual relationship between the two works: vocalization, that narrative transformation that allows a character to tell his own story. The downfall of Aschenbach is told by a rather heterodiegetic narrator, whose focalization shifts from external to internal over the course of the narrative, the internal focalization remaining heterodiegetic. In other words, the narrator, who is not Aschenbach, sees the story largely from Aschenbach's perspective at the beginning of the narration, but becomes less and less able to see Aschenbach's perspective as the narration progresses. Jablonski tells of his own homodiegetic downfall with an autobiographical text that comprises the bulk of the novel. This difference is key. The seemingly objective, heterodiegetic narration in *Der Tod in Venedig* allows for the Lukácsian reading of the novella, which posits that Aschenbach, although previously admirable, has taken a wrong turn. Jablonski also thinks that his life has gone awry, but he cannot simply distance himself from his own life. His attempt to do so proves self-destructive. Before further examining how his internal, homodiegetic narration and his attempt to purge his extradiegetic self of unsavory intradiegetic elements destroys him, it is necessary to examine the spatial semantics of his downfall.

Central to both texts is the crossing of semantic borders.¹⁷⁶ Although little has been written about *Tod am Meer*, an incredible amount of scholarship has been produced on *Der Tod in Venedig*. Two narratologically-informed articles are of particular importance here. First, Dorrit Cohn's "The Second Author of *Der Tod in Venedig*" describes a transition in Mann's novella, in which the authorial narrator ceases to understand the protagonist Gustav von Aschenbach.¹⁷⁷ Second, Matias Martinez's "Choleratod und regressive Transzendenz. Thomas Mann, *Der Tod in Venedig* (1912)" uses Lotman's spatial semantics and his "klassifikatorische Grenze"¹⁷⁸ to describe the semantics of the transition involved in Aschenbach's trip from Munich to Venice. Martinez outlines three sets of semantic binaries. The first set describes psychological and physical changes in Aschenbach. The second set describes the semantic opposition between Munich (clean, attractive, bourgeois) and Venice (dirty, ugly, degenerate). The third set highlights the divide between the familiar and the foreign. As Martinez's essay demonstrates, Lotman's spatial semantics apply well to *Der Tod in Venedig*. Indeed, an enormous amount of semantic transition occurs along Aschenbach's path from Munich to

¹⁷⁶ Jurij Lotman. *Die Struktur literarischer Texte*. Rolf-Dietrich Keil (Trans.). Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1993. 356.

¹⁷⁷ Dorrit Cohn. "The Second Author of *Der Tod in Venedig*." *Probleme der Moderne: Studien zur deutschen Literatur von Nietzsche bis Brecht. Festschrift für Walter Sokel*. Benjamin Bennett, Anton Kaes, William J. Lillyman (Eds.). Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1983. 223-245. Cohn, a student of Franz Stanzel, remains relatively true to Stanzel's tripartite typology of "auktoriale," "Ich-," and "personale" narrative situations. See: Franz Karl Stanzel. *Typische Formen des Romans*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964. Stanzel later complicated his typology of narrative situations but maintained that these complications exist in harmony with the original tripartite typology. Gerard Genette created a very different typology that distinguishes between mood and voice and that includes a tripartite typology of focalization as part of the mood rubric. See: Gérard Genette. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Cornell UP, 1980. Since then, many have criticized Genette's concept of focalization on several different grounds. Genette's concept of focalization is, indeed, problematic, but it remains useful and it is utilized elsewhere in this dissertation.

¹⁷⁸ Jurij Lotman. *Die Struktur literarischer Texte*. Rolf-Dietrich Keil (Trans.). Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1993. 356..

Venice. Read together, the essays by Cohn and Martinez show that as the landscape changes, Aschenbach changes, and the narrator's perception of Aschenbach also changes.

What Cohn and Martinez establish narratologically—roughly stated, that Aschenbach undergoes great change as he travels from North to South—had already been posited by sociologically-informed critics, a decade before the publication of Cohn's essay.¹⁷⁹ What these critics argue is that the change, or rather downfall of Aschenbach represents the downfall of bourgeois society. Diersen makes this explicit as she writes, “Und doch signalisiert Aschenbachs Untergang Bedrohtheit und Brüchigkeit einer gesellschaftlichen Ordnung.”¹⁸⁰ The endangered societal order that Diersen describes—she was a critic from the GDR—is the pre-World War I, bourgeois German society, influenced by capitalism and experiencing early symptoms of what would become a long descent into fascism. Böschenstein's piece provides even more of a parallel to Cohn and Martinez. In any case, Aschenbach undergoes a change on his journey from Munich to Venice. This change has been largely read as a negative societal change.

Martinez shows, however, that while opposing elements can certainly be linked to opposing spaces in the novella, there is also another paradox at work in the novella. That is, there is also a system of incompatible, multiple meanings that do not exist in absolutely distinct times and spaces, but rather exist simultaneously within a single entity,

¹⁷⁹ Georg Lukács. “Deutsche Literatur im Zeitalter des Imperialismus.” 1945. *Skizze einer Geschichte der neueren deutschen Literatur*. Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1963. 190. Inge Diersen. *Thomas Mann: Episches Werk, Weltanschauung, Leben*. 3rd ed. Berlin/Weimar: Aufbau, 1985. (originally 1975). Bernhard Böschenstein. “Exzentrische Polarität.” *Interpretationen: Thomas Mann. Romane und Erzählungen*. Volkmar Hansen (Ed.). Stuttgart: Reclam, 1993. Note that both Lukács and Diersen were critics from the East Bloc.

¹⁸⁰ Inge Diersen. *Thomas Mann: Episches Werk, Weltanschauung, Leben*. 3rd ed. Berlin/Weimar: Aufbau, 1985. 99.

here in the figure of Aschenbach.¹⁸¹ Martinez elaborates this concept with the example that the story of Aschenbach is at once both realistic with a historical background and real geographical locations as well as mythical with its numerous transcendental figures. There are both outer and inner elements, a matter that leads back to Cohn's insight that, at some point in the novella, the narrator ceases to understand the inner Aschenbach and is only capable of describing Aschenbach from the outside, although Aschenbach is clearly undergoing inner change. The matter, however, is even more complicated. The paradox of Aschenbach not only has to do with the simultaneous existence of the realistic (outer) meanings and the mystical (inner) meanings, but also that Aschenbach's transformation is not entirely one from point A to point B, but rather that both A and B—with all the associations related to both—are always, to some degree at work in Aschenbach all the time. While the associations linked with A are generally read to be positive and those with B negative, both contain a wealth of associative meanings. In any case, Aschenbach's change represents the inner-workings of a system, whether psychological or societal. At the societal level, this is largely in tune with Diersen's reading: Elements in German society at the beginning of the twentieth century eventually get the upper hand in a way that leads the system to self-destruct.

Heiduczek's *Tod am Meer* employs a similar critical reading of Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* to describe the self-destruction of the German Democratic Republic. Before examining the inner changes in Jablonski himself, it is necessary to outline some of the politico-societal events described by Jablonski. Although several historical events are recounted in *Tod am Meer*, two events in particular, at least after the war, seem to stick

¹⁸¹ Matias Martinez. "Choleratod und regressive Transzendenz. Thomas Mann, *Der Tod in Venedig* (1912)." *Doppelte Welten: Struktur und Sinn zweideutigen Erzählens*. 162-165.

out starkly in Jablonski's mind. The first event is the absorption of the SPD by the KPD and the nominal creation of the SED. Jablonski entered the SPD in order to receive one hundred Mark from the SPD. Shortly thereafter, the SPD is dissolved into the KPD and Jablonski is stuck in the SED. He repeatedly exclaims how bitter he is about the matter. The other event that seems to plague Jablonski's memory is the failed workers' revolution of June 17, 1953, which was violently suppressed by the Soviets. In both of these cases voices are silenced, and history is simplified. Such a reading suggests correctly that *Tod am Meer* represents a case of proximation, that form of textual transformation that brings a story into contact with a contemporary situation. That is, if *Der Tod in Venedig* represents the self-destructive downfall of the German bourgeoisie, then *Tod am Meer*, being a reworking of *Der Tod in Venedig* in the East Bloc, represents self-destruction involved in Eastern European communism. Such is the case, but that is not the whole picture. Vocalization allows Jablonski to narrate his own story, unlike Aschenbach, and that narrative situation has ramifications that deserve examination.

Jablonski's Memory

One way of examining Jablonski's narrative situation is to read the novel as detective fiction. Such a reading sees Jablonski as an eyewitness to his own story. It also emphasizes Jablonski's investigative narration of his life. Jablonski detects his life story and, in the process, excavates much about German history. Detective fiction looks backwards to intradiegetic events in order to establish previously unknown (or rather unnarrated) details, most often in the form of the question: Who murdered the victim? Philosopher and literary critic Ernst Bloch offered a more eloquent definition of detective

fiction and lists three main criteria for genre: 1) “die Spannung des *Ratens*,” 2) “das *Entlarvende, Aufdeckende*,” and 3) “das *Unerzählte ... , Vorgeschichtehafte ...*” [9, italics are Bloch’s]. For Bloch, the third criterium is the most important and arises through the first two. Before any narration begins, a criminal act (*Untat*), usually murder, is committed. The narration, then, looks primarily backwards in time in order to reconstruct and thus explain the act.¹⁸² Bloch further notes that the narration of detective stories often begins with the discovery of a corpse. All of these criteria apply to *Tod am Meer*. The first sentence of the novel complies with this formula perfectly: “Jablonski ist tot.”¹⁸³ The rest of the novel seeks to explain the mysterious death of Jablonski. Not only does the narration take an analeptic turn to a time before Jablonski’s death, it goes as far back as his childhood in the 1930s, implying that the answer to the question of why Jablonski died lies that far back in the past. “Als in Hindenburg die Synagoge brannte, war ich ein Kind.”¹⁸⁴ Jablonski’s narration then proceeds through the war, capitulation, and well into the GDR years. All the while Jablonski asks at what point things began to go wrong. “Ich suche den Punkt, von dem aus mein Leben anfang, falsch zu laufen.”¹⁸⁵ While the fictional editor wants to detect the cause of Jablonski’s death, Jablonski answers this question – or at least provides much insight into it – through his attempt to find the point

¹⁸² Ernst Bloch. “Philosophische Ansicht des Detektivromans.” *Literarische Aufsätze*. vol. 9. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1965. Gérard Genette mentions similar aspects of detective fiction in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Cornell UP, 1980. (originally published as “Discours du récit,” a portion of *Figures III*. Editions due seuil, 1972). 77, 196-197. Also, Edgar Marsch explicitly alludes to Bloch as he (Marsch) develops a typology of order in detective fiction in *Die Kriminalerzählung: Theorie, Geschichte, Analyse*. Munich: Winkler, 1972. 82.

¹⁸³ Werner Heiduczek. *Tod am Meer*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1999. 5.

¹⁸⁴ *ibid.* 19. The synagogue in Hindenburg (today Zabrze) was burned down on November 9, 1938 around eight o’clock in the morning by National Socialists as part of “Kristallnacht.” “‘Reichskristallnacht’: Vor 65 Jahren: Rückfall in die Barbarei.” *Unser Oberschlesien*, 21, 13. (November 2003) 5-8.

¹⁸⁵ Werner Heiduczek. *Tod am Meer*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1999. 21.

at which his life began to go wrong. A reading of Jablonski's and the fictional editor's questions approaches the relevance of detective fiction as a paradigm for a reading of *Tod am Meer*. Before delving further into such a reading, however, it is necessary to look at another definition of detective fiction, one that considers the detecting character, in order to establish more firmly the importance of vocalization for *Tod am Meer*.

Given the lack of a detective in the sense of a police employee or a professional private investigator in *Tod am Meer*, a reader may be tempted to ask whether the work might belong simply to crime fiction rather than the more specific genre of detective fiction. Julian Symons explicitly distinguishes the two on eight grounds: plot, detective, method of murder, clues, people, milieu, social standing, and importance of the puzzle element.¹⁸⁶ Symons's criteria show that *Tod am Meer* can, indeed, be legitimately read as a work of detective fiction, but they also help to describe the work's narrative situation and the ramifications thereof. The first criterium, like Bloch's third criterium, is the assertion that analeptic reconstruction is necessary. The second criterium states that in detective fiction there must be a character who questions and detects. Symons, however, states that the detective need not be a professional and that the detective is often the main character. In this case, Jablonski fits the bill. The third criterium states that the method of murder is of great importance in detective fiction and is often strange. Although, as I argue, Jablonski's death is a matter of self-murder, the method is both strange and important. The fourth criterium states that detective fiction offers many clues, which are often explained by the detective figure. This is certainly the case with *Tod am Meer*.

Jablonski excavates Central European history finding and explaining clues all along the

¹⁸⁶ Julian Symons. *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel: A History*. New York: Viking, 1985.

way. The fifth criterium states that the detective figure is the main character in detective fiction and that all other characters are minor. Such is without doubt the case in *Tod am Meer* (yet another element that the work has in common with Mann's novella). The sixth criterium states that the bulk of the narration in detective fiction takes place before the murderous deed occurs. In the case of *Tod am Meer*, 294 out of 299 pages take place before Jablonski's death. The eighth criterium states that the importance of solving a puzzle or answering a question is of great importance for detective fiction. As quoted above, Jablonski explicitly cites the question of searching for a point at which his life began to spiral downward as the driving force behind his narration. Only Symons's seventh criterium is somewhat problematic for *Tod am Meer*. However, it is also problematic in itself. It states that detective fiction must have a conservative social stance. Symons, however, does not offer a definition of conservative, nor does he assert whether it is the detective, the narrator, or the author who ought to be conservative. Furthermore, since the SED thought itself to be progressive, it is difficult to say what conservative means in the context of the GDR. In any case, *Tod am Meer* fulfills at least seven of Symons's eight criteria of detective fiction as opposed to crime fiction and may legitimately be read as detective fiction.

The elements that make the novella not seem like detective fiction are, in large part, the elements that make *Tod am Meer* different from *Der Tod in Venedig*. The most important of these is that Jablonski is detecting his own case. He narrates his own demise. There are no suspects whom he can ask whether they have alibis. There is no one whom the police can arrest. The detection is not committed to the scientific rigor of Auguste Dupin or Sherlock Holmes, nor are there any forensics laboratories. This is all

because the scene of the events is Jablonski's memory. Nonetheless there is a question that leads to detection, and there is, in accordance with Symons's second criterium, a character who detects, only the victim, as it were, and the detective are the same character.

The mystery that Jablonski seeks to solve is how his life turns out to be so miserable. His detection in the work seeks to locate a turning point at which his life goes awry. "Ich suche den Punkt, von dem aus mein Leben anfang, falsch zu laufen."¹⁸⁷ How does he go about this detection? In searching for that point in his life, he is both detective and one of several witnesses, the main witness, in fact. He perceives his own story. To use Genette's terms, which are adopted by Martinez and Scheffel in the German context, he is a homodiegetic (more specifically, autodiegetic) narrator with internal focalization, at least in his manuscript, which makes up the bulk of the novel. He recounts the events of his own life. There are two levels of narration within Jablonski's manuscript: the extradiegetic and the intradiegetic. That is, there is the level in the fictional manuscript's present (the extradiegetic), where Jablonski is in the hospital in Burgas, Bulgaria, and there is his past (the intradiegetic), where he is involved in the Second World War, witnesses the workers' uprising of June 17, 1953, and so on. His detection involves searching for the intradiegetic point that leads to his miserable extradiegetic existence. He is at once detective, victim, and perpetrator. The clues are episodes in his (intradiegetic) life.

Jablonski never does find a singular point at which his life goes awry. Instead, nearly every event in his life is such a point. He precedes several intradiegetic episodes

¹⁸⁷ Werner Heiduczek. *Tod am Meer*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1999. 21.

by stating that his negative life turn may have begun with the episode that he is about to narrate. He recounts numerous, failed, amorous relationships as well as deaths and political and personal fiascos. The National Socialists hang Wanda.¹⁸⁸ A fellow soldier murders his friend Wysgol in the War. “Und mit Wysgol hat er mir die Hoffnung genommen.”¹⁸⁹ He unsuccessfully attempts to navigate his way Westward after the War.¹⁹⁰ He enters the SED more or less against his will.¹⁹¹ The Communists dismiss Ellen from the teacher-training program when they find out that she worked as a prostitute for Nazi military officers.¹⁹² Jablonski manipulates a girl known as the “traurige Habicht” into a suicide attempt and greatly resents it.¹⁹³ He ruins his relationship with Hermine by sleeping with her daughter.¹⁹⁴ At Imme’s instigation, he defends Stalin against a Kantian philosophy professor, an episode that he later greatly regrets.¹⁹⁵ For a moment, he places the blame of his miserable life on Imme. He states three times, “Imme ist schuld.”¹⁹⁶ He points out, “Ohne ihn wäre mein Leben anders verlaufen.”¹⁹⁷ But as soon as he blames Imme, he acknowledges that the matter is more

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.* 52.

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.* 64.

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.* 64.

¹⁹¹ *ibid.* 122.

¹⁹² *ibid.* 116-121.

¹⁹³ *ibid.* 124-127.

¹⁹⁴ *ibid.* 228-230.

¹⁹⁵ *ibid.* 196-201.

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.* 185.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.* 192.

complicated. “Ich habe ihn gefürchtet, und ich habe ihn geliebt.”¹⁹⁸ He later goes so far as to claim that Imme’s death is his (Jablonski’s) downfall.¹⁹⁹ Jablonski sums up the failure of his life with the pithy sentence, “Mein ganzes Leben ging schief.”²⁰⁰ The major event that destroys Jablonski, however, is the act of detection itself.

Before examining how Jablonski detects himself to death, it is useful to examine Jablonski’s spaces of detection—not the spaces that he detects, but rather the extradiegetic spaces from which he detects: the sea and his hospital bed—as they emphasize the change in focalization that accompanies vocalization. Both foreshadow Jablonski’s self-destructiveness and the way that he perceives it. The space of the sea, already mentioned in the novel’s title, again juxtaposes the novel with Thomas Mann’s novella *Der Tod in Venedig*. Both Aschenbach and Jablonski die next to the sea, but whereas Aschenbach’s story is narrated by an outside narrator—what Dorrit Cohn, following Franz Stanzel, calls a second author²⁰¹—from an unknown location, Jablonski’s story is narrated by Jablonski at sea. In describing the semantic role of the sea in Mann’s *Der Tod in Venedig*, Matias Martinez writes,

In der Novelle steht das Meer in bedeutungstragender Opposition zum Festland.

Aschenbach kommt aus dem kontinentalen München. Seine Reise ans Meer

scheint nur ein geographischer Ortswechsel zu sein. Im Laufe der Erzählung

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.* 192.

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.* 210.

²⁰⁰ *ibid.* 22.

²⁰¹ Dorrit Cohn. “The Second Author of *Der Tod in Venedig*.” *Probleme der Moderne: Studien zur deutschen Literatur von Nietzsche bis Brecht. Festschrift für Walter Sokel*. Benjamin Bennett, Anton Kaes, William J. Lillyman (Eds.). Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1983. 223-245.

werden jedoch Hinweise eingestreut, die das Meer über seine denotative Bedeutung hinaus mit konnotativen Zusatzbedeutungen aufladen.²⁰²

In the case of Jablonski, the Black Sea is not only a semantic opposition to his home on solid ground in Leipzig, it also represents the absence of solid ground on which to erect his search for cause and effect. In other words, it represents memory (in the sense of the ancient Greek mythological figure of Letha). If the sea is a symbol of memory and forgetting, then it makes sense that Jablonski narrates his life story along the sea.

Jablonski's memory, which provides the basis of his narration, indulges in analepsis and prolepsis. Jablonski does not craft a solid narration, but rather his memory drifts without an apparent destination. Although Leipzig also has waterfront in the form of the river Elbe, there is a semantic difference between Leipzig's river and Burgas' sea. The river flows linearly toward a destination, whereas the sea ebbs and flows and contains waves. Besides Burgas, the towns Jablonski has lived in have all been located on rivers. "[M]ein Leben ist dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß ich es an stinkenden Flüssen zubringen muß: Schwarze Elster, Beuthener Wasser, Mulde."²⁰³ On these rivers, history has been narrated as linear, teleological narratives, whether by National Socialism or by Stalinism. On the wavy, tidal Black Sea, Jablonski's memory drifts along as it wishes. If, however, Jablonski's memory is liberated at sea, it is no luxury for Jablonski. He knows Burgas is on the sea and will be a place where he can remember, writing: "O Burgas, das mich hergeholt hat, damit Totes in mir wach wird."²⁰⁴ He also implies that he understands how

²⁰² Matias Martinez. "Choleratod und regressive Transzendenz. Thomas Mann, *Der Tod in Venedig* (1912)." *Doppelte Welten: Struktur und Sinn zweideutigen Erzählens*. 151-176. 158.

²⁰³ Werner Heiduczek. *Tod am Meer*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1999. 293.

²⁰⁴ *ibid.* 52.

destructive such remembering in Burgas might be: “Vielleicht ist Burgas meine letzte Station. Fast wünsche ich es.”²⁰⁵ He is, furthermore, well aware of the myth of Letha, but he also recognizes that the free flow of memory can be self-destructive. “Lethe trinken, ins Nirwana eingehen. Der Mythos kennt schöne Namen. Aber so oder so, ich bin verdammt, mich zu erinnern ...” [the ellipses are Jablonski’s].²⁰⁶ Jablonski feels forced to remember, knowing that it will be his demise. Burgas on the Black Sea is, then, certainly a place where Jablonski feels he can remember past events in his life.

There is, however, another location of narration where the act of self-destruction is materialized: Jablonski’s hospital bed. Although, the hospital lies next to the Black Sea, it is more specifically in the restricted space of his hospital bed from which Jablonski narrates. Monika Ankele describes the hospital bed—in the context of women’s psychiatric institutions around 1900—as a restricted space in which the patient further restricts herself.²⁰⁷ That is, the restricted space of the bed—a space to which psychiatrists at the time thought it healthy to confine women with psychiatric disorders—instigates in the patient a drive to flee further within herself. They create “einen Raum im Raum.”²⁰⁸ Ankele’s examples of such intraspaces include Helen Prager who hid objects as well as animals under her bed sheets,²⁰⁹ the painter Bertha Gertrud Fleck who kept her eyes shut even while not sleeping, so as to be able to see things that were not

²⁰⁵ *ibid.* 86.

²⁰⁶ *ibid.* 259.

²⁰⁷ Monika Ankele. “Begrenzter Raum: Das Bett in der Frauenpsychiatrie um 1900.” *Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften*. 2 (2008). 61-71.

²⁰⁸ *ibid.* 62.

²⁰⁹ *ibid.* 66-67.

there in or around her bed,²¹⁰ several patients who hid under their bed sheets as a measure similar to closing their eyes but with the added protection against being seen by others,²¹¹ and Auguste Opel who even ate under her bed sheets.²¹² Although Jablonski is neither a woman, nor is he living around 1900, nor does he literally keep his eyes closed or hide under his bed sheets, he does flee within himself. In his hospital bed, he lodges himself into the intradiegetic world of his memory to the point of self-destruction. He is ill, so he remembers, and the more he remembers the more ill he becomes.

As Jablonski replays his life looking for the moment in which his life turned awry, he explores unpredictability in GDR history. In explaining his notion of explosion (the catalyst of unpredictability), Yuri Lotman mentions detective fiction as a potential site for unpredictability. He creates a dichotomy between detective fiction that offers a single offender and tends toward predictability (perhaps what Bloch meant when he wrote that detective fiction tends to be conservative) and detective fiction that exposes unpredictability. Lotman offers Edgar Allan Poe as a representative author of the latter kind of detective fiction. "... the artistic strength of the works of E. A. Poe consists precisely in the fact that he lays before the reader riddles which cannot be solved. [...] E. A. Poe opens before the reader a way without end, a window onto unpredictability ...”²¹³ This is precisely the kind of detective fiction that *Tod am Meer* is. It offers a “window onto unpredictability.” It questions GDR history, and instead of offering a “sly

²¹⁰ *ibid.* 67.

²¹¹ *ibid.* 68.

²¹² *ibid.* 68.

²¹³ Yuri Lotman. *Culture and Explosion*. Marina Grishakova (ed.). Wilma Clark (trans.). Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009. 121.

or simple ‘explanation[.]’,²¹⁴ it exposes a riddle “which cannot be solved.” In doing so, it forces both Jablonski and the reader to consider unpredictable possibilities. Such consideration of unpredicatability works against the Eastern European communist reverence for linear, logical history. Jablonski surely understood this as he was a historian.

Jablonski and Stalin

Although Jablonski kills himself, a symptom of the illness that he thrust upon himself is cerebral hemorrhaging. Jablonski’s act of bleeding from the head is an important symbol for the novel. It is an abjective act that symbolizes the self-destruction involved in Jablonski’s act of detecting his past. It also indexes the life and death of a figure Jablonski knew well, one who officially died of cerebral hemorrhaging: Joseph Stalin. Furthermore, two other characters in *Tod am Meer*, whose lives are intricately intertwined with Stalinism, die of cerebral hemorrhaging. The relationship between cerebral hemorrhaging, abjection, and Stalinism must be examined. First, however, it is in order to note the relationship between Jablonski’s cause of death and that of Aschenbach.

In Thomas Manns *Tod in Venedig*, Gustav von Aschenbach remains in Venice knowing that he will die of Cholera, a bacterial infection primarily of the small intestines. The main symptoms of the disease are extreme, chronic diarrhea and vomiting, both of which lead to fatal dehydration. In other words, the system that is the human body defluids itself to death in an attempt to flush out the bacteria. This defluiding can be seen

²¹⁴ *ibid.* 121.

as abjection. The narrator of Aschenbach's story gives the reader no details of Aschenbach's abjective symptoms, in part because Aschenbach's death is narrated by a heterodiegetic, third-person narrator.²¹⁵ At this point in the narration, as Cohn indicates, the narrator does not understand Aschenbach's experiences. Jablonski, on the other hand, narrating his own story, describes earlier abjective symptoms. Long before he writes himself to death, as he is a soldier in the Second World War—an episode that is without doubt related to his misery and later suicide—he contracts a waterborne bacterial illness, likely dysentery or typhoid fever. “Wir bekamen drei Tage weder zu trinken noch zu essen. Und als es das erste Wasser gab, gab es die Ruhr und den Typhus.”²¹⁶ Jablonski contracts the illness and his symptoms include gastroenteritis, fever, and extreme vomiting. “Gegen Abend bekam ich Brechdurchfall und Fieber. Die ganze Nacht über kotzte ich” (66-67).²¹⁷ Here, in the midst of the Second World War, is where Jablonski's abjection begins. It continues later in the form of writing, purging out the painful details of his life story.

Although it may be argued that Aschenbach experiences abjective symptoms, Jablonski's cerebral hemorrhaging indexes another narrative much more clearly, one all too familiar to Jablonski. The dictator of the Soviet Union, Joseph Vissarionovich “Stalin” dies on March 5, 1953 of cerebral hemorrhaging. At least, this is the official cause of Stalin's death that would have been familiar to both Jablonski and Heiduczek. The recent emergence of an earlier draft of the medical report, which was locked away

²¹⁵ Later, I point to Kristeva's definition of the abject in order to describe the symbolic value of these symptoms. For now, by abjective symptoms, I mean simply that the body is excreting fluids.

²¹⁶ Werner Heiduczek. *Tod am Meer*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1999. 63.

²¹⁷ *ibid.* 66-67.

for decades, describes the vomiting of blood, pointing, therefore, towards stomach hemorrhaging.²¹⁸ In any case, the brutal, paranoid dictator died of abjective symptoms very similar to those that accompanied Jablonski's death. Jablonski, furthermore, is familiar with Stalin's death, not only because Jablonski was living in the GDR at the time, not only because he was a member of the SED, but because he was trained as a biographer of Stalin. First, Imme has Jablonski defend Stalin vis-à-vis Melzer, a Kantian philosophy professor. Then, after Jablonski completed his studies at the university, Imme sent Jablonski to the regional Party school to be trained as a Stalin biographer. "Imme jedoch hatte mich nach Abschluß des Studiums sofort für zwei Monate auf die Kreispartei-schule geschickt. Ausbildung als Propagandist. Spezialgebiet: Stalinbiographie."²¹⁹ Not only does Jablonski mention Stalin often in his manuscript, he explicitly mentions Stalin's death.

Im Frühsommer dreiundfünfzig drohte in unserem Land die Emotion die Vernunft zu erdrücken. Stalin war gestorben. Die Pläne, Deutschland zu neutralisieren, waren gescheitert. Nato und Warschauer Vertrag. Rüstung. Rüstung. Rüstung. Es drohte ein neuer Krieg.²²⁰

Here Jablonski mentions Stalin's death in the context of the insecurity of Cold War Germany. This association, taken at face value, seems to imply that Jablonski thinks everything was better when Stalin was alive. However, the case is more complicated than this. Although trained as a Stalin biographer, Jablonski is no great defender of

²¹⁸ Simon Sebag Montefiore. *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*. London: Phoenix, 2004. 661. (originally published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003). Montefiore also believes Stalin killed himself.

²¹⁹ Werner Heiduczek. *Tod am Meer*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1999. 212.

²²⁰ *ibid.* 260.

Stalin. It must also be stated, however, that Jablonski does not denounce Stalin as harshly as one might hope. For example, when Jablonski, even before his training as a Stalin biographer, learns that Stalin lets his own son die in a Nazi prisoner-of-war camp, rather than exchanging imprisoned German officers for his son's life, Jablonski notes how cruel the act is, but then admires Stalin's persistence.

Sein Vater hätte ihn gegen hohe deutsche Offiziere austauschen können. Aber er hat den Sohn hingeopfert. Es schien mir eine schreckliche Tat, zugleich bewunderte ich die Unbedingtheit gegen sich selbst. Mir kam das Geschehen vor wie in einer griechischen Tragödie. Ich verstieg mich so weit, Stalin mit Ödipus zu vergleichen ...²²¹

Jablonski appears almost to admire Stalin, although Stalin's persistence is self-destructive. Not only might it be compared to Oedipus, but also to that of Aschenbach and Jablonski.²²² Aschenbach's favorite word is, in fact, "Durchhalten."²²³

Neither Aschenbach nor Oedipus, however, is a cruel dictator, who murdered millions of people. Jablonski's ambiguity toward Stalin and the SED must be further examined. Jablonski is no great apparatchik. Once he even exclaims, "Ich scheiß auf die Partei."²²⁴ Still, he is a member of the Party, even if he entered the Party on a fluke. He makes sarcastic statements about others who romanticize Stalin. "Hermine sprach von

²²¹ *ibid.* 205.

²²² The allusion here to Oedipus also foreshadows the subversive engagement with ancient Greek literature in Christa Wolf's *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, as is discussed in the next chapter.

²²³ Thomas Mann. *Der Tod in Venedig*. Berlin: S. Fischer, 1913. 22.

²²⁴ Werner Heiduczek. *Tod am Meer*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1999. 233.

Stalin wie Goethes Lotte von Klopstock, gleichsam verzaubert.”²²⁵ However, he learns to be a Stalin biographer, well knowing that he is going to be a cog in the Party propaganda machine. And even though he sometimes curses the Party, there are moments when he feels great allegiance to it.

Lach mich aus, lach mich aus, eines Nachts wurde ich wach, sprang aus dem Bett und hielt eine große Rede. Es war ein Ruf an alle. Ich konnte nicht anders. Saulus war Paulus geworden. Es hätte nicht viel gefehlt, und ich hätte neben Marx und Lenin und Stalin den lieben Gott beschworen.²²⁶

This passage shows how mixed up Jablonski is at times. A Catholic, Jablonski not only swings back and forth between hating the Party and willingly participating in it, he also mixes two belief systems that are normally thought to be starkly opposed to one another. Even as he curses Stalinism, it is internalized in him. In another passage, Jablonski curses Stalin, among other things, not because the dictator murdered millions of human beings, but rather because he associates Stalin with his unhappy relationship with Hermine.

Ich war plötzlich wütend auf Mauritius und den traurigen Habicht. Ein Unstern leuchtete über mir, seit ich so leichtfertig in die SPD eingetreten war. Die hundert Mark brachten mir miserable Zinsen. Von der SPD war ich zur SED gekommen, von der SED zu Immanuel Kant, von Immanuel Kant zu Imme, von Imme zu Stalin, von Stalin zu Hermine. Ihretwegen saß ich nun mit durchnässten Hosen und einem geschenkten Pullover, dessen Ärmel mir zu kurz waren, in einem

²²⁵ *ibid.* 214.

²²⁶ *ibid.* 235.

Zimmer der Landesleitung und mußte mich von Imme anschreien lassen. Dabei hatte ich mich sogar ohne sein Wissen zu einem Volksrichter-Lehrgang gemeldet, um Hermine zu entfliehen.²²⁷

This passage combined with the previous one shows how intertwined Stalinism is in Jablonski's life. He finds his way to Stalinism in a manner similar to the main character in a *Schelmenroman*. He meanders here and there, and Stalinism becomes part of his life, whether he likes it or not. In this passage, he condemns Stalin, but mostly for the reason that he is not satisfied with his life, and Stalin is intertwined with his life. To emphasize the constant juxtaposition of Jablonski and Stalin, it is furthermore, worth mentioning that Jablonski, during the war, was called "heiliger Josef,"²²⁸ whether his real first name is Josef, the text leaves open.

Jablonski's inability to separate Stalinism and other things that he does not like from his life leads back to the abject. Jablonski, the detective, looks for the point at which his life turns sour. He wants to rid himself of that element. He cannot find that point, or rather his whole life is that point. He tries to expel elements from his life until he is no more. Abjection is the violent attempt to separate oneself from something that exists within oneself. Or as Kristeva writes:

L'abjection is something that disgusts you, for example, you see something rotting and you want to vomit – it is an extremely strong feeling that is at once somatic and symbolic, which is above all a revolt against an eternal menace from

²²⁷ *ibid.* 232-233.

²²⁸ *ibid.* 44.

which one wants to distance oneself, but of which one has the impression that it may menace us from the inside.²²⁹

John Lechte follows this definition up with the key word, ambiguity, which the previous few cited passages from the novel show to be an important part of Jablonski's abjection.

"[T]he abject is the threat of unassimilable non-unity: that is, ambiguity. Abjection, therefore, is fundamentally 'what disturbs identity, system, order'" (Lechte 160).²³⁰

Jablonski's acts of vomiting and later bleeding in the head are both acts, in which he attempts to distance himself from things that are so deeply woven into the fabric of his life that he cannot expulse them without harming himself. As he writes early in his manuscript: "Mein ganzes Leben ging schief."²³¹ He thus wants to distance himself from everything that he is. Jablonski revolts against menaces that menace him from the inside. His whole inside menaces him, and his revolt against these menaces brings him to the point of self-annihilation.

Jablonski, however, is not the only character in the novel who suffers symptoms of abjection. In fact, most characters in the novel do. Some have bowel movements or vomit. Most, however, bleed from the head. Jablonski's mother calls his father a "Straschek, was soviel bedeutet wie 'Hosenscheißer'" (24).²³² Jablonski describes squatting over an oriental toilet in Bulgaria and meeting Iwan who taught him

²²⁹ Julia Kristeva. *Julia Kristeva, Interviews*. Ross Mitchell Guberman (Ed.). New York: Columbia UP, 1996. 118. Abjection also plays a role in the chapter on Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.*

²³⁰ John Lechte. *Julia Kristeva*. London: Routledge, 1990. 160. The passage that Lechte cites ("what disturbs identity, system, order") is from Julia Kristeva. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Leon S. Roudiez (Trans.). New York: Columbia UP, 1982. 4.

²³¹ Werner Heiduczek. *Tod am Meer*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1999. 22.

²³² *ibid.* 24.

Bulgarian.²³³ The “dicke Zigeunerin” in the hospital vomits into the sink and clogs the drain.²³⁴ Paul hits his head on the corner of a table and bleeds heavily.²³⁵ The “traurige Habicht” slashes her wrists open and nearly bleeds to death.²³⁶ Anissa nearly bleeds to death as the result of a botched abortion. Vunja has the same illness as Jablonski. Dr. Assa warns both of them of the “Wildheit der Liebe. [...] Der physiologische Vorgang könne einen neuen Gefäßriß provozieren.”²³⁷ Tscherwuchin appears one night at Jablonski’s room with an unexplained bloody forehead.²³⁸ In the middle of Jablonski’s description of how demonstrators stormed the building of the Ministerium für Staatssicherheit on June 17, 1953, Jablonski describes how he saw a man with a bloody face. All of this abjection is interwoven with Stalinism, which, as will become evident, can also be seen as abjective and self-destructive.

Two other characters, in particular, lead lives interwoven in the history of Stalinism and die of cerebral hemorrhaging. Imme (Immanuel Feister) also has a bloody head on June 17, 1953. Imme is the pseudo-academic who has Jablonski the student defend Stalin against a renowned professor of Kantian philosophy. He is also the character who sends Jablonski to the propaganda department of the regional Party school to be a Stalin biographer. Imme defends Stalin(ism) to death. That is, he defends Stalin(ism) until he, Imme, dies. (Stalin is already dead at this point). Imme says over

²³³ *ibid.* 30-31.

²³⁴ *ibid.* 54.

²³⁵ *ibid.* 74.

²³⁶ *ibid.* 137.

²³⁷ *ibid.* 187.

²³⁸ *ibid.* 243.

and over again, “Die Macht geben wir nicht aus der Hand.”²³⁹ The power, however, does not leak out of his hands, but rather out of his head. As protestors assemble on the market square, Imme runs to the square, climbs up a wooden pole, and tries to yell over the protestors’ loudspeakers. He demands that they turn off the speakers and return to the carbide ovens. Jablonski thinks Imme is crazy, and the words Jablonski uses to describe this thought are telling. “ich dachte: Dem springt der Kopf auseinander.”²⁴⁰ And that is exactly what happens. A protestor throws a rock at Imme that hits him precisely in the head. He lies on the grounds, blood flowing from his head, rainwater flowing into his mouth. The border between the subject and the object is fluid.

Another character who deals with abjection and is self-destructive in a way similar to Jablonski is Schippenschiß (Willi Hutkessel), who is to play the lead role in the film for which Jablonski is writing the script. Schippenschiß earns his nickname, from which he cannot possibly escape, through an act of abjection.

Während seiner Zeit als Heizer auf einer Lok fragte ihn jemand: “Was machst du denn, wenn’s dich ankommt? Du kannst doch nicht den Hintern in den Wind hängen?” Hutkessel antwortete treuherzig: “Ich scheiß auf die Schippe, und rein ins Feuerloch.” Alle, die dabeistanden, wollten sich einpissen vor Lachen. Seit jenem Tag hieß Willi Hutkessel “Schippenschiß.” Es kränkte ihn so, daß er bei der Reichsbahn kündigte. Aber die Flucht half ihm nicht. Er hätte nach Kanada

²³⁹ *ibid.* 253.

²⁴⁰ *ibid.* 268.

auswandern können, nach Australien, auf eine gottverlassene Insel, der Name wäre ihm vorausgeeilt.²⁴¹

His nickname is perhaps the only thing that remains constant in his life. Besides working as a locomotive stoker, he works as a construction equipment operator and as an aluminium fabricator. He goes on to win a national literature prize and later becomes director of the Kulturpalast, a job from which he is later fired along with being dismissed from the Party. Schippenschiß's career roller coaster and his rise and fall in the Party represent a political ambiguity similar to that of his abjective act. When he shovels his shit onto the fire that powers the State locomotive, is he symbolically shitting on the State, or is he adding organic fuel to the fire? This is the dilemma faced by most of the characters in the novel, especially Jablonski and Schippenschiß.

Jablonski and Schippenschiß are, indeed, quite similiar. They are so similiar that Jablonski writes: "Schippenschiß war Jablonski und Jablonski war Schippenschiß."²⁴² Jablonski and Schippenschiß are the same age and even share the same birthday.²⁴³ They have had similar careers or at least similar career up and downs.²⁴⁴ Just as Schippenschiß moves from being a simple worker to a major figure in GDR cultural policymaking and then gets kicked out of the Party, Jablonski, as a result of the Bitterfelder Weg movement, begins his writing career while working with a carbide oven and undergoes a series of ups and downs in his relationship to the Party. Schippenschiß's life, like that of Jablonski

²⁴¹ *ibid.* 274.

²⁴² *ibid.* 275.

²⁴³ *ibid.* 273.

²⁴⁴ *ibid.* 275.

is plagued with a confusing ambiguity. Jablonski describes the emotions of Schippenschiß's life, and perhaps that of his own, in terms of opposing pairs: Qual und Freude, Haß und Liebe, Tod und Leben, es sind siamesische Zwillinge."²⁴⁵ These opposing pairs at work in the lives of Jablonski and Schippenschiß are similar to those Matias Martinez describes in *Aschenbach*. There is a change from A to B, and constantly back and forth. And in Jablonski and Schippenschiß, as in *Aschenbach*, the A and the B are both simultaneously present in the system of the character.

To get to the point, Jablonski and Schippenschiß are not only similar to each other, they both represent the paranoia and self-destructiveness of the Stalinism at work in the GDR. Jablonski himself makes this point explicitly when describing Schippenschiß. "In seinem Leben steckte mein eigenes. Und in unser beider Leben das unseres Landes."²⁴⁶ And Jablonski is not the only Stalin biographer to describe Stalinism and a paranoid and self-destructive system. Simon Sebag Montefiore counts as one of the major traits of Stalin to be "cannibalistic paranoia."²⁴⁷ Montefiore also mentions Stalin's plethora of illness and deformity as well as his hypochondria. His political paranoia may also be described in terms of hypochondria. Jablonski writes that his film is meant to shock.²⁴⁸ The reader does not have the opportunity to view the fictional film. But shock is exactly what Heiduczek's novel does. The Party-loyal writer Dieter Noll, as

²⁴⁵ *ibid.* 282.

²⁴⁶ *ibid.* 275.

²⁴⁷ Simon Sebag Montefiore. *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*. London: Phoenix, 2004. 4

²⁴⁸ Werner Heiduczek. *Tod am Meer*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1999. 275.

Udo Grashoff cites, is “schwer schockiert” by the book.²⁴⁹ Hans Koch, furthermore, was appalled by the “selbsterstörische Züge” in the novel.²⁵⁰ Koch was correct: at its core, the novel is about self-destruction. Jablonski’s self-destructive abjection represents the self-destructive elements of Stalinism, that is, show trials, purging, murder, and, specific to the context of the GDR, population hemorrhaging. Not only are characters in the novel, such as Schippenschiß, dismissed from the Party on mysterious grounds, others leave their jobs or even the GDR. In describing a Bitterfeld-related work program²⁵¹ to Jablonski for the sake of his film, Schippenschiß explains a hemorrhage of work-force.

Wir haben gelebt wie in einem Kloster. Nein, schlimmer. Planerfüllung
 hundertzwanzig Prozent, nicht saufen, nicht huren, keine Bummelschicht,
 Dichterlesung, Beethoven und Neues Deutschland. Nach einem Monat liefen die
 ersten davon. Ich weiß nicht mehr, wie viele durchhielten. Keine fünfzig
 Prozent. Und von denen, die durchhielten, blieben die meisten nur wegen der
 Prämie.²⁵²

In this case, the treatment of workers is counterproductive. The workers are so heavily encouraged to work harder that they do not work.²⁵³ And, of course, people flee the

²⁴⁹ Udo Grashoff. *“In einem Anfall von Depression ...”: Selbsttötungen in der DDR*. Berlin: Christoph Links, 2006. 456.

²⁵⁰ Udo Grashoff. *“In einem Anfall von Depression ...”: Selbsttötungen in der DDR*. Berlin: Christoph Links, 2006. 456. Grashoff cites Koch from *Neues Deutschland*. April 15-16, 1978. 4.

²⁵¹ The Bitterfelder Weg, initiated in 1959, was a program that encouraged writers to perform manual labor and encouraged laborers to write. It was named after the town of Bitterfeld, where the first conference to plan the program convened on April 24, 1959.

²⁵² Werner Heiduczek. *Tod am Meer*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1999. 279. The allusion to Beethoven here also demonstrates how tiresome the official literary heritage of the GDR had become.

²⁵³ Heiner Müller’s play *Der Lohndrucker* deals with a similar paradox. The main character of the play, modeled after Hans Garbe, who became a Party propaganda tool, because he once rebuilt a furnace while

GDR. Jablonski himself states three times that he travels to Bulgaria in order to flee the GDR.²⁵⁴ Jablonski tells Imme that five engineers defected to the West in the previous month, and Imme states there more will leave in the future. Jablonski goes on to explain that Imme, in his paranoia, wants more to leave. “Imme war für klare Hältnisse. Am liebsten hätte er die Hälfte aller Betriebsleiter aus dem Werk gejagt. Für ihn waren sie Saboteure und Agenten.”²⁵⁵ Imme’s paranoid desire is representative of the abjective at work in the Stalinist system. As Jablonski describes the uncomfortable position of Eschenreuter, Jablonski’s successor as director of the school in Kreppin, who is torn between Imme and Lüderitz, a local pastor, who is as dogmatic in his Christianity as Imme is in his Stalinism, Jablonski wonders why Eschenreuter does not flee. “Ein Anderer wäre vielleicht nach dem Westen geflohen.”²⁵⁶ Indeed, in Imme’s Stalinist system, in which as Imme states, “Wer nicht mit uns ist, ist gegen uns,”²⁵⁷ many fled to the West.

Stalinism and Self-Destruction

In the Stalinist system described by Imme, Nikolai Bukharin, during his show trial in 1937, is reported to have declared, “I won’t shoot myself because then people will say that I killed myself so as to harm the party. But if I die, as it were, from an illness, then

one of the ovens was still on, becomes both a socialist hero and a wage buster, or rather a instigator for the increase in production norms despite a decrease in worker safety.

²⁵⁴ Werner Heiduczek. *Tod am Meer*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1999. 223, 271, 281.

²⁵⁵ *ibid.* 255.

²⁵⁶ *ibid.* 259.

²⁵⁷ *ibid.* 250.

what will you lose by it?” Slavoj Zizek describes this scene in his essay “When the Party Commits Suicide,”²⁵⁸ which is in part a review of *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks* by Getty and Naumov.²⁵⁹ One chapter of Getty’s and Naumov’s volume particularly strikes Zizek’s attention: “The Storm of 1937: The Party Commits Suicide,” which describes the purges and executions of 1937/1938, which includes the execution of Bukharin. Zizek is struck by the fact that Bukharin, a dedicated Stalinist, is willing to publicly confess to political sins that he did not commit, if the Party needs him to. He understands that elements of the Party must be ritually abjected. But he writes a private letter to Stalin asking Stalin to tell him secretly that he has not really committed sins against Stalin. Bukharin is such a dedicated Stalinist that he is willing to die for the Party, but he cannot bear the thought that Stalin might really think him guilty. Zizek declares: “Once we enter the Stalinist universe of the ridiculous sublime, the ultimate form of sacrifice is no longer the tragic fate of the fighter dedicated to the Cause, but a much more radical self-sacrifice.” The Party’s need to abject such key elements, that is, to execute such a loyal member, is abjective and self-destructive. Werner Heiduczek was also well aware of such self-destruction, describing it with the sentence, “Im Namen des Sozialismus töteten Sozialisten Sozialisten.“ The blood that is displaced in Jablonski’s cranium represents, first and foremost, such paranoid political abjection. Jablonski, narrating his own experience of Stalinism, destroys himself trying to separate the elements of Stalinism from his life.

²⁵⁸ Slavoj Zizek. “When the Party Commits Suicide.” *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism: Five Interventions in the (Mis)use of a Notion*. London; New York: Verso, 2002. 88-140.

²⁵⁹ J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov. *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks*. Yale UP, 1999.

Jablonski is self-destructive in a way similar to Aschenbach. *Tod am Meer* uses transtextual momentum from *Der Tod in Venedig*, which was relatively well received in the GDR, to criticize, among other things, the self-destruction of Stalinism. Jablonski tries to separate himself from everything about his life that he does not like. He searches for moments in his biography from which he can distance himself and finds that his entire life is a sequence of failures. This will to separation from the displeasurable—what else is abjection?—functions like Imme’s exclamation that “Wer nicht mit uns ist, ist gegen uns,”²⁶⁰ which turns into the self-destructive paranoia that everyone is against us, to the point that there is no more us. Or in Jablonski’s case, he detects his own problematic life, removing elements of it until there is no more Jablonski. While Jablonski, an Aschenbach-character, detects what went wrong in his life, which was intertwined with Stalinism, and narrates his own story in his autobiography, in which he remembers himself to death, a story that unmistakably takes place in twentieth-century European history, another text appeared two years later that reevaluates GDR literary history by telling a story that is, on the surface, far removed from the GDR. It, however, is quite subversive vis-à-vis GDR literary history.

Chapter Three

Reevaluating Literary Heritage: Wolf's *Kein Ort. Nirgends*

I do not wish to leave the subject of transvaluation without mentioning its most dramatic and yet most enigmatic manifestation: Kleist's Penthesilea (1808).

Gérard Genette²⁶¹

Literary Heritage and the Biermann Affair

Christa Wolf's *Kein Ort. Nirgends* was influenced by the November 1976 expatriation of singer-songwriter Wolf Biermann.²⁶² Whereas Heiduczek's *Tod am Meer* was written before the Biermann affair took place (and published two months after the affair), Wolf's novel was written after the affair, an event that had a profound effect on Wolf. She had signed a petition against the decision to expatriate Biermann and consequently faced restrictions and later dismissal from her leadership position in the *Schriftstellerband*.²⁶³ Wolf purportedly felt as though she had her back against the wall, a statement she made during an interview with Frauke Meyer-Gosau for the West German periodical *alternative* in the winter of 1982, implying that Wolf felt she that her political

²⁶¹ Gérard Genette. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Trans.). Lincoln; London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. 375.

²⁶² See: Anna K. Kuhn. "No Place on Earth: Revision of the Romantic Heritage." *Christa Wolf's Utopian Vision: From Marxism to Feminism*. Cambridge UP, 1988. 138. Theresa Hörnigk. *Christa Wolf*. Göttingen: Steidl, 1989. 187. Sonja Hilzinger. *Christa Wolf*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1986. 106-108. Peter F. Teupe. *Christa Wolfs Kein Ort. Nirgends als Paradigma der DDR-Literatur der siebziger Jahre*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1992. Jörg Magenau. *Christa Wolf: Eine Biographie*. Berlin: Kindler, 2002. 267-284.

²⁶³ Jörg Magenau. *Christa Wolf: Eine Biographie*. Berlin: Kindler, 2002. 267-284.

and literary possibilities had become limited in the GDR.²⁶⁴ But neither Biermann nor Wolf wanted out of the country, at least not permanently. In November 1976, Biermann gave a concert in Cologne and wanted to return to the GDR, but he was forced to remain outside of the country. Like Biermann, Wolf had some freedom to travel, visiting Greece in 1980, for example, but she always willingly returned to the GDR. For Wolf, being in the GDR and being a writer were intertwined. Wolf made a pact with Franz Fühmann that if one of them became incapable of writing, that person would leave the GDR.²⁶⁵ She continued to write and remained in the country. As David Bathrick describes, writers such as Wolf understood that leaving the GDR would only strengthen the rhetorical binaries of ill, irrational, capitalist literature and healthy rational, communist literature. If her literary works are any indicator, Wolf wanted to reevaluate the literary heritage of the GDR. Indeed, *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, written after the Biermann affair, is the first major instance in Wolf's oeuvre of such reevaluation. The impact of the Biermann affair on *Kein Ort. Nirgends* has long been acknowledged. Ann Stamp Miller, for example, writes:

After Biermann's expatriation, the writers had to find other ways of expressing their voices, either by coding their literature or writing as voices from a more distant past. For instance, Christa Wolf turned to the Romantic Period and Greek literature ... In so doing, their works provided a platform whereby they could

²⁶⁴ *ibid.* See also: Anna K. Kuhn. "No Place on Earth: Revision of the Romantic Heritage." *Christa Wolf's Utopian Vision: From Marxism to Feminism*. Cambridge UP, 1988. 138. The interview was published as: "Projectionsraum Romantik." *alternative*. VIII (1981/1982). 239.

²⁶⁵ Jörg Magenau. *Christa Wolf: Eine Biographie*. Berlin: Kindler, 2002. 285-301.

vent their frustration and voice their subtle call for political reform with less fear of censorship because of questionable interpretation.²⁶⁶

Wolf did turn to the Romantic period and to Greek literature, and in doing so certainly made the censors' task more difficult. However, Wolf's turn to the Romantics and the Greeks, I argue, was much more than a mere slight of hand to trick the censors. Rather, Wolf's transtextuality represented a bold subversion of GDR literary heritage.

Wolf's *Kein Ort. Nirgends* (1979) was her first major work that performs this reevaluation. It utilizes the theme of suicide not as a means of escape, but rather as a method of resistance, as a means of questioning the limits and boundaries of GDR literary heritage, and as a means of exploring unpredictability in GDR literary heritage. This chapter examines the semi-fictional double-suicide of Kleist and Günderrode by examining those suicidal figures in *Kein Ort. Nirgends* and their dreams in the work, in which they imagine scenes that correspond to each others' actual writings. Using the taboo theme of suicide, *Kein Ort. Nirgends* probes the official literary heritage of the GDR beneath the surface into romanticism but also into ancient Greek literature, the ways in which German romanticism received ancient Greek literature differently from German classicism, and the ramifications thereof for the GDR context. This reevaluation is what Genette calls transvaluation. Not only does Wolf transvaluate Kleist and Günderrode, but she also demonstrates how they in turn transvaluated ancient Greek literature.

Ute Brandes points in this direction in her essay on quotation in *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, as she writes, "... the structure of citation underlying the text functions to

²⁶⁶ Ann Stamp Miller. *The Cultural Politics of the German Democratic Republic: The Voices of Christa Wolf, Wolf Biermann, and Heiner Müller*. Boca Raton, FL: Brown Walker, 1999. 156.

connect the spirit of the early Romantic epoch with the *Zeitgeist* in the GDR.”²⁶⁷ Indeed, Wolf quotes Kleist’s and Günderrode’s letters and literary works in a manner that has relevance for the GDR. Although the story is set in 1804, the narrator reveals that it is a fiction that has contemporary relevance: “Daß sie sich getroffen hätten: erwünschte Legende.”²⁶⁸ Even before that passage, the narrator notes that the figures on which the story is based are centuries dead,²⁶⁹ implying that the narrator is speaking around the time that the book was written, and that we, the narrators contemporaries, are “immer noch gierig auf der Aschegeschmack der Worte.”²⁷⁰ The narrator also indicates that the message that may be gleaned from those words is no exact historical message, but rather is an “Echo, ungeheuer, vielfach gebrochen.”²⁷¹ While Brandes locates unmarked quotations in Wolf’s work, demonstrating the fruitful manipulation of Kleist’s and Günderrode’s writings at the sentence level, this study shows how Wolf adopts Kleist’s and Günderrode’s transvaluation of the literary heritage constructed by German Classicism, utilizing it to transvaluate the literary heritage of the GDR.

Kleist

Kleist was not part of the official literary heritage of the GDR, in part because of the positive reception of Kleist by the National Socialists, and in part because Lukács saw

²⁶⁷ Ute Brandes. “Quotation as Authentication: *No Place on Earth*.” *Responses to Christa Wolf: Critical Essay*. Marilyn Sibley Fries (Ed.). Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1989. 329.

²⁶⁸ Christa Wolf. *Kein Ort. Nirgends*. Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1979.

²⁶⁹ *ibid.* 5-6.

²⁷⁰ *ibid.* 5.

²⁷¹ *ibid.* 6.

Kleist as a hopeless conservative and an irrationalist.²⁷² Kleist, however, was not altogether frowned upon in the GDR. Anna Seghers, who deeply influenced Christa Wolf, defended Kleist as one of the great German writers, one whose shock value was necessary in times of crisis.²⁷³ There was also engagement with Kleist in the GDR in the 1950s and 1960s.²⁷⁴ However, engagement with Kleist in the GDR becomes more frequent among both scholars of literature and writers in the 1970s and 1980s.²⁷⁵ In this period, writers such as Günter Kunert, Heiner Müller, Christa Wolf, Jürgen Rennert, Erich Arendt, Rainer Kirsch, Klaus Schlesinger, Rudo Melchert, and Roland Müller dealt explicitly with Kleist in literary works.²⁷⁶ Kleist was a problem for the maintenance of the official literary heritage of the GDR.²⁷⁷ The authorities in the GDR could afford neither to ignore completely nor to accept wholeheartedly Kleist to the GDR literary heritage. Although Kleist was never officially condoned during the entire forty-year existence of the GDR, he became an ambiguous and much discussed figure in the 1970s and was a large part of the crisis of the GDR literary heritage in the wake of Honecker's "No Taboos" speech of 1971.²⁷⁸ As Günter Kunert pointed out, the *Lexikon*

²⁷² See: Theo Honnef. *Heinrich Kleist in der Literatur der DDR*. New York: Peter Lang, 1988. 39-42.

²⁷³ Ibid. 41.

²⁷⁴ Ibid. 41-58, 79-122.

²⁷⁵ Ibid. 58-61, 123-191.

²⁷⁶ Ibid. 123-191.

²⁷⁷ Ibid. 62.

²⁷⁸ David Bathrick underscores this point: "Once linked to the most reactionary historical tendencies, nineteenth-century writers such as Kleist and Hölderlin, E. T. A. Hoffmann and Jean Paul, Gunderode and Bettina von Armin suddenly [in the 1970s] were looked to not merely as literary models to be emulated but as articulating experiences that spoke directly to the contemporary society." *The Powers of Speech: The Politics of Culture in the GDR*. Lincoln; London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995. 187. Sture Packalén also locates a change in the reception of Romanticism in the GDR in the 1970s. For Packalén, the

deutschsprachiger Schriftsteller, which was published in the GDR in 1972, characterized Kleist's works as "eigentümliche Vermischung von ... Gesundheit und Krankhaftigkeit."²⁷⁹ Kunert, in citing this passage, identified this peculiarity of Kleist in the GDR. Kunert, indeed, had much to say about Kleist and his reception in the GDR.

In 1976, three years before the publication of Wolf's *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, Kunert composed and aired a radio play based on Kleist's suicide entitled *Ein anderer K.*,²⁸⁰ in which the voices of Kleist's acquaintances contemplate why Kleist killed himself.²⁸¹ The character Grollhammer poses the question as follows: "Mir ist der Tod meines Freundes ein Rätsel. Er mag exzentrisch gewesen sein, doch einen anderen Menschen ins Herz und sich selber in den Kopf – da müssen doch tiefere Gründe vorliegen, greifbare, ersichtliche!"²⁸² Other characters in the radio play then attempt to answer this question of why Kleist killed himself. Gruner mentions rumors that the act might be a signal to the Prussian state that it has strayed from its political goals. Grollhammer later implies that Kleist might have been schizophrenic. The widower Vogel tells Grollhammer that there is no concrete reason, but rather that Kleist was "eben ein Dichter."²⁸³ Other figures defend similar positions. In the end, however, Kunert gives the semi-fictional Kleist

change is primarily related to an interest in the biographies of the Romantic writers and artists. *Zum Hölderlinbild in der Bundesrepublik und der DDR*. Stockholm: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 1986. 58.

²⁷⁹ This description of Kleist also appears verbatim in Kunert's "Pamphlet für K." *Sinn und Form*. 27 (1975) 1093. Theo Honnef cites Kunert citing the passage in *Heinrich Kleist in der Literatur der DDR*. New York: Peter Lang, 1988. 123.

²⁸⁰ Günter Kunert. *Ein anderer K.* Stuttgart: Reclam, 1977. Theo Honnef writes at length about this radio play. *Heinrich von Kleist in der Literatur der DDR*. New York: Peter Lang, 1988. 123-143.

²⁸¹ This polyphony of voices ruminating about the mysterious death resembles Uwe Johnson's 1959 *Mutmaßungen über Jakob*. Kunert's radio play, like Johnson's book, reads like detective fiction.

²⁸² Günter Kunert. *Ein anderer K.* Stuttgart: Reclam, 1977. 13.

²⁸³ *ibid.* 15.

(who at this point in the radio play is dead) the final word.²⁸⁴ And it is the semi-fictional Kleist's final monologue, with its description of the possibilities for perception that leads to Kleist's transvaluation that is so important for my reading of *Kein Ort. Nirgends*. It is important enough to quote in full.

Die wahre Erkenntnis erscheint nicht in der Sprache alltäglicher Unterhaltung, nicht in der Sprache des Militärs oder der Büchsenmacher, auch nicht in der Kanzleisprache, sie erscheint nur in Bildern und Gleichnissen, denn das Paradies hat sich hinter uns geschlossen und ist verriegelt. Wir müssen die Reise um die Welt machen und sehen, ob es vielleicht von hinten irgendwo offen ist. Denn die Welt ist ringförmig, und es gibt einen Punkt, wo sie wieder ineinandergreift. Erst wenn dieser Punkt erreicht ist, erst wenn alles Getrennte erneut sich zusammenfügt, kann Leben so werden dass es nicht länger notwendig ist, es noch darzustellen. Weil dann seine reale und seine wirkliche Erscheinungsweise eins geworden sind. Zu diesem Punkte also müßte sich die Menschheit aufmachen, falls sie überhaupt eine werden will.²⁸⁵

The passage contains stark allusions and unmarked quotations from the historical Kleist's essay "Über das Marionettentheater," in which Kleist writes that after having eaten from the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge (Baum der Erkenntnis) in the biblical story of Adam and Eve, that "Doch das Paradies ist verriegelt und der Cherub hinter uns; wir müssen die Reise um die Welt machen, und sehen, ob es vielleicht von hinten irgendwo

²⁸⁴ Again, the use of the posthumous voice has been used by William Faulkner and, in the context of divided Germany, Uwe Johnson in several works and later by Christoph Hein in *Horns Ende*, as will become evident in the chapter in this study on that work.

²⁸⁵ Günter Kunert. *Ein anderer K.* Stuttgart: Reclam, 1977. 42.

offen ist.”²⁸⁶ The semi-fictional Kleist, in this passage, begins by locating the appearance of *Erkenntnis* (ie. perception, recognition,), stating that *Erkenntnis* is not located in any of a variety of language registers that reflect surface reality in a one-to-one manner, but rather that real *Erkenntnis* is to be found in images and comparisons.²⁸⁷ Kleist’s notion of *Erkenntnis* peers beyond surface realism. For the semi-fictional Kleist here, paradise has closed behind us and is sealed, an appropriate image for a space that exists and at the same time does not exist. In order to enter the paradisiacal (no)space, according to this semi-fictional Kleist, one needs images and comparisons. This is work that Wolf’s text does. Christa Wolf’s *Kein Ort. Nirgends* picks up where Kunert’s *Ein anderer K.* leaves off and utilizes the trope of suicide, among others, to reevaluate literary history. By probing deeply into the literary heritage of the GDR—through German romanticism and into romanticism’s reception of ancient Greek literature—*Kein Ort. Nirgends* reaches beyond the common Party understanding of the literary heritage of the GDR thereby disrupting it.

Through Kleist, Wolf is able to examine contrasting valuations of Greek literature. Kleist’s Penthesilea, like Günderröde, kills herself with a dagger to the heart. This is where Kleist, besides with his biographical, bullet-induced suicide, plays a role. One of the keys to understanding the double suicides in Christa Wolf’s *Kein Ort*.

²⁸⁶ Kleist 459.

²⁸⁷ Wolf makes a similar argument in her 1968 essay “Lesen und Schreiben.” Her point can be perceived in part as a response to the realism insisted upon by Georg Lukács. Azar Nafisi, in the Iranian context, makes the same point as she commands: “do not, under any circumstances, belittle a work of fiction by trying to turn it into a carbon copy of real life” in: Azar Nafisi. *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*. New York: Random House, 2003.

Nirgends is Kleist's play *Penthesilea*.²⁸⁸ The eponymous Amazon queen in that play kills herself, even after her sister Prothoe takes away her dagger and her arrows, with a poisonous, ideational dagger that she forms from her own emotions.

Denn jetzt steig' ich in meinen Busen nieder
Gleich einem Schacht, und grabe, kalt wie Erz,
Mir ein vernichtendes Gefühl hervor.
Dies Erz, dies läutr' ich in der Glut des Jammers,
Hart mir zu Stahl; tränk es mit Gift sodann,
Heißätzendem, der Reue, durch und durch;
Trag es der Hoffnung ew'gem Amboß zu,
Und schärf' und spitz es mir zu einem Dolch;
Und diesem Dolch jetzt reich' ich meine Brust:
So! So! So! So! Und wieder – Nun ist's gut.

(Sie fällt und stirbt.)

Penthesilea, the breastless archer-queen of the Amazons, has fallen in love with the Greek warrior Achilles, and he has likewise fallen in love with her. After arguing about which kingdom they will live in, he challenges her to another battle in order to settle the matter. He goes to the battlefield alone, without armor, only with a spear. She, in a mad rage of love, archers an arrow through his neck and, along with her dogs, bites his flesh to pieces. Upon coming back to her senses, she is told that she has killed him, and worse,

²⁸⁸ John Pizer makes a similar argument, namely that the violence and gender-bending in *Kein Ort. Nirgends* can be better understood by thinking of the novel as being influenced in part by Kleist's *Penthesilea*. He does not, however, point to textual examples from *Kein Ort. Nirgends* that allude to *Penthesilea*. John Pizer. "Staging Violence and Transcendence: Reading Christa Wolf through German Romanticism." *German Studies Review*. 33.1 (February 2010) 1-22.

mangled his beautiful body. This is when she forms her ideational, steel dagger, soaks it in ideational poison, and stabs herself five times until she drops dead.

The figure of Penthesilea and Kleist's play *Penthesilea* are well known to Christa Wolf, as she wrote an essay about the Kleist play,²⁸⁹ and as the figure of Penthesilea appears in her book *Kassandra*.²⁹⁰ However, Penthesilea and her suicide in the Kleist play also have much to do with Wolf's *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, starting with an allusion to Kleist's *Penthesilea* in *Kein Ort. Nirgends* (1982). The clues are subtle, but once spotted, they are telling.²⁹¹ As Günderröde sees a deer being shot in the neck with an arrow, she fantasizes about dying the deer's death. This scene is pronouncedly similar to Achilles's death in Kleist's *Penthesilea*. The two passages are juxtaposed below.

Der Druck auf der Brust, seit dem Morgen schon, seit dem Traum, der jetzt wieder auftaucht. In einer Gruppe von Personen ging sie in einem kargen, sanften Gelände, fremd und zugleich vertraut, in ihrem weißen fließenden Kleid, zwischen Savigny und der Bettine. Savigny hob plötzlich einen Bogen an die Wange, spannte ihn, zielte mit stumpfem Bolzen. Da sah sie: am Waldrand das Reh. Der Schreckenslaut, den sie sich ausstoßen hörte, kam wie immer zu spät, der Bolzen holte ihn ein. Das Reh, am Hals getroffen, stürzte. Die Bettine an ihrer Seite, die sie nicht aus den Augen ließ, nahm als erste das Unheil wahr.

²⁸⁹ Christa Wolf. "Kleists 'Penthesilea'." *Werke*. Vol. 8. Sonja Hilzinger (Ed.). Munich: Luchterhand, 2000. 261-279. Written in August 1982.

²⁹⁰ Christa Wolf. *Kassandra*. Frankfurt am Main: Luchterhand, 1983. See also: Jean Wilson. "Transgression and Identity in Kleist's *Penthesilea* and Wolf's *Cassandra*." *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature and Culture*. 16 (2000). 191-206.

²⁹¹ The metaphor of detecting clues for describing the work of discourse analysis is described by David Wellbery as he points to Carlo Ginzburg: "Modern interpretation, Carlo Ginzburg has argued in a deft essay, follows the spoor of Morelli. Rather than focus on the grand themes that parade as center and essence, it seeks its clues on the periphery, among them the inadvertent traces and remainders of cultural production. Here, as in other passages in this study, I am working largely in this mode of analysis.

Lina! Rief sie klagend. Die Wunde war an ihrem Hals, sie mußte nicht nachfühlen. Der Bettine weißes Tuch färbte sich rot, daß die Günderrode staunen mußte, wie kräftig im Traum Farben sind. Es käme ihr so natürlich vor, zu verblüten.²⁹²

Inzwischen schritt die Königin heran,
Die Doggen hinter ihr, Gebirg' und Wald
Hochher, gleich einem Jäger, überschauend;
Und da er eben, die Gezweige öffnend,
Zu ihren Füßen niedersinken will:
Ha! Sein Geweih verrät den Hirsch, ruft sie,
Und spannt mit Kraft der Rasenden, sogleich
Den Bogen an, daß sich die Enden küssen,
Und hebt den Bogen auf, und zielt und schießt,
Und jagt den Pfeil ihm durch den Hals; er stürzt!
Ein Siegesgeschrei schallt roh im Volk empor.
Jetzt gleichwohl lebt der Ärmste noch der Menschen,
Den Pfeil, den weit vorragenden, im Nacken,
Hebt er sich röchelnd auf, und überschlägt sich,²⁹³

²⁹² Christa Wolf. *Kein Ort. Nirgends*. Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1979. 9-10.

²⁹³ Kleist. *Penthesilea*, scene 23.41-54

The similarities here are remarkable. Achilles is referred to as a deer in the Kleist play, and it is a deer that is killed in the passage from the Wolf piece. Both are hunted. Both Achilles and the deer are killed with a bow and arrow, and in both cases the arrow hits the neck. The verbs “aufheben,” “spannen,” and “zielen” are used in both passages to describe the movements of the archer, and the verb “stürzen” is used in both passages to describe the action of the creature shot in the neck. Furthermore, both scenes take place at the edge of the forest, in both the noun “Wald” being used.

Günderrode’s dream of dying the deer’s death that is similar to that of Kleist’s Achilles shines much light on *Kein Ort. Nirgends* in at least three ways. First, it reinforces Günderrode’s wish to die. She fantasizes that she is the deer who is being impaled with the arrow. On the one hand, she thinks how natural such a death would be. “Es käme ihr so natürlich vor, zu verblüten.” Indeed, the death of the deer occurs in nature in the sense that they are at the edge of the forest. The deer runs wild, rather than being domesticated—encaged in a way that would be symbolic of the bourgeois life represented by the figures inside the salon—and then systematically slaughtered. On the other hand, that death is unnatural in that the deer is intentionally killed by Savigny. Reading the passage from Kleist’s *Penthesilea*, furthermore, one might ask to what extent Achilles’ death may be considered suicide. He perhaps did not expect that Penthesilea would kill him, but he did—himself vulnerably unarmed—approach an armed warrior in battle. Günderrode wishes to die the deer’s or maybe Achilles’ death.

Second, it points to gender dysidentification. The historical Günderrode wanted to be a man. Indeed, her unhappiness as a woman is the main reason she gives for wanting to die. In a diary entry dated August 29, 1801, an entry that Wolf quotes at the

beginning of her essay „Der Schatten eines Traumes: Karoline G nderrode – Ein Entwurf“ (1978), G nderrode, after belaboring her wish to die, writes: “warum ward ich kein Mann! Ich habe keinen Sinn f r weibliche Tugende, f r Weibergl ckseligkeit.”²⁹⁴ The historical Kleist also experienced gender dysidentification.²⁹⁵ Focusing on gender in Wolf’s *Kein Ort. Nirgends* is nothing new.²⁹⁶ But doing so in the context of G nderrode’s dream is *Kein Ort. Nirgends* is. It further indicates the parallel between the dream and Kleist’s *Penthesilea*. There is, on one level, already a reversal of gender roles in Kleist’s play.²⁹⁷ Achilles submits, while Penthesilea is a warrior. And it is Achilles who is penetrated.

Third, it allows *Kein Ort. Nirgends* to be read not only in terms of G nderrode’s dream, but also in terms of Kleist’s play *Penthesilea*. Penthesilea kills the person she loves. She kills herself with a dagger. And that dagger is an idea. This same progression holds true in the case of Wolf’s fictional Kleist and G nderrode. It is not revealed in the

²⁹⁴ Christa Wolf. “Der Schatten eines Traumes: Karoline von G nderrode – ein Entwurf.” Karoline von G nderrode. *Der Schatten eines Traumes: Gedichte, Prosa, Briefe, Zeugnisse von Zeitgenossen*. Christa Wolf (Ed.). Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1979. 5.

²⁹⁵ Fritz Wittels. “Heinrich von Kleist – Prussian Junker and Creative Genius. A Study in Bisexuality.” *Art and Psychoanalysis*. William Phillips (Ed.). New York, 1957. 165-182. Catriona MacLeod. “The ‘Third Sex’ in an Age of Difference: Androgyny and Homosexuality in Winckelmann, Friedrich Schlegel, and Kleist.” *Outing Goethe and His Age*. Alice Kuzniar (Ed.). Stanford UP, 1996. 194-214. Joachim Pfeiffer. “Friendship and Gender: The Aesthetic Construction of Subjectivity in Kleist.” Robert D. Tobin (Trans.). *Outing Goethe and His Age*. Alice Kuzniar (Ed.). Stanford UP, 1996. 215-227. Simon Richter. *Missing the Breast: Gender, Fantasy, and the Body in the German Enlightenment*. Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 2006. 221-226. Christa Wolf also underscores this point in: “Kleists ‘Penthesilea’.” *Werke*. Vol. 8. Sonja Hilzinger (Ed.). M nchen: Luchterhand, 2000. 270-271.

²⁹⁶ Helen Feherv ry. “Autorschaft, Geschlechtsbewusstsein und  ffentlichkeit: Versuch  ber Heiner M llers *Die Hamletmaschine* und Christa Wolfs *Kein Ort. Nirgends*.” *Entw rfe von Frauen in der Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Irma von der L he (Ed.). Berlin: Argument, 1982. Sara Lennox. “Christa Wolf and the Women Romantics.” *Studies in GDR Culture and Society*. Margy Gerber et al. (Eds.). Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982. 31-44. Anna Kuhn. *Christa Wolf’s Utopian Vision: from Marxism to Feminism*. Cambridge UP, 1988.

²⁹⁷ Maximilian Harden made this point as early as 1895. See his text in: *Schriftsteller  ber Kleist: Eine Dokumentation*. Peter Goldammer (Ed.). Berlin; Weimar, 1976. 452.

text whether one of them kills the other first and then kills himself—as in the historical case of Kleist and Henriette Vogel—or whether they somehow kill each other at the same time, or whether they each kill themselves at the same time. They do, however, agree to die together. Much, however, is made of G nderrode’s dagger in the novel. She wears it around her neck and touches the place on her chest where she knows the insertion of the dagger would kill her. Later, she drops it, and Kleist hands it back to her. Everyone at the salon sees the dagger and is perplexed that she has such a weapon. Kleist, however, is amazed.²⁹⁸ Such representation of G nderrode’s dagger fortifies the notion of Kleist’s *Penthesilea* as a hypotext in Wolf’s *Kein Ort. Nirgends*. It is Kleist who understands G nderrode’s attraction to the dagger. Kleist and G nderrode, furthermore, both understand that the dagger has ideational value.

With the example of *Penthesilea*, three elements of Kleist’s oeuvre that are important for Christa Wolf, especially for *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, become evident: the relationship between self-destruction and love, character transformation, and transtextuality, especially transvaluation. In her essay on Kleist’s *Penthesilea*, Kleist’s work that perhaps mostly starkly concerns love and self-destruction, Christa Wolf writes: “Kleists Helden, flatternden Gewissens zwischen unsichere Gebote gestellt, die einander ausschlie en, aber unbedingten Gehorsam beanspruchen, zerfleischen sich selbst. Kein sch ner Anblick. Die Moderne beginnt.”²⁹⁹ This statement also describes several protagonists in Wolf’s oeuvre, above all Kleist and G nderrode in *Kein Ort. Nirgends*. Themes of self-destruction, destroying objects of love, and self-destruction via love are

²⁹⁸ Christa Wolf. *Kein Ort. Nirgends*. Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1979. 56-57.

²⁹⁹ Christa Wolf. “Kleists ‘Penthesilea’.” *Werke*. Vol. 8. Sonja Hilzinger (Ed.). Munich: Luchterhand, 2000. 269.

common in Kleist's oeuvre. In "Die Verlobung in St. Domingo," a Swiss colonizer on the island of Santo Domingo³⁰⁰ falls in love with a woman of African descent, thinks she has betrayed him—it later becomes clear that she intended to help him avoid harm—and he kills her. In "Der Findling," a man adopts a child, loves him as his own, and later kills him, as the adopted son had been responsible for the death of the father's wife and has legally evicted the father from his own home. Before the father is hanged for murder, he refuses to take sacraments, as he wishes to further avenge the adopted son in hell. In "Der Zweikampf," Jakob Rotbart dies after apparently winning a duel, as a minor cut to his wrist becomes fatally infected, and Herr Friedrich loses the duel, being injured severely but is nursed back to health. Both of these men were fighting for the love of Littegard, with whom Rotbart thinks he has had sexual intercourse, and whose chastity Friedrich dares not question. In "Michael Kohlhaas," the eponymous main-character leads himself into capital punishment defending his property and his horse, which he loves. In "Das Erdbeben in Chili," Jeronimo and Josephe are to be put to death for loving each other, escape death by grace, meet again in a loving embrace, and are later put to death.

Second, inner transformation in characters is a hallmark of both Kleist's and Wolf's narratives, although the transformations occur in markedly different ways in the two respective writers' works. Kleist's works represent an extreme in that there are sharp turns in Kleist's plots, and with these plot turns, come inner transformation in the characters. There are natural disasters, legal declarations, fights, and deaths, for example. Indeed, Eberhard Lämmert cites Kleist as the foremost German example of what he calls

³⁰⁰ This island is today known as Hispaniola and is divided into Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Indeed, the story is largely about the Haitian slave revolution.

the “Geschehenserzählung,”³⁰¹ that is, a narration in which the outward plot is emphasized more than other elements of the narrative such as societal development or inner, affective or psychological development. In Lämmert’s spectrum of emphasis on outer plot versus emphasis on inner development, Kleist is placed far at the outer plot end, and Christa Wolf would be far at the inner development end, as Rita Seidel overcomes her love for Manfred and affirms her allegiance to the communist project, as Christa T. comes to herself, as the narrator in *Was bleibt* ponders finding her own language, as the semi-fictional Kleist and Günderrode confirm their status as outsiders, and as Cassandra reflects upon her development as a prophet, for example. However, as Lämmert himself insists, this polarization is a spectrum—not a concrete dichotomy—designed to give insight into the broad nature of narrative. The implication is that all narratives have some amount of development on each side of the spectrum, although the emphasis may be much higher on one side or the other. Kleist and Wolf, then, represent dialectical opposites of each other, not just dialectical in the sense that they are opposites, but dialectical in the sense that they are two sides of the same coin. On the inner development side of the spectrum, there is a high ratio of inner development to outer plot development, but, nonetheless, inner development happens along with outer plot development within the coordinates of time and space. Rita Seidel’s inner development is a response to Manfred’s crossing of the border into West Berlin and time she spends with her fellow workers in locomotive production. Likewise, sharp outer plot turns have inner ramifications for the characters within the narrative. After Michael Kohlhaas participates in much action and is sentenced to death, he is changed. After Penthesilea

³⁰¹ Eberhard Lämmert. *Bauformen des Erzählens*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1972. 40. Originally published in 1955.

kills Achilles, she has undergone such inner change that she is capable of crafting a blade made from her inner affect and kills herself with it. *Penthesilea*, indeed, is an example of a work that particularly disturbs Lämmert's spectrum of outer plot development versus inner development. Martin Greenberg writes of the action-filled third scene, in which Penthesilea gallops quickly to intercept Achilles: "This isn't so much action as feeling, the love and violence, tenderness and aggression, submissiveness and domineeringness which are tragically confused inside the breast of the Amazonian queen."³⁰² In this case, the narration (narrated here in Aetolian's speech as he discusses the action with Dolopian and Myrmidon) of action portrays intense emotion. For Penthesilea, indeed, action and emotion are not polar opposites, just as she does not perceive love and violence to be polar opposites. The interaction between outward action and inner change, furthermore, connected to and represented largely by the self-destruction indicated in the previous paragraph. And this holds, in large part, true for Kleist and Günderrode in *Kein Ort. Nirgends* just as it does for Penthesilea and Achilles in Kleist's *Penthesilea*.

Third, most of Kleist's works contain heavy transtextual elements.³⁰³ As Genette indicates, *Penthesilea* is one of the most prominent examples of transvaluation—"any operation of an axiological nature bearing on the value that is implicitly or explicitly assigned to an action or group of actions: namely, the sequence of actions, attitudes, and

³⁰² Martin Greenberg (Ed.). "Introduction." Heinrich von Kleist. *Five Plays*. Yale UP, 1988. xl-xli.

³⁰³ Many scholars have noted this. See, for example: Joachim Pfeiffer. "Friendship and Gender: The Aesthetic Construction of Subjectivity in Kleist." Robert D. Tobin (Trans.). *Outing Goethe and His Age*. Alice Kuzniar (Ed.). Stanford UP, 1996. 222. Franz M. Eybl. *Kleist-Lektüren*. Wien: WUV Facultas (UTB), 2007. 92. Martin Greenberg (Ed.). "Introduction." Heinrich von Kleist. *Five Plays*. Yale UP, 1988. xx, xxx-xxxi, xxxviii-xl. Simon Richter. *Missing the Breast: Gender, Fantasy, and the Body in the German Enlightenment*. Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 2006. 227.

feelings that constitutes a ‘character’³⁰⁴—not just in Kleist’s oeuvre, but in the entirety of Western literature.³⁰⁵ In Kleist’s version of the play the violence of battle and the violence of love come to the fore, and Penthesilea is at least an equal agent to Achilles. Indeed, in the Kleist version, Penthesilea kills Achilles, whereas other versions of the story have Achilles killing Penthesilea. Kleist’s *Amphitryon*, furthermore, also has a strong transtextual element, and is also an example of transvaluation, in as far as the character of Amphitryon in the Kleist play is not a cuckolded fool to be lampooned as in other versions of the story, but rather he is a serious general experiencing a metaphysical crisis. In Kleist’s narrative fiction, he often begins with a historical or mythological story, which he then valuates. Indeed, transvaluation is at work in much of Kleist’s writings. Christa Wolf, in *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, adopts Kleist’s technique of transvaluation, a technique that is also at work in the writings of Karoline von Günderrode.

Günderrode

Karoline von Günderrode, as part of German Romanticism, remained, like Kleist, outside of the official literary heritage of the GDR.³⁰⁶ Georg Lukács described Romanticism as a break from rationalism and classism towards irrational, paving the way

³⁰⁴ Gérard Genette. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Trans.). Lincoln; London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. 343.

³⁰⁵ *ibid.* 375.

³⁰⁶ Theo Honnef indicates this quite explicitly: “Die Romantiker aber blieben von dem offiziell sanktionierten Literaturkanon ausgeschlossen.” *Heinrich Kleist in der Literatur der DDR*. New York: Peter Lang, 1988. 27.

for modern, capitalist society.³⁰⁷ Günderrode, however, like Kleist and other Romantic authors, also became part of the crisis surrounding the official literary heritage of the GDR in the 1970s and 1980s.³⁰⁸ Anna Seghers, however, defended Günderrode along with Kleist already in 1937, challenging Lukács's narrow view of them, which became and remained the official view of Romanticism in the GDR until the 1970s.³⁰⁹ Seghers's defense of Romanticism later had a strong influence Wolf. Whereas a multitude of GDR writers and scholars engaged with Kleist in the 1970s and 1980s, Christa Wolf worked alone to peak interest in Günderrode. Wolf was first introduced to Günderrode through Seghers. Wolf confessed this in a letter to Seghers: "Du warst die erste, durch die ich ihren Namen [Günderrode] überhaupt gehört habe."³¹⁰ Indeed, Wolf recognizes Seghers as directly influencing *Kein Ort. Nirgends*. In an earlier letter to Seghers, Wolf writes: "Ich habe den Sommer über an einer Erzählung geschrieben, die ist noch nicht fertig, ich weiß noch nichtmal, ob sich sie wirklich schaffe. Aber Du bist mit schuld an dem Thema: Ich versuche, eine Begegnung zwischen Kleist und der Karoline von Günderrode zu schildern, die vielleicht einmal stattgefunden hat (wahrscheinlich nicht), aber ich

³⁰⁷ Theo Honnef briefly summarizes Lukács argument. 27. Lukács develops this argument in "Die Romantik als Wendung in der deutschen Literatur." *Fortschritt und Reaktion in der deutschen Literatur*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1947. 51-73. He further develops it in *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft*. Georg Lukács. *Werke*. Frank Benseler (Ed.). vol. 9. Neuwied; Berlin: Lukács Archiv, 1962.

³⁰⁸ David Bathrick underscores this point: "Once linked to the most reactionary historical tendencies, nineteenth-century writers such as Kleist and Hölderlin, E. T. A. Hoffmann and Jean Paul, Gunderode and Bettina von Armin suddenly [in the 1970s] were looked to not merely as literary models to be emulated but as articulating experiences that spoke directly to the contemporary society." 187. Sture Packalén also locates a change in the reception of Romanticism in the GDR in the 1970s. For Packalén, the change is primarily related to an interest in the biographies of the Romantics writers and artists. *Zum Hölderlinbild in der Bundesrepublik und der DDR*.

³⁰⁹ Anna K. Kuhn. *Christa Wolf's Utopian Vision: From Marxism to Feminism*. Cambridge UP, 1988. 142-143.

³¹⁰ Christa Wolf and Anna Seghers. *Das dicht besetzte Leben: Briefe, Gespräche und Essays*. Angela Drescher (Ed.). Berlin: Aufbau, 2003. 43. (letter dated 20. Juni 1978).

glaube, das habe ich Dir im Frühjahr schon erzählt.”³¹¹ In addition to including a semi-fictional Günderrode in *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, Wolf edited a volume of Günderrode’s poetry, prose, and correspondence.³¹² Wolf included a lengthy essay on Günderrode in the volume.³¹³ She also corresponded about Günderrode, writing to Brigitte Reimann, for example: “Kennst Du die Günderrode? Mit ihr beschäftige ich mich ein bisschen, dabei mit dem Umkreis der Romantik-Weiber. Gar nicht uninteressant, kann ich Dir sagen.”³¹⁴ And in May 1970 on trip to West Germany, she visited Günderrode’s grave in Winkel am Rhein,³¹⁵ from where she wrote to Anna Seghers: “wir sind nun in Winkel am Rhein, wo die Günderode sich erdolcht hat, die Stelle am Fluß findet man natürlich nicht, aber den Stein auf dem Friedhof.”³¹⁶ Given Wolf’s enthusiasm about Günderrode and the edited volume of Günderrode’s work, many in the GDR were likely introduced to Günderrode through Wolf. There is, however, no large amount of literary reworkings of Günderrode in the GDR.³¹⁷ Nonetheless, the inclusion of Günderrode in *Kein Ort. Nirgends* further fortifies the work’s transvaluation of Greek literature.

³¹¹ *ibid.* 43. (letter dated 7. Dez. 77).

³¹² Karoline von Günderrode. *Der Schatten eines Traumes: Gedichte, Prosa, Briefe, Zeugnisse von Zeitgenossen*. Christa Wolf (Ed.). Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1979.

³¹³ Christa Wolf. “Der Schatten eines Traumes: Karoline von Günderrode – ein Entwurf.” Karoline von Günderrode. *Der Schatten eines Traumes: Gedichte, Prosa, Briefe, Zeugnisse von Zeitgenossen*. Christa Wolf (Ed.). Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1979. 5-65.

³¹⁴ Brigitte Reimann and Christa Wolf. *Sei begrüßt und lebe. Eine Freundschaft in Briefen, 1964-1973*. Berlin: Aufbau, 1999. 34.

³¹⁵ Jörg Magenau. *Christa Wolf: Eine Biographie*. Berlin: Kindler, 2002. 240.

³¹⁶ Christa Wolf and Anna Seghers. *Das dicht besetzte Leben: Briefe, Gespräche und Essays*. Angela Drescher (Ed.). Berlin: Aufbau, 2003. 29. (letter dated 10.5.70).

³¹⁷ Emmerich, for example, only mentions Günderrode three times in his *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*. All three instances are related to Wolf’s *Kein Ort. Nirgends*. Emmerich 294, 336, 338.

It is, in part, G nderrode’s technique of transvaluation that makes her works so pathological³¹⁸ for Luk cs and, at the same time, so vital for Anna Seghers and Christa Wolf. There is, on the surface, a lack of life-affirmation that one might expect to be part of Luk cs’s realism. G nderrode was both ill and suicidal, and some of this may be seen in her texts. But Luk cs also appreciates works by Thomas Mann that include ill, dying, and even suicidal protagonists. He also appreciates Goethe’s *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*, in which the protagonist both defends and commits suicide. The works of G nderrode do not fit into Luk cs’s notion of realism for two other reasons. First, they emphasize the transformation inherent in death. Second, they receive Greek mythology in ways that counter the reception of Greek mythology in German classicism. These two points are, furthermore, related. An overview of intertextuality in the works of G nderrode shall begin to clarify these points.

Like those of Kleist, G nderrode’s works tend to have strong relationships with other texts. The short poem “Ariadne auf Naxos” engages with a number of figures from Greek mythology. Her ballad “Don Juan” transforms Mozart’s eponymous opera. Her brief dialogue “Des Wanderers Niederfahrt” is a romanticization of Goethe’s poem “Wanderers Nachtlied.” Her poem “Brutus II” addresses the murder of Julius Caesar made (in)famous in Shakespeare’s play *Julius Caesar* from the guilt-laden perspective of Brutus. Her poems “Buonaparte in Egypten” and “Mahomets Traum in der W ste” allude, respectively, to the historical figures Napoleon Bonaparte and Mohammed. Her one-act play, or “dramolet” as she calls it, “Immortalita” has figures from Greek mythology participate in dialogue with the feminine personification of immortality. She

³¹⁸ Luk cs, indeed, speaks of literary history in the metaphorical terms of healthy versus ill.

also wrote poems about Melete and Adonis, which shall later be helpful in revealing the connection between death and transformation for G nderrode.

G nderrode’s dialogue “Die Manen,” furthermore, reads as a theory of the relationships among texts. In the dialogue, a student tells a teacher about how upon visiting the catacombs of Gustav Adolph, he came to the realization that stories only exist insofar as they are received and that stories change over time. Benjamin makes this point in part in his essay on the storyteller, and Christa Wolf addresses the matter in the opening pages of several of her books as well as in several essays. “Die Manen” like Benjamin’s essay on the storyteller connects such transformations in stories to death. Rather than annihilating something, death represents merely a shift in energy. The teacher figure in the dialogue states, “Der Tod ist ein chemischer Proze , eine Scheidung der Kr fte, aber kein Vernichter, er zerrei t das Band zwischen mir und  hnlichen Seelen nicht” (128).³¹⁹ Death thus changes matters, but it does not stop the matter from being relevant to the present and future. He goes on to ask the student figure, “Eine Verbindung mit Verstorbenen kann also statt haben, in so fern sie nicht aufgeh rt haben, mit uns zu harmonisieren?” (128).³²⁰ He then answers his own question with the statement, “Es kommt nur darauf an, diese Verbindung gewahr zu werden” (129).³²¹ This dialogue, which Christa Wolf cites in her essay on G nderrode, highlights much about transtextuality in Wolf’s works. G nderrode’s discourse on death and transformation,

³¹⁹ Karoline von G nderrode. *Der Schatten eines Traumes: Gedichte, Prosa, Briefe, Zeugnisse von Zeugenossen*. Christa Wolf (Ed.). Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1979. 128.

³²⁰ *ibid.* 128.

³²¹ *Ibid.* 129. This dialogue also foreshadows a discussion on haunting in Christoph Hein’s *Horns Ende* in the following chapter of this study.

furthermore, emerges in Christa Wolf's *Kein Ort. Nirgends*. Although "Die Manen" utilizes Nordic history, many of Günderrode's works transvaluate Greek mythology.

Greek mythology plays a particularly large role in Günderrode's readings, as the previous overview of intertextuality in her works indicates. Friedrich Creuzer often sent her his translations of Greek texts³²² and was teaching her about Greek history.³²³ In Creuzer's letter to her dated March 21, 1805, for example, he mentions her affinity for Pythagoras of Samos.³²⁴ Günderrode also worked on Creuzer's four-volume *Mythologie und Symbolik der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen*, published 1810-1812.³²⁵ Günderrode's *Studienbuch* also indicates that she carefully studied the journal *Athenäum*, edited by August Wilhelm Schlegel and Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel, which contained translations of Greek elegies and essays on Greek literature.³²⁶ Her knowledge of Greek mythology and Greek history is also apparent in her literary writings, as the previous overview of intertextuality in her works indicates. Although it was common for writers in Günderrode's day to engage with the myths of Ancient Greece, Günderrode's engagement with them was starkly different from German Classicist writers, Goethe being the most obvious example. Whereas the German Classicist writers perceived Greek literature as rational and heroic, Günderrode perceived it as morbid and irrational,

³²² Karoline von Günderrode. *Ich sende Dir ein zärtliches Pfand: die Briefe der Karoline von Günderrode*. Birgit Weissenborn (Ed.). Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1992. 380.

³²³ *ibid.* 383-384.

³²⁴ *ibid.* 201.

³²⁵ *ibid.* 385.

³²⁶ Steven D. Martinson. "...aus dem Schiffbruch des irdischen Lebens": The Literature of Karoline von Günderrode and Early German Romantic and Idealist Philosophy." *German Studies Review*. 28.2 (May 2005). 304.

characteristics that drew her to it. Günderrode's intervention into the reception of Greek literature combined with her interest in the transformative aspects of death were subversive in the context of the GDR. Günderrode's Adonis poems, along with Christa Wolf's subtle allusion to them in *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, provide an example of this.

While Günderrode's dream of dying the deer's death in *Kein Ort. Nirgends* alludes to Kleist's play *Penthesilea*, Kleist, in *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, has a dream, which he conveys to Wilhelmine, that alludes to two poems in Günderrode's *Melete*, namely "Adonis Tod" and "Adonis Todtenfeyer." In this dream, which the narrator indicates is the first and only dream that this semi-fictional Kleist mentions,³²⁷ and which has haunted Kleist since he left the military,³²⁸ Kleist chases a wild boar, "ein zottiges Tier, einen Eber wohl, ein wildes, schönes, rasendes Geschöpf,"³²⁹ trying to put reins on it and mount it. He is, however, never able to catch up with it completely. Finally, he grabs a musket and shoots the beast to death.³³⁰ After he conveys the dream to Wilhelmine, she cries and declares that the relationship between her and Kleist is going nowhere.³³¹ On the surface, this dream indicates perhaps that Kleist attempted to maintain standing in the Prussian military (or in Prussian society) and was unable to do so. Juxtaposed with two poems by Günderrode, however, the dream indexes something much richer.

The first two poems in Günderrode's collection *Melete*, after the quatrain "An

³²⁷ Christa Wolf. *Kein Ort. Nirgends*. Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1979. 36.

³²⁸ *ibid.* 37.

³²⁹ *ibid.* 37.

³³⁰ *ibid.* 37.

³³¹ *ibid.* 38.

Melete” and the sonnet “Zueignung,” deal explicitly with the ancient Greek myth of Adonis, the god of rebirth and vegetation and the lover of both Aphrodite and Persephone, and whom was pierced in the heart by a wild boar’s tusks and died in Aphrodite’s arms.³³² In some versions of the myth, Ares, disguised as a wild boar, murders Adonis out of vengeance on behalf of. The first of these two poems, “Adonis Tod,” consists of two sonnets and describes the death of Adonis (“den Jäger traf des Thieres wilde Wuth”) and the sorrow of Aphrodite (“Die Göttin sinkt in namenlosem Leide”). As Edith Hamilton writes of Aphrodite and her sorrow at Adonis’s death, “... the Goddess of Love, who pierces with her shafts the hearts of gods and men alike, was fated herself to suffer that same piercing pain.”³³³ Aphrodite, however, realizes the transformation occurring at the moment of death, as the blood of Adonis makes a rose grow, and her sorrows turn to song. The second poem, “Adonis Todtenfeyer,” is a meditation on the transformative nature of death. The line “Wandeln ist unsterblich Sterben” epitomizes such sentiment. A transformation occurs when something of the dead lives on. Günderrode even suggests that the divine is present in such transformations: “Leben wiederkehrt zum Leben. / Also ist der Gott erstanden / Aus des dumpfen Grabes Banden.” Life does not simply persist beyond death, but it is transformed at the moment of death. This thought parallels that of Yuri Lotman (as part of his theory of spatial semantics) that the crossing of the border between life and death—in either direction—is often a border crossing of great semantic importance.³³⁴

³³² Edith Hamilton. *Mythology*. New York: Mentor, 1969. 90-91. Originally published in 1940.

³³³ Edith Hamilton. *Mythology*. New York: Mentor, 1969. 90.

³³⁴ Jurij Lotman. *Die Struktur literarischer Texte*. Rolf-Dietrich Keil (Trans.). Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1993. 338. Originally published in 1972.

But what does this have to do with the *Kein Ort. Nirgends*?

Günderrode's Adonis poems juxtaposed with the reception of Adonis in German classicism indicate Günderrode's radical reinterpretation of Greek mythology. Whereas Günderrode's portrayal of Adonis deals with death and transformation, the German classicist portrayals of Adonis deal with primarily with beauty. The following passage from Goethe's *Briefe aus der Schweiz*, in which he compares Ferdinand to Adonis, is indicative of the German classicist imagining of Adonis.

Ich veranlaßte Ferdinanden, zu baden im See; wie herrlich ist mein junger Freund
gebildet! Welch ein Ebenmaß aller Teile! Welch eine Fülle der Form, welch ein
Glanz der Jugend, welch ein Gewinn für mich, meine Einbildungskraft mit
diesem vollkommenen Muster der menschlichen Natur bereichert zu haben! Nun
bevölkere ich Wälder, Wiesen und Höhen mit so schönen Gestalten; ihn seh ich
als Adonis dem Eber folgen, ihn als Narziß sich in der Quelle bespiegeln!.³³⁵

Here there is no mention of Adonis's gruesome death. There is also no mention of his being mourned by a goddess or his transformation. Goethe—in congruity with Winckelmann's ideas about young Greek boys in general—imagines Adonis to be beautiful, youthful, and athletic.

Another example of the reception of the Adonis myth in German classicism is located in Schiller's sonnet "Nänie" (1800).

Auch das Schöne muss sterben! Das Menschen und Götter bezwinget

Nicht die eherne Brust rührt es dem stygischen Zeus.

Einmal nur erweichte die Liebe den Schattenbeherrscher

³³⁵ Goethe. *Briefe aus der Schweiz*. 489

Und an der Schwelle noch, streng, rief er zurück sein Geschenk.
 Nicht stillt Aphrodite dem schönen Knaben die Wunde,
 Die in den zierlichen Leib grausam der Eber geritzt.
 Nicht errettet den göttlichen Held die unsterbliche Mutter,
 Wann er am skäischen Tor fallend sein Schicksal erfüllt.
 Aber sie steigt aus dem Meer mit allen Töchtern des Nereus,
 Und die Klage hebt an um den verherrlichten Sohn.
 Siehe! Da weinen die Götter, es weinen die Göttinnen alle,
 Dass das Schöne vergeht, dass das Vollkommene stirbt.
 Auch ein Klagelied zu sein im Mund der Geliebten ist herrlich;
 Denn das Gemeine geht klanglos zum Orkus hinab.³³⁶

Here too, Adonis is twice (lines 1 and 12) described as being beautiful. And with Adonis, beauty, the reader is informed, must perish. The description of the death of Adonis here implies a transformation at the moment of death, but it is a lamented, passing of the beautiful, which is quite different from the positive unlocking of the divine through death described in Günderrode's Adonis poems. Whereas death represents the end of Adonis and his beauty for Schiller, it represents a transformation for Günderrode.

In Günderrode's Adonis poems, Adonis undergoes a transformation. Both Kleist and Günderrode receive Greek literature radically differently from the Weimar classicists, namely such as Wieland, Goethe, and Schiller, all influenced by Winckelmann. Whereas the Weimar classicists view the ancient Greeks as being both beautiful and rational, Kleist and Günderrode focus on the irrational, the paradoxical, the

³³⁶ Schiller. "Nänie."

violent, and the mortal in Greek literature. They both also focus on bodies in Greek literature that can be maimed, wounded, and destroyed. But there is always a transformation involved in these deaths. Günderrode in particular was interested in death and its transformative value in Greek literature. In fact, as Markus Hille and Steven D. Martinson indicate, it was Günderrode's interest in death and transformation—in addition to Friedrich Creuzer's influence on her—that first lead her to study Greek mythology.³³⁷ So many of her works—and in particular the Adonis poems—index the concept of death that she establishes in the fragment “Die Manen”: “Er [death (der Tod)] ist ein chemischer Prozeß, eine Scheidung der Kräfte, aber kein Vernichter, er zerreit das Band zwischen mir und ähnlichen Seelen nicht, das Fortschreiten des Einen und das Zurückbleiben des Andern aber kann wohl diese Gemeinschaft aufheben, wie ein Mensch, der in allem Vortrefflichen fortgeschritten ist.”

Christa Wolf, too, is interested in death and transformation, and this is particularly evident in *Kein Ort. Nirgends*. The fictional Günderrode in the novel dreams of being killed by an arrow like a deer and like Achilles, and the fictional Kleist dreams of killing a wild boar similar to the one that kills Adonis in Greek myth and in Günderrode's Adonis poems. Both of these scenes imply a will to transformation both through death via literary history. Kleist and Günderrode, in Wolf's novel, reevaluate Weimar classicism, locating transformative death, rather than rationality and life-affirmation, in Greek literature. Kleist tells Günderrode: “Der Geheime Rat [that is, Goethe], denk ich,

³³⁷ Steven D. Martinson. “‘...aus dem Schiffbruch des irdischen Lebens’: The Literature of Karoline von Günderrode and Early German Romantic and Idealist Philosophy.” *German Studies Review*. 28.2 (May 2005). 311. Markus Hille. *Karoline von Günderrode*. Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1999.

hat keinen dringlichen Hang zur Tragödie, und ich glaube zu wissen, wieso.”³³⁸

Günderrode asks him to elaborate, and he continues: “Er ist auf Ausgleich bedacht. Er meint, die Widerkräfte, in der Welt wirken, ließen sich teilen in zwei Zweige der Vernunft—er nennt sie Gut und Böse—, die letzten Endes beide zur Fortentwicklung der Menschheit beitragen müssen.”³³⁹ Kleist then distinguishes himself from Goethe:

Ich kann die Welt in gut und böse nicht teilen; nicht in zwei Zweige der Vernunft, nicht in gesund und krank. Wenn ich die Welt teilen wollte, müßt ich die Axt an mich selber legen, mein Inneres spalten, dem angeekelten Publikum die beiden Hälften hinhalten, daß es Grund hat, die Nase zu rümpfen: Wo bleibt die Reinlichkeit. Ja, unrein ist, was ich vorzuweisen habe.³⁴⁰

Kleist alludes here to Goethe’s statement in a letter to Eckermann, dated April 2, 1829, that “Das Classische nenne ich das Gesunde, und das Romantische das Kranke.” This is a statement that Georg Lukács frequently used to legitimate his dichotomous paradigm of literature, which declared Kleist, for example, to be unhealthy. This paradigm is at the heart of the literary heritage of the GDR and is disrupted by works such as *Kein Ort. Nirgends*.

In this passage, furthermore, the fictional Kleist indicates a connection between suicide and a disruption of the paradigm created by the later Goethe and furiously maintained by Lukács. Kleist, often viewed as a bridge between classicism and romanticism, implies both that such a division destroys him, forces him into two parts, and that the way to counter such a destructive, dichotomous paradigm is through

³³⁸ Christa Wolf. *Kein Ort. Nirgends*. Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1979. 107.

³³⁹ *ibid.* 107.

³⁴⁰ *ibid.* 107.

transformative self-destruction. The logic here is that representations of suicide demonstrate just how destructive such paradigms are. The situation here of Kleist and Günderrode parallels that of writers in the GDR such as Christa Wolf, who did not fit easily into such a paradigm. Both sets of writers, furthermore, struggle to reappropriate Ancient Greek literature away from the view that the Greeks consistently represent the rational, the healthy, and the beautiful. In a different passage, Kleist fortifies this argument: “Muß die Menschheit durch diese Einöde, um ins Gelobte Land zu kommen? Ich kann’s nicht glauben. Ach, wie traurig ist diese zyklopische Einseitigkeit.”³⁴¹ In addition to indicating that such paradigms of literature are one-sided, Kleist implies here that there is, in fact, monstrosity in Greek literature, as he alludes to the cyclops, the one-eyed giant described by both Hesiod (in the *Theogony*) and Homer (in the *Odyssey*). This passage, furthermore, strengthens the parallel with the GDR situation of invented literary heritage, as Kleist questions the use of a dichotomous paradigm of literature. Here again, Kleist mentions the destruction inherent in such a paradigm, this time, using again both a gruesome image from Greek mythology and an image of the destruction of his own body. The former is an allusion to Ixion, who killed his father-in-law and was later bound to a spinning wheel for eternity. The latter emerges as Kleist bangs on his head and tells the doctor, Georg Christian Wedekind, that if the problem is in his (Kleist’s) head, that he (Wedekind) should prove the efficiency of his beloved science by dissecting his (Kleist’s) head and finding it.

³⁴¹ *ibid.* 102.

Kleist and G nderrode deride Goethe’s later classicist work. They maintain, further, that “der Alte in Weimar,” that is, Goethe, is not capable of writing a tragedy.³⁴² Kleist later comments that Goethe “hat ... lange nichts Poetisches hervorgebracht”.³⁴³ At this remark G nderrode laughs.³⁴⁴ This “lange” refers apparently to the time since Goethe’s Sturm und Drang works, indeed about thirty years. Kleist goes on to suggest that Goethe is “lebensfremd.”³⁴⁵ Kleist and G nderrode then criticize Goethe’s *Torquato Tasso*. Earlier Kleist grows jealous as Clemens Brentano explains that he has dreamt that Goethe died.³⁴⁶ All of this suggests an attempt on the part of Kleist and G nderrode to wrestle away Greek mythology and literary historical legitimacy from Goethe and the Weimar classicists. Likewise, Wolf is wrestling literary history away from the Luk csian paradigms of heritage. By questioning multiple layers of the official literary heritage—from Luk cs’s dichotomy of the healthy versus the sick, through Goethe and the Weimar classicists and Kleist and G nderrode, through to the ancient Greeks—Wolf is able to reveal that literary history cannot be entirely molded into literary heritage. While Luk cs looks to ancient Greece as a great, healthy rationalist society,³⁴⁷ Wolf indicates that the Greeks might just as easily be viewed as irrational, self-destructive, and anything but static.

³⁴² Ibid. 129.

³⁴³ Ibid. 132.

³⁴⁴ Ibid. 132.

³⁴⁵ Ibid. 132.

³⁴⁶ Ibid. 105.

³⁴⁷ See, for example, Luk cs’s work “Die Zerst rung der Vernunft.” 1954.

The fact that the two main transtextual nodes under examination here—Günderrode’s allusion to Kleist’s *Penthesilea* and Kleist’s allusion to Günderrode’s Adonis poems—are dreams provides further insight into their transformative nature. Yuri Lotman sees the dream as “a semiotic mirror and each of us sees in it the reflection of our own language. A fundamental property of this language lies in its extreme unpredictability,” which makes it “extremely well suited to the generation of new information.” Such unpredictability leads to possibilities and to the transformation of stories. In the dream, furthermore, there is, according to Lotman, often confusion between the third-person and the first-person. Such is certainly the case in *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, as Günderrode and Kleist each dream of being someone else. In modernity, the dream, Lotman goes on to explain, provides “a way into the self.”³⁴⁸ The connection between the dream of being someone else and the dream as a way into the self might be explained in the the self, at least in part, is constructed out of stories of others, those stories, as is evident in this study, being dynamic. The dream passages in *Kein Ort. Nirgends* create a window into the dynamic nature of those stories. They allow the reader to witness stories changing as they enter the mind of a different person. Dreams, Lotman further explains, inhabit space, and this space has changed over time. With the advent of modernity, dreams transformed from being religious to being psychological. “From the external it became internal.”³⁴⁹ Likewise, literary heritage, as a shaper and transformer of stories, is related to space.

³⁴⁸ Yuri Lotman. *Culture and Explosion*. Marina Grishakova (ed.). Wilma Clark (trans.). Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009. 144.

³⁴⁹ *ibid.* 144.

Literary Heritage and Space

Kein Ort. Nirgends utilizes spatial metaphors to express the dynamic nature of literary history, which stands in opposition to the restrictive rules of literary heritage. In the novel, space, like literary history, is turned inside out. There are at least two spatial binary pairs at work in *Kein Ort. Nirgends*. The first involves a spatial semantic opposition between inside and outside: inside the salon, inside bourgeois society versus outside the salon, in the forest, in a space of utopian possibilities. The second pair, the seed and the coffin, also involves the opposition of inside and outside. But with this pair, it is the inside that embodies the positive, the possible, the utopian. The first pair has been aptly described. But it can be turned out its head by reading the work in terms of the second pair.

Mechthild Quernheim has described the first spatial semantic binary pair well. She illustrates the pair by creating two opposing lists and placing them side-by-side.³⁵⁰ At the top of the lists, she places the terms “Salon” and “Natur” in opposition. Underneath those terms come “bürgerliche Welt” and “Utopie,” respectively. In the first list, underneath “salon” and “bürgerliche Welt,” follows a list of characters who remain in the physical and metaphorical space of the salon: Savignys, Esenbecks, Merten, Wedekind, C. u. P. Serviére, and C. Brentano. In the second list, underneath “Natur” and “Utopie,” follows the opposing list of characters, those who venture into nature: Kleist, Günderode, and, in parentheses, B. Brentano. Underneath those oppositions, follows a plethora of semantic oppositions. With these spatial semantic oppositions, Quernheim has done good much to explain space in the novel, but there is still more to be done.

³⁵⁰ Mechthild Quernheim. *Das moralische Ich: Kritische Studien zur Subjektwerdung in der Erzählprosa Christa Wolfs*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1990. 189.

The other spatial semantic binary pair inverts the semantics of the outside and the inside, implying that in order to flee oppression, one must enter into the discourse that makes that oppression possible. Regarding literary heritage, one must delve deeply into that heritage in order to loosen its grip. This spatial semantic binary comes largely from the epigraph at the beginning of *Kein Ort. Nirgends*.

Ich trage ein Herz mit mir herum, wie ein nördliches Land den Keim einer
Südfrucht. Es treibt und treibt, und kann nicht reifen.

- Kleist

Deswegen kommt es mir aber vor, als sähe ich mich im Sarg liegen und meine
beiden Ichs starren sich ganz verwundert an.

- Günderrode³⁵¹

The Kleist quotation is taken from a letter written by Kleist to Adolphine von Werdeck on July 29, 1801.³⁵² The Günderrode quotation is taken from a letter written by Günderrode to Clemens Brentano probably in 1803, in which Günderrode compares letters to corpses and explains that seeing a letter that she wrote is like seeing her own corpse in a coffin. Ripped from their respective contexts and read together, these two statements compliment each other, and the word “Deswegen” at the beginning of the second statement begs the reader to read the two statements together. Here Günderrode provides a spatial antidote to Kleist’s spatial problem. The coffin, perhaps the most claustrophobic space imaginable, is the semantic opposite of the wanderer’s open space. However, it is, of course, not that simple. The coffin also represents death, Günderrode’s

³⁵¹ Christa Wolf. *Kein Ort. Nirgends*. Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1979. 5.

³⁵² Heinrich von Kleist. *Sämtliche Briefe*. Dieter Heimböckel (Ed.). Stuttgart: Reclam, 1999. 266.

desirous contemplation of the coffin points, at least implicitly, to her suicidal tendency. Not only then is the coffin a symbol of inward spatiality, it also brings an outlying topic into the center of discourse. The book's epigraph foreshadows the suicide at the end of the book. As Kleist and G nderode wander away from the bourgeois parlor and kill themselves as an act of transformation. However, this is only one of the book's epigraphs.

Kleist's seed, furthermore, is not such a simple matter either. Although it has not yet sprouted, it remains a source of potential energy. Such potential energy lies in narratives as they are passed down and as readings change based on changing situations. Walter Benjamin also used the image of the seed in this manner. At the end of the seventh section of his essay "Der Erz hler: Betrachtungen zum Werk Nikolai Lesskows," Benjamin compares stories—as opposed to information—to unsprouted seeds. "Sie  hnelt den Samenk rnern, die jahrtausendlang luftdicht verschlossen in den Kammern der Pyramiden gelegen und ihre Keimkraft bis auf den heutigen Tag bewahrt haben."³⁵³ The seeds do not expend their energy at once but have lasting power. Likewise stories have lasting powers. They do not expend all of their energy on instant explanation, but rather they allow for a multitude of interpretations as contexts change. Kleist's stories—and his biography and suicide—allow for such a multitude of interpretations.³⁵⁴

G nderode's coffin, furthermore, is, like the pyramid chambers described by Benjamin, a way of insuring that the energy of the stories is extended. The coffin does

³⁵³ Walter Benjamin. *Gesammelte Schriften*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991. II.2.446.

³⁵⁴ Indeed, David Wellbery has edited a volume of essays on Kleist's "Das Erdbeben in Chili" that showcase a variety of literary methodologies. Kleist's story lends itself easily to such a variety of approaches. David Wellbery (Ed.). *Positionen der Literaturwissenschaft: acht Modellanalysen am Beispiel von Kleists Das Erdbeben in Chili*. Munich: Beck, 1985.

not, however, lock away the story or make it inaccessible. It allows the story to become richer. It allows the story to travel and to evolve. Similarly, for Kleist and Günderrode, death and enclosure in a coffin does not stop the story, but rather it allows it to flourish and take on multiple layers of meaning. Death is not the end. “Wandeln ist unsterblich Sterben.” Death, when its potential energy is realized, is transformative. Transformative death and the transvaluation of literary texts are precisely what is at stake in *Kein Ort. Nirgends* as well as in several of Wolf’s works after *Kein Ort. Nirgends*.

Suicide and Transvaluation in Wolf’s Oeuvre

Christa Wolf with *Kein Ort. Nirgends* adopts the technique of transvaluation from Kleist and Günderrode. Kleist, especially with *Penthesilea*, as Genette indicates,³⁵⁵ creates astonishing transvaluations. Much of the transvaluation in Kleist’s works, furthermore, presents rereadings of Greek myths. Günderrode also presents transvaluations of Greek myths. Both Kleist and Günderrode are working against the Enlightenment, Goethean readings of Greek myths. With Wolf’s fictional meeting between Kleist and Günderrode, Wolf brings these transvaluations into the context of the literary heritage of the GDR. Wolf’s Kleist and Günderrode are diegetically located in the year 1804. Nonetheless the work is inevitably read in the context of the GDR, as Ute Brandes makes clear.³⁵⁶ Wolf’s novel emphasizes the transvaluations inherent in the works of Kleist and Günderrode, which upset the Lukácsian dichotomous view of the

³⁵⁵ Gérard Genette. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Trans.). Lincoln; London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. 375.

³⁵⁶ Ute Brandes. “Quotation as Authentication: *No Place on Earth*.” *Responses to Christa Wolf: Critical Essay*. Marilyn Sibley Fries (Ed.). Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1989. 329.

literary heritage of the GDR not only regarding Kleist and Günderrode but also regarding the ancient Greeks.

Kein Ort. Nirgends represents a caesura in Christa Wolf's oeuvre. Astrid Köhler makes this point by grouping *Kein Ort. Nirgends* together with Wolf's later works *Sommerstück* and *Was bleibt*.³⁵⁷ Köhler argues that these three works deal with writers and are much less affirmative of the GDR project.³⁵⁸ Her assessment is accurate but not thorough. George Buehler also marks *Kein Ort. Nirgends* as a caesura in Wolf's oeuvre on similar grounds, declaring *Kein Ort. Nirgends* to be Wolf's "first complete with all five socialist realist characteristics and thereby marks the death of socialist realism in the longer prose works by Christa Wolf."³⁵⁹

Kein Ort. Nirgends is Wolf's work with the most explicit reference to suicide. As the narrator in *Kein Ort. Nirgends* states, "Wir wissen, was kommt."³⁶⁰ Wolf achieves this direct mention of suicide, in part, because the Kleist and Günderrode figures are diegetically in 1804. They are what figures that index what Eberhard Lämmert calls "Die 'reale Folie' der Geschichte."³⁶¹ Nonetheless, *Kein Ort. Nirgends* engages the taboo topic of suicide in the wake of Honecker's declaration that there are no taboos in GDR literature, as long as the author is grounded in socialism. On the one hand, *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, then, does represent a caesura in Wolf's oeuvre on these grounds.

³⁵⁷ Astrid Köhler. *Brückenschläge: Autoren vor und nach der Wiedervereinigung*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007. 22-29.

³⁵⁸ *ibid.* 23.

³⁵⁹ George Buehler. *The Death of Socialist Realism in the Novels of Christa Wolf*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1984. 175. Buehler's five characteristics of Socialist Realism are: 1) objective reflection of reality, 2) partiality, 3) national orientation, 4) the typical, 5) the positive hero.

³⁶⁰ Christa Wolf. *Kein Ort. Nirgends*. Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1979. 151.

³⁶¹ Eberhard Lämmert. *Bauformen des Erzählens*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1972. 26-28.

Kein Ort. Nirgends, however, in addition to making the theme of suicide explicit, also is the first work by Wolf with heavy transtextual elements, a characteristic that appears in several of her later works, especially *Kassandra* and *Medea: Stimmen*, works that continue Wolf's push towards rereading ancient Greek myths against the grain of both the Enlightenment and the literary heritage of the GDR. Although it takes place in 1804, *Kein Ort. Nirgends* has much to do with the GDR. Whereas Wolf's earlier works are subversive via their psychoanalytically oriented reappraisal of communist family narratives, coming of age stories, and father and mother figures—as Julia Hell skillfully argues—these works by Wolf starting with *Kein Ort. Nirgends* are subversive in their transvaluations of GDR literary heritage. They probe into Lukacs's dichotomy of realism versus modernism. They dig deeply into the archive of German and Western literature, as Wolf writes about Kleist and Günderrode writing about Homer and others writing about Greek history, for example. They thereby reevaluate multiple layers of the literary heritage of the GDR.

Christa Wolf, in *Kein Ort. Nirgends*, establishes a place where one can watch stories transform and epochs communicate. Yuri Lotman, in explaining what he calls “dialogue mechanisms,” describes how a cultures and even parts of cultures communicate in dialogue.³⁶² While one people or subculture produces culture, another is receiving culture. When the culture producer recedes into a lull, the culture receiver begins to produce culture. This is, in part, what is at work between classicism and romanticism. Earlier in the same work, Lotman writes: “Romanticism occupies only a part of the semiosphere in which all sorts of other traditional structures continue to exist, some of

³⁶² Yuri M. Lotman. *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*. Ann Shukman (trans.). London; New York: Tauris, 1990. 143-150.

the going way back into antiquity.”³⁶³ Wolf’s work illustrates how romanticism awoke elements of the classical that classicism had ignored, and it also awakens elements of literary history that GDR cultural authorities had ignored.

Six years after the appearance of Wolf’s *Kein Ort. Nirgends* appeared and used romanticism’s reappraisal of Greek literature to reappraise GDR literary heritage, another short novel appeared in the GDR that used an even older text to excavate Central European history of the 1940s and 1950s and reveal its relevance for the GDR of the 1980s. While Wolf’s text transvalues literary heritage, this one uses an overlooked aspect of an accepted text to haunt the GDR conscious.

³⁶³ *ibid.* 126.

Chapter Four

Haunting and Subversive Memory: Hein's *Horns Ende*

... the making of what is absent to speak ...
is the rhetorical devise behind all haunting.

Stephen Greenblatt³⁶⁴

In 1985, fourteen years after Honecker's "No Taboos" speech, and after two years of struggling with the censors, Christoph Hein's second major prose work appeared. *Horns Ende* deals with difficult issues of history and memory, asking, for example, what became of the Nazis who previously dwelt in the territory that became East Germany, and evoking memories of Stalinist show trials in the GDR in the 1950s. The presence of such issues in the novel delayed its publication. Aufbau and Luchterhand publishers, the former in the East, the latter in the West, had worked out a deal to publish the novel in East and West simultaneously.³⁶⁵ This is the same deal negotiated between the same two publishers that led to the publication of Wolf's *Kein Ort. Nirgends* in 1979. The Ministry of Culture, however, temporarily inhibited publication. Klaus Selbig, one of three censors who screened the novel, wrote a letter to Klaus Höpcke, the Minister of Culture from 1973 until 1989, dated May, 10 1984, in which he provided the following reason, among others, for halting publication of the book:

³⁶⁴ Stephen Greenblatt. *Hamlet in Purgatory*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton UP, 2001. 251.

³⁶⁵ Phillip McKnight. *Understanding Christoph Hein*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1995. 74.

... the impression remains that the story carries over into the present as a history of human cruelty. To be sure, the dialogues which precede the individual chapters and the concluding dialogue provide a kind of contrapunkt, but it requires an extremely thorough reading and a great deal of good will not to interpret this novel in the aforementioned sense. ...³⁶⁶

The censors were correct in noting that the novel presents a “history of human cruelty,” part of which “carries over into the present,” that is, into the GDR. They were mistaken, however, in their reading of the dialogues between chapters, which include the posthumous voice of Horn, as a counterpoint to that history. Their misreading of those dialogues is further evident in the fact that they persuaded Hein to change the original title, *Horn*, to the title under which the work was later published, *Horns Ende*, because they thought that emphasizing Horn’s death would demonstrate a disconnect between the histories of fascism and Stalinism, and the one hand, and the contemporary situation in the GDR, on the other. Their mistake lies in the fact that they read the ghost of Horn as belonging entirely to the past. His haunting, I argue, relying on a transtextual borrowing from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, in fact, has everything to do with the GDR present.

History and memory are vital to the novel, and scholars have often read the novel in those terms, but they struggle to pinpoint precisely the subversive nature of those elements in the novel. The key to reading the novel in terms of subversive memory are found in the ghost’s dialogues with the character Thomas. These ghostly dialogues resemble the communication between the ghost of Hamlet’s father and Hamlet in

³⁶⁶ Portions of this letter are provided in English translation by Phillip McKnight in *Understanding Christoph Hein*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1995. 74-76.

Shakespeare's eponymous work. The textual relationship between Hein's *Horns Ende* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, furthermore, is complex. It is one of proximation, that transformation which occurs when the hypertext juxtaposes the hypotext with a contemporary setting. It is also prosafication, that transformation which occurs when the narrative of a dramatic text is portrayed in prose. The proximation in *Horns Ende* is not as obvious as that in Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* It does not juxtapose *Hamlet* with crass youth culture. Nor does it present *Hamlet* in such a way that appears to parody it. Instead, it utilizes a type of haunting that is, upon examination, remarkably similar to the haunting that occurs in *Hamlet*. It employs such haunting as subversive memory.

Memory and History

Horns Ende consists of five characters' accounts of the time surrounding Horn's suicide in the 1950s in the German Democratic Republic. In addition to the disjointed and interspersed narrative accounts, there is a dialogue in eight sections (one for each chapter) between Thomas and the long dead Horn, who demands that Thomas not forget the long past events. The titular character, Horn, who is not one of the narrators, except in the dialogue, is the director of the museum in Bad Guldenberg, the small town where the novel takes place. Horn is reprimanded for creating a museum display that some of the authorities find to be opposed to the project of socialism. Without the consent of the mayor, several governmental figures investigate Horn and find out that his sister has fled to the Federal Republic of Germany. The details of neither the museum display nor any punishment are described. It is made clear, however, that Horn is being threatened by

legal and social measures. Eventually, Horn hangs himself. His body is found later by Paul, a mischievous adolescent who shows the hanging body to his friend, Thomas, one of the narrators and characters whom Horn later haunts. Again, this haunting, and its similarity to the haunting in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is key for my reading the novel.

Many critics who have written about *Horns Ende* examine the novel, at least in part, by describing the ways in which different characters in the novel see history differently. Reading the novel in this way is no doubt worthwhile, as history and memory are key elements in the novel. Hein himself has made this point repeatedly.³⁶⁷ Important as history and memory are in *Horns Ende*, the point has been, if not overstated, stated too often without leading anywhere new. The main two thrusts of such criticism are 1) that different characters in the novel represent different philosophies of history and memory, and 2) that Walter Benjamin's influence upon Christoph Hein can be seen in the novel, especially through the character Horn.

It may be that Bernd Fischer first set up this paradigm of criticism on *Horns Ende* in the chapter on this novel when he writes, "Die Schwierigkeiten, die die vielstimmigen Erzählinstanzen des Romans mit dieser Nachkriegsgeschichte einer Kleinstadt haben und vermitteln, werfen zugleich fundamentale Fragen nach der Möglichkeit von Geschichte und Geschichtsschreibung."³⁶⁸ Fischer's taxonomy of narrators in the novel vis-à-vis

³⁶⁷ For example, see: "Wir werden es lernen müssen, mit unserer Vergangenheit zu leben" [Interview Krzysztof Jachimczak]. (1986). *Christoph Hein: Texte, Daten, Bilder*. Lothar Baier (Ed.). Frankfurt: Luchterhand, 1990. Also: David Clarke provides a good summary of Hein's essays on history-writing and literature in "Mit Kunst der Welt beikommen," chapter one of his monograph, *Diese merkwürdige Kleinigkeit einer Vision: Christoph Hein's Social Critique in Transition*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002.

³⁶⁸ Bernd Fischer. *Christoph Hein: Drama und Prosa im letzten Jahrzehnt der DDR*. Heidelberg: Winter, 1990. 92.

“Geschichtsschreibung” consists of three categories.³⁶⁹ The first of these three categories groups together the two narrators who are consciously writing some form history: Spodeck and Kruschkatz. Fischer’s second category consists of those characters, who narrate without being conscious of historical theory, yet are psychologically stable: Gertrude Fischlinger and Thomas. The third category is reserved for Marlene Gohl, who has a serious mental illness. Marlene’s narration, Fischer argues, represents irrational, Romantic memory. At the end of the chapter, Fischer comes to the character of Horn, who is not a narrator, although he may be the main character. For Horn, Fischer emphasizes, history is all-important. On this point, Fischer is correct. However, Horn has another relationship to history that Fischer has overlooked, namely the way in which Horn’s ghost deals with history.

Many critics also see Horn’s view of history as being similar to that of Walter Benjamin, a figure who has deeply influenced Christoph Hein.³⁷⁰ Bernd Fischer and Joachim Lehmann especially emphasize the parallels between Horn’s view of history and that of Benjamin. Fischer, between his chapters on *Horns Ende* and *Passage*, writes an excursion to Walter Benjamin—Fischer himself calls it an excursion—in which he

³⁶⁹ Ibid. 95. As briefly mentioned in the previous paragraph, much similar criticism has been written in the wake of Fischer’s chapter. A brief survey of this includes: Dieter Sevin. “Perspektivität als Strukturprinzip: Christoph Hein’s *Horns Ende*.” *Textstrategien in DDR-Prosawerken zwischen Bau und Durchbruch der Berliner Mauer*. Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1994. Philip McKnight. “The Museum of History.” *Understanding Christoph Hein*. University of South Carolina Press, 1995. Christl Kiewitz. “*Horns Ende*: Ein Tribunal der Erinnerungen zur Versöhnung der Vergangenheit durch die Gegenwart.” *Der stumme Schrei: Krise und Kritik der sozialistischen Intelligenz im Werk Christoph Heins*. Stauffenburg: Tübingen, 1995. Andrea Hilbk. *Von Zirkularbewegungen und kreisenden Utopien: Zur Geschichtsdarstellung in der Epik Christoph Heins*. Augsburg: Bernd Wissner, 1998. David Robinson. “Hein’s Historians: Fictions of Social Memory.” *Deconstructing East Germany: Christoph Hein’s Literature of Dissent*. Rochester: Camden House, 1999. David Clarke. “*Horns Ende*: Rethinking the Past.” “*Diese merkwürdige Kleinigkeit einer Vision*”: *Christoph Hein’s Social Critique in Transition*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002.

³⁷⁰ For an extensive study of the influence of Benjamin on Hein, see: Ines Zeckert. *Poetologie und Prophetie: Heins Prosa und Dramatik im Kontext seiner Walter-Benjamin-Rezeption*. Frankfurt am Main; New York: Lang, 1993.

attempts to explain why Benjamin is important for Hein's writings, especially for *Horns Ende*. Fischer points to selections from Benjamin's *Passagenwerk* as well as from his „Über den Begriff der Geschichte.“ Fischer argues that *Horns Ende* follows at least some of Benjamin's ideas about history-writing in that it emphasizes the dangers of deterministic philosophies of history and highlights the losers of history, that is, the victims of deterministic philosophies of history. These two branches of Benjamin's influence on *Horns Ende*, then, are actually two sides of the same coin. A third branch of influence that Fischer sees is Benjamin's inversion of Marx's metaphor of revolutions as the locomotives of history into revolutions being the emergency brakes of history. Fischer's point here is that the narrators in *Horns Ende* imply that nothing about Bad Guldenberg, if not the GDR as a whole, performed that emergency brake function. Yet a fourth branch of influence is Benjamin's insistence that history, for the historical materialist, is best seen as a snapshot, a flicker of light. It is through these snapshots, Fischer reads Benjamin, that redemption becomes a possibility for perceivers of history, such as the adult Thomas in *Horns Ende*. Horn's suicide, Fischer correctly points out, is a powerful example of such a snapshot of history.

Joachim Lehmann, in his 1991 essay, "Christoph Hein: Chronist und 'historischer Materialist'," one of the more perceptive, early essays on Hein's oeuvre, points out four phenomena, which are related, that he sees in *Horns Ende*, phenomena which can be, in part, found in *Drachenblut* and *Der Tangospieler* as well: 1) the portrayal of a major political event that plays a role in an anecdote about a minor figure; 2) the presence of the dead in the present; 3) the leap of the past into the present through memory; 4) the

compulsion of the living to remember the dead.³⁷¹ Lehmann goes on to place Hein's prose under the rubric of Benjamin's concept of the historical materialist. To do so, Lehmann compares Benjamin's notion of the chronicler with that of Hein. Lehmann cites Benjamin's statement about the chronicler from "Über den Begriff der Geschichte,"³⁷² in which Benjamin writes that the chronicler documents events without distinguishing between important and unimportant events, so that readers of the chronicles may use any moment of history as a point of redemption. Hein, Lehmann argues, works in this vein. To back up this claim in the case of *Horns Ende*, Lehmann—in a move similar to that of Fischer—argues that Marlene, with her mental handicap, comes closer to the "Benjamin/Hornschen Wahrheit"³⁷³ than other narrators. Like Fischer, Lehmann also claims, correctly, that Horn's suicide functions as a catalyst for the other narrators to remember Bad Guldenberg in the 1950s.

Memory and history are no doubt important issues in the novel. Furthermore, Benjamin's influence on Hein is, indeed, present in the novel, and Benjamin-informed approaches to *Horns Ende* are useful in understanding the novel. However, such criticism—useful and accurate as it is—misses two key points that are related to each other as well as to memory and history: the space of Bad Guldenberg and the ghost. Horn's ghost has been largely ignored and needs to be examined in order to understand fully the way that history and memory function in the novel as well as the degree to

³⁷¹ Joachim Lehmann. "Christoph Hein – Chronist und 'historischer Materialist'." *Text + Kritik*. 111 (July 1991). 44-56.

³⁷² Lehmann mistakenly claims to cite from Benjamin's eighteenth thesis, when, in fact, he cites from the third thesis.

³⁷³ Joachim Lehmann. "Christoph Hein – Chronist und 'historischer Materialist'." *Text + Kritik*. 111 (July 1991). 50-51.

which the novel is subversive. Reading the space of Bad Guldenberg in *Horns Ende* then further demonstrates just how subversive haunting is in the novel.

As a point of transition into a reading of space in *Horns Ende*, it is in order to engage with one more critic, one who explicitly, if briefly, examines the role of suicide in *Horns Ende*. In the section on that novel in his 1997 dissertation, *Suicide in the German Novel 1945-1989*, Michael Douglas Schleihauß Zimmermann argues, accurately but imprecisely, that Horn's suicide is a matter of egression.³⁷⁴ That is, Horn has little human contact, as he is alienated and rejected by GDR society. Zimmermann also sweeps Horn's suicide into Durkheim's broad category of egoistic suicide, a suspicious categorization, since—although egoistic suicides involve a low degree of integration of the individual into society—egoistic suicides have no moral implications, that is, the individual does not kill himself for a cause.³⁷⁵ Horn carries an enormous moral burden. He is fighting for a cause. Although Horn's suicide may arguably fit better into the category of egoistic suicides than into any of the other three of Durkheim's categories, it is far from a perfect fit, and there is certainly no imperative to squeeze Horn's suicide into one of Durkheim's categories. Zimmermann's main point, however, is the lack of integration, which makes up one-half of the criteria for egoistic suicides. This point is accurate, but not entirely precise. Zimmermann's attempt to define Horn's suicide in terms of Durkheim's categories, furthermore, causes him to forget that the fictional suicide is a narrative event with narrative consequences. Horn's suicide leads to subversive memory through haunting.

³⁷⁴ Michael Douglas Schleihauß Zimmermann. *Suicide in the German Novel, 1945-1989*. doctoral dissertation. University of Waterloo (Canada), 1997. 108-127.

³⁷⁵ Emile Durkheim. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. John A. Saulding and George Simpson (Trans.). George Simpson (Ed.). Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1951.

The Ghost of Horn

Horn's ghost is remarkably similar to that of Hamlet's father in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Christoph Hein has also been influenced by *Hamlet*. The intertextual role of *Hamlet* in Hein's *Horns Ende*, however, has yet to be extrapolated. A reading of *Horns Ende* that is informed by *Hamlet* adds to scholarship on memory in *Horns Ende* by emphasizing the role of the ghost in both works. In other words, *Horns Ende* needs to be read with *Hamlet* in mind because of the nature of the man, and later ghost, around whom the novel centers. "Erinnere dich," the ghost of historian and museum director Horn commands Thomas, the boy who finds Horn's body, in the first two words of the novel. These are virtually the same words that the ghost of Hamlet's father utters to his son: "Remember me."³⁷⁶ What remains to be clarified, however, is the nature of such memory.

Stephen Greenblatt comes close to answering this question in *Hamlet in Purgatory*: "*Prosopopoeia*—personification, the making of what is absent to speak—is the rhetorical devise behind all haunting."³⁷⁷ That is, the ghost not only commands one to remember, but the ghost is (unorthodox) memory personified. Indeed, *Horns Ende* has long been read as a text about memory in the GDR. However, a reading of the novel with *Hamlet* in mind under the assumption that such a reading allows for a more thorough connection among memory, communication, and the ghost in *Horns Ende*. Who is remembering? What is being remembering? Most importantly, what role does the ghost

³⁷⁶ William Shakespeare. *Hamlet*. 1.5.91.

³⁷⁷ Stephen Greenblatt. *Hamlet in Purgatory*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton UP, 2001. 251.

play in the remembering? My reading of the novel sees Horn's ghost as a vessel of subversive, intergenerational memory, a way of disturbing, not dissimilar to that of the ghost of Hamlet's father. For that reason, particular attention is paid to the passages in which the ghost speaks. In other words, the main question of this chapter is: What does the posthumous voice of a history professor who killed himself in the 1950s in the GDR have to say? Examining the ghost's speech by drawing on theories of space and spectrality, this chapter hands Horn's ghost an interpretive open mic and comes to the conclusion that the historian's haunting loosens the retracting, claustrophobic, politico-cultural space of the GDR represented largely by the town of Bad Guldenberg.

Shakespeare was received positively in the GDR, and productions of Shakespeare's plays were often staged in the GDR.³⁷⁸ For Lukács, Shakespeare was a revered model for theater.³⁷⁹ He particularly praised the historicism of that playwright's dramas.³⁸⁰ That Shakespeare ought to be received positively is also a rare point on which Lukács and Brecht agreed. They disagreed, however, on how to receive him. In 1951, for example, Brecht staged a production of *Coriolanus*³⁸¹ and was lambasted for his

³⁷⁸ Wolfram Schlenker. *Das "kulturelle Erbe" in der DDR: Gesellschaftliche Entwicklung und Kulturpolitik 1945-1965*. Stuttgart: Poeschel, 1977. 156.

³⁷⁹ Arpad Kadarkay. *Georg Lukács: Life, Thought, and Politics*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1991. 334.

³⁸⁰ *ibid.* 334.

³⁸¹ Wolfgang Emmerich. *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*. Berlin: Aufbau, 2000. 153.

modernization of the piece.³⁸² Following Brecht, Heiner Müller staged a version of *Macbeth* in 1972 that likewise differed from Lukács's historicist Shakespeare.³⁸³

Lukács was especially fond of *Hamlet*, and there were ample productions of the play in the GDR. Lukács saw in that play an example of how various characters can reveal comprehensive worldviews. Hamlet's contrast with Laertes, Horatio, and Fortinbras, Lukács contends, demonstrates the historical typicality of Hamlet.³⁸⁴ Lukács, however, does not appear ever to mention the ghost of Hamlet's father. While Lukács is interested in the historicism of play, the ghost deals with history quite differently. Writers such as Christoph Hein and Heiner Müller, however, confront the ghost. Müller produced the play, but he also rewrote it in the form of his play *Die Hamletmaschine*. There is, furthermore, no shortage of ghosts in Müller's productions. Müller also emphasizes the elements of violence and revolution in *Hamlet*, elements that exist in the play. Müller is also interested in suicide in the play, particularly Ophelia's compulsive, irrational, youthful suicide. Hein, however, utilizes *Hamlet* and his father's ghost in quite a different manner.

There is no doubt that Shakespeare is also an important figure for Hein. He says as much himself in an interview with Klaus Hammer in the context of defining Hein's notion of chronicling: "Chronist ist für mich ein Homer wie ein Shakespeare wie ein

³⁸² David Bathrick. *The Powers of Speech: The Politics of Culture in the GDR*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995. 261.

³⁸³ Wolfgang Emmerich. *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*. Berlin: Aufbau, 2000. 248.

³⁸⁴ Georg Lukács makes this point at least twice: *The Historical Novel*. University of Nebraska Press, 1983. 96. *Writer and Critic*. London: Merlin, 1970. 159-160.

Kafka.”³⁸⁵ In addition to this explicit statement of the influence of Shakespeare on Hein, there are at least two instances where Hein declares the influence specifically of *Hamlet* on his own thought. In his 1978 essay, “Hamlet und der Parteisekretär,” Hein, rather implicitly points towards *Hamlet*, in order to argue that theater should do two things: examine the past for the sake of understanding the present (i.e. using 12th century Denmark to comment on England around 1600) and make the private public (as in the play within the play, “The Mousetrap”).³⁸⁶ The importance of *Hamlet* for Christoph Hein, however, is again evident in his 1989 essay “Die Zeit, die nicht vergehen kann oder Das Dilemma des Chronisten: Gedanken zum Historikerstreit anlässlich zweier deutscher vierzigster Jahrestage,” in which Hein recalls that the German national character, in a previous century, was summed up by the statement: “Deutschland ist Hamlet.”³⁸⁷ Hein reminds his audience of some of the similarities: both are young, philosophically minded, lonely, misunderstood, morbid, and so forth. Although Hein concurs that no one would use the image of Hamlet to describe the Germany of 1989 and goes on to explore other possibilities from Western literature, the image of Hamlet implicitly reemerges at the end of the essay as Hein insists that history will not simply disappear. In short, Hein argues

³⁸⁵ Klaus Hammer. “Horns Ende: Versuch einer Interpretation.” (1987). *Chronist ohne Botschaft*. Klaus Hammer (Ed.). Berlin; Weimar: Aufbau, 1992. 12.

³⁸⁶ Christoph Hein. “Hamlet und der Parteisekretär.” *Schlötel oder Was solls: Stücke und Essays*. Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1986. excerpt from “Christoph Hein antwortet auf Fragen von *Theater der Zeit*. *Theater der Zeit*. 7 (1978).

³⁸⁷ Christoph Hein. “Die Zeit, die nicht vergehen kann oder Das Dilemma des Chronisten: Gedanken zum Historikerstreit anlässlich zweier deutscher vierzigster Jahrestage.” *Der Ort. Das Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003. 140. This is likely a reference to Ferdinand Freiligrath’s 1844 poem “Deutschland ist Hamlet.” Heiner Müller also quoted Freiligrath’s poem on the program for his play *Hamletmaschine*. *Hamlet* has been widely received in Germany since the late 17th century. For more information on the reception of both Shakespeare and *Hamlet* in Germany, see: Roger Paulin. *The Critical Reception of Shakespeare in Germany 1682-1914: Native Literature and Foreign Genius*. Hildesheim; New York: Olms, 2003. See also: Franz Loquai. *Hamlet und Deutschland: Zur literarischen Shakespeare Reception im 20. Jahrhundert*. Stuttgart; Weimar: Metzler, 1993.

that, despite (or perhaps even because of) attempts at normalization, German history will continue – Hein, however, does not use this word – to haunt the German people. These two essays together with the fact that Hein learned much about theater under the direction of Benno Besson and was an accomplished playwright a decade before *Horns Ende* was written indicates at the very least that Hein was familiar with *Hamlet* and was aware of some uses of the image of Hamlet.

There is a long tradition of ghosts in Western literature. In antiquity, ghosts were associated with the underworld: one need only to think of Seneca's *Thyestes*.³⁸⁸ There are many ghosts in renaissance drama, especially in Shakespeare. In the nineteenth century, there are ghosts in Dickens's novels. Modernist ghosts abound in works by authors such as Beckett and Joyce.³⁸⁹ Later, there are post-colonial ghosts in the works of authors such as Toni Morrison and Luisa Valenzuela.³⁹⁰ But what is a ghost? And how have ghosts evolved over time?

One of the sharpest caesuras in the lineage of ghosts in Western literature comes with the ghost of Hamlet's father in Shakespeare's 1601 play *Hamlet*. Before Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, ghosts tended to "let loose a high-pitched blood-curdling shriek"³⁹¹ have a "bloody appearance" and a "slightly hysterical diction".³⁹² In other

³⁸⁸ Mark Pizzato. "Ancient Specters (Prehistoric, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman)." *Ghosts of Theatre and Cinema in the Brain*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006.

³⁸⁹ Jean-Michel Rabaté. *The Ghosts of Modernity*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996. See also Alice Rayner. *Ghosts: Death's Double and the Phenomena of Theatre*. Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

³⁹⁰ Gordon F. Avery. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

³⁹¹ E. Pearlman. *William Shakespeare: The History Plays*. New York: Twayne, 1992. 71.

³⁹² *ibid.* 73.

words, pre-1601, Western ghosts were intended to startle in a physical sense and to seek revenge. There is relatively little change in the role of ghosts ancient Greece and Rome to Shakespeare's 1597 play *Richard III*. E. Pearlman elaborates on the shift in Shakespeare's ghosts from the "old-style ghosts" in *Richard III* through the ghost of Caesar in the 1599 play *Julius Caesar*, which see some change in the form of Brutus's brooding and Anthony's attempt to make amends for Caesar's death, to the ghost of Hamlet's father, the nature of which, Pearlman indicates, the theatergoing Londoner at the time could not have predicted.³⁹³ The ghosts that visit Richard III are the ghosts of those he has murdered, and they come to him to curse him with revenge. The ghost of Hamlet's father – in Shakespeare's 1601 version of the play – does not insist upon revenge, but rather remembrance. It may be argued, then, that the ghost of Hamlet's father is the first ghost to haunt, in Avery Gordon's sense, a topic to which it must be returned later.

Stephen Greenblatt shines much light on *Hamlet* as well as the history of European ghostdom in his monograph *Hamlet in Purgatory*. Greenblatt examines the history of the theological notion of purgatory, in order to understand better the nature of the ghost of Hamlet's father. Greenblatt argues that the (largely medieval) Catholic doctrine of purgatory, a place in between heaven and hell where souls may be sent after corporeal death in order to clear away their sins through finite – if lengthy – punishment, collapses during the renaissance into the notion of the ghost who returns to Earth to right a wrong. Protestants tended to view ghosts as either fraud or demons, a view which often

³⁹³ *ibid.* 73. Stephen Greenblatt makes the same point in: *Hamlet in Purgatory*. Princeton UP, 2001. 164-165.

led them to deride or condemn the notion of ghosts.³⁹⁴ Shakespeare, Greenblatt ultimately argues, catholicizes the *Ur-Hamlet*, in which the ghost frighteningly screeching for revenge (which is line with both the ancient, underworld ghosts and the Protestant, demonized ghosts), by staging the ghost of Hamlet's father as a purgatorial ghost (the ghost himself states that he has come from purgatory)³⁹⁵ in the form of a "deep psychic disturbance."³⁹⁶ In other words, the main command that the ghost of Hamlet's father gives to Hamlet – rather than frightening or demanding revenge – is that he remember. Greenblatt turns to a historical document, which indicates, to the surprise of many, that Shakespeare's father, if not Shakespeare himself had been a closet-Catholic and this in a time and place in which being Catholic was illegal.

Although the topic of religion in Elizabethan England is quite distant from the GDR, this has much to do with *Horns Ende*. It would without doubt be a dubious argument – as well as a useless one – to argue that Christoph Hein is Catholic. In fact, he is the son of a Lutheran minister and has stated in an interview that he sees himself as a spiritually inclined pantheist.³⁹⁷ Indeed, the theological split between Protestants and Catholics over the ontology of ghosts is only peripherally – if at all – relevant to a reading of *Horns Ende*. Greenblatt's emphasis on the role of the ghost as a purgatorial "deep psychic disturbance," however, is important for understanding the nature of Horn's

³⁹⁴ Stephen Greenblatt. *Hamlet in Purgatory*. Princeton UP, 2001. 158.

³⁹⁵ "I am thy father's spirit,/Doomed for a certain term to walk the night,/And for the day confined to fast in fires/Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature/Are burnt and purged away" (1.5.9-13).

³⁹⁶ Stephen Greenblatt. *Hamlet in Purgatory*. Princeton UP, 2001. 185, 195, 206.

³⁹⁷ See Hilary Mimpriß. "'Ohne Hoffnung können wir nicht leben': Christoph Hein's use of religious motifs as an expression of resignation and of hope." *Christoph Hein in Perspective*. (*German Monitor*, no. 51). Graham Jackman (Ed.). Amsterdam; Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000.

ghost. A reading of Horn's ghost that is informed by Greenblatt's reading of the ghost of Hamlet's father illuminates the nature of haunting in *Horns Ende*, which is otherwise not readily apparent.

Critics of *Horns Ende* have struggled to define the nature of Horn's posthumous voice. Christl Kiewitz compares it to the resurrected Christ. David Clarke calls the voice "what may be Horn's ghost, or perhaps an invention of Thomas's own imagination."³⁹⁸ Phillip McKnight more precisely describes it as "an apparition which continually admonishes and exhorts him to remember what had happened – even to remember, if he can, some things which he hadn't seen."³⁹⁹ David Robinson gets even closer to the matter. He writes that Thomas "is prodded into remembering by the ghostly exhortations of Horn" and that Thomas is "[h]aunted by the ghost of memory."⁴⁰⁰ Bernd Fischer points out how Gertrude, somewhat superstitiously, opens the windows and burns incense in Horn's room in order to prevent "schlechte Geister."⁴⁰¹ Finally, Robinson calls the apparition "Horn's ghost"⁴⁰² and later labels the dialogues between the dead Horn and the adult Thomas the "the ghost prologues."⁴⁰³ Furthermore, Robinson insists—rightly so—upon the importance of Horn's ghost's command that Thomas remember. It is, indeed,

³⁹⁸ David Clarke. "Diese merkwürdige Kleinigkeit einer Vision": Christoph Hein's Social Critique in *Transition*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002. 124.

³⁹⁹ Phillip McKnight. *Understanding Christoph Hein*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1995. 40.

⁴⁰⁰ David W. Robinson. *Deconstructing East Germany: Christoph Hein's Literature of Dissent*. Rochester: Camden House, 1999.

⁴⁰¹ Bernd Fischer. *Christoph Hein: Drama und Prosa im letzten Jahrzehnt der DDR*. Heidelberg: Winter, 1990. 111. The scene that Fischer cites is in: Christoph Hein. *Horns Ende*. Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1985. 58.

⁴⁰² David W. Robinson. *Deconstructing East Germany: Christoph Hein's Literature of Dissent*. Rochester: Camden House, 1999. 158.

⁴⁰³ Ibid. 160.

this point that defines the ghost. David Clarke's concern that the ghost is a figment of Thomas's imagination – or rather that Thomas does not actually see the ghost – is beside the point. In other words, Clarke fails to acknowledge fully the nature of literary ghosts. Theatrical and cinematic ghosts are often transparent or silhouette-like not only for an uncanny effect, but often because the director wants to make the point that ghosts are not (entirely) visual figures.⁴⁰⁴ The perhaps most famous literary ghost ever, the ghost of Hamlet's father, for example, cannot be seen by Gertrude. That is, ghosts *are* figments of the imagination. Or more precisely – and this is the thrust of Alice Rayner's argument – ghosts exist, but they exist in a way that leads one to think that they are imaginary. In short, ghosts are not clearly visible, corporeal entities.

Joachim Lehmann mentions in passing the possibility of a comparison between the ghost of Horn and that of Hamlet's father.⁴⁰⁵ Lehmann, however, mentions several possibilities for the nature of Horn's posthumous voice and does not elaborate on the comparison with the ghost of Hamlet's father. This comparison, however, allows for a reading of the novel that pinpoints its subversive nature. A return to Lehmann's essay will prove relevant later in the explication of the relationship between ghosts and chronicling. First, however, it is necessary to follow up on a reading of Horn's ghost through the lens of Greenblatt's reading of the ghost of Hamlet's father.

⁴⁰⁴ Alice Rayner. "Introduction: Doubles and Doubts." *Ghosts: Death's Double and the Phenomena of Theater*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006. ix-xxxv. Rayner makes this point perhaps most pithily when she writes that "ghosting or haunting is an aspect of theatre as a mode of consciousness in which a fully materialized reality, even a representational reality, is haunted by an appearing not-to-be – that is by its own negation." xvii.

⁴⁰⁵ Joachim Lehmann. "Christoph Hein – Chronist und 'historischer Materialist'." *Text + Kritik*. 111 (July 1991). 49.

But is Horn's ghost a "deep psychic disturbance" for Thomas? The answer lies in the conversation between Thomas and the ghost. Not only does the ghost command Thomas to remember "Erinnere dich."⁴⁰⁶ Thomas does not want to remember, but the ghost insists: "Du mußt dich erinnern. ... Du kannst es nicht vergessen haben. ... Alles hast du gesehen."⁴⁰⁷ The ghost personifies this unremitting memory. Thomas attempts to repress the memory, but it will not go away. This struggle between wanting to forget and being forced to remember repeats itself. Again, the ghost commands: "Erinnere dich."⁴⁰⁸ And again Thomas attempts to repress the memory: "Ich weiss es nicht mehr."⁴⁰⁹ But the ghost does not let up: "Du kannst es nicht vergessen haben. Du mußt dich erinnern."⁴¹⁰ And again: "Streng dich an. Du hast viel gesehen. Mehr als du weißt. ... Dein Gedächtnis hat alles festgehalten. ... Was war? Sprich!"⁴¹¹ The exclamation point demonstrates the ghost's aggressive insistence. The aggressive punctuation continues as does the ghost's insistent command: "Ach, was du verstehst! Denk nicht nach. Erinnere dich. ... Erzähl! Was war dann?"⁴¹² Even as Thomas has begun to remember and is growing tired, the ghost chants that Thomas keep remembering. "Erinnere dich. ... Weiter, Junge. Weiter. Weiter. Du mußt dich erinnern."⁴¹³ The memory of Horn and

⁴⁰⁶ Christoph Hein. *Horns Ende*. Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1985. 5.

⁴⁰⁷ *ibid.* 5.

⁴⁰⁸ *ibid.* 31.

⁴⁰⁹ *ibid.* 31.

⁴¹⁰ *ibid.* 31.

⁴¹¹ *ibid.* 145.

⁴¹² *ibid.* 217.

⁴¹³ *ibid.* 249.

the events surrounding Horn's death, all personified by the ghost of Horn cannot be repressed. It emerges again and again.

Not only is the emergence of Horn's ghost unremitting, it also frightens Thomas. Horn's hanging corpse had already frightened Thomas. "Sie haben mich erschreckt. Damals als ich Sie fand. ...wie Sie gestorben sind. ... Sie waren völlig verändert. Ihre Zunge, Ihre Lippen ..." ⁴¹⁴ Even before Horn's death, Thomas is afraid of Horn. "Ich hatte Angst vor Ihnen. ... Wie waren mir unheimlich. Ich verstand so wenig und fürchtete mich." ⁴¹⁵ Seeing Horn's hanging corpse is also a frightening experience for the young Thomas.

Dann sah ich zu dem Toten hoch. Er sah mich mit offenen Augen an, und ich trat so schnell zur Seite, daß ich über die eigenen Füße stolperte.

Es war tatsächlich Herr Horn, wenn ich ihn auch kaum wiedererkannt. Die Augen waren hervorgetreten, und die Zunge quoll breit und verfärbt aus dem Mund. Ich blickte zu Paul, um den Toten nicht ansehen zu müssen. ⁴¹⁶

At his first sight of the corpse (or rather at the corpse's first sight of him), Thomas is startled. Then the gore of the corpse overwhelms him. He looks away, but he will not forget Horn and his corpse. For the adult Thomas, the memory of Horn is at least as frightening as the living Horn of the hanging corpse of Horn. Thomas tells Horn's ghost: "Sie quälen mich." ⁴¹⁷ But Horn's ghost gets to the crux of haunting as a "deep psychic

⁴¹⁴ *ibid.* 59.

⁴¹⁵ *ibid.* 31.

⁴¹⁶ *ibid.* 252.

⁴¹⁷ *ibid.* 99.

disturbance” when he replies: “Nicht ich bin es, der dich quält. Du bist es, du selbst”.⁴¹⁸

Thus Horn’s ghost is the personification of Thomas’s unremitting, deeply disturbing memory of Horn.

In addition, Stephen Greenblatt’s study of purgatory and *Hamlet* shines light on Horn’s ghost in two related ways. First, it allows for the assertion that Horn’s suicide and his ghost (i.e. the haunting memory of him) creates a purgatorial space that functions as an antidote to the claustrophobic space represented by Bad Guldenberg. Second, it allows for a comparison of the function of the ghost with the function of chronicling, which Hein (and his critics) has repeatedly stated is one of the overarching elements of his writing. Purgatory and chronicling are, in a way, related. However, it is best to consider them separately before examining their relationship to one another.

Greenblatt’s history of purgatory provides not only an approach to *Hamlet*, it also provides a term for a space where it is possible to work through the past. The ghost of Hamlet’s father reports that he is:

Doomed for a certain term to walk the night
And for the day confined to fast in fires
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away.⁴¹⁹

Having acknowledged the similarities between the ghost of Hamlet’s father and that of Horn, it is possible to regard Horn as a figure from a secular purgatory. The purgatory of Hamlet’s father was also secularized. Furthermore, Horn’s purgatory may even be less

⁴¹⁸ *ibid.* 99.

⁴¹⁹ William Shakespeare. *Hamlet*. 1.5.10-13.

secularized than that of Hamlet's father, since, as David Clarke notes, the priest prays for Horn,⁴²⁰ even though Horn is buried in the "ehemaligen Selbstmörderecke" where atheists (and, unofficially, suicides) are buried. Horn's haunting creates memory and a working through of the past in a town that is symbolic for repression. Just as the ghost of Hamlet's father returns to remind Horn's haunting, like that of Hamlet's father, creates a space where critical, unorthodox remembering is possible. Furthermore, it creates the possibility—or rather the necessity—of giving the past relevance for the present. Thus, it is possible to see the realm of Horn's ghost as purgatory. He must appear and command that Thomas remember until the crimes of Bad Guldenberg, like those of Hamlet's Denmark, are purged away.

Before, during, and after the *Wende* of 1989/1990, Hein has described himself as a "Chronist" – a chronicler – a writer who narrates, through literary and subjective means, what he sees without including explicit commentary on how the events at hand ought to be interpreted. In a 1986 interview with Krzysztof Jachimczak, when asked about his role as a chronicler, Hein explains "Ich bin nicht klüger als mein Publikum, ich kann keine Richtung angeben. Ich bin so unberaten wie mein Publikum. Ich kann ihm nur etwas über den Weg sagen, den wir gegangen sind."⁴²¹ This recounting of the path that has been crossed is what Hein means by chronicling. According to Hein, this method of writing is not new, but rather has existed for quite a while. In a March 1990 interview with Sigrid Löffler, Hein places himself within a tradition of literary

⁴²⁰ The fact that a priest prays for Horn after Horn has committed suicide also creates a contrast between Horn's suicide and that of Werther in Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*, since it is explicitly written at the end of the latter novel that no priest prays for Werther.

⁴²¹ Christoph Hein. "Wir werden es lernen müssen, mit unserer Vergangenheit zu leben" [Interview with Krzysztof Jachimczak]. (1986). *Christoph Hein: Texte, Daten, Bilder*. Lothar Baier (Ed.). Frankfurt: Luchterhand, 1990. 52.

chroniclers: “Ja ich verstehe mich als Chronist, der mit großer Genauigkeit aufzeichnet, was er gesehen hat. Damit stehe ich in einer großen Tradition von Johann Peter Hebel bis Kafka.”⁴²² In an interview a year later with Klaus Hammer, Hein, in further explaining what he means by the term “Chronist,” traces this tradition back somewhat further:

Ich benutze das Wort weniger im Sinne des Buchhalters als des wirklichen Chronikschreibers etwa des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts, wo die kleinen Fürsten einen Schreiber hatten, der wirklich tagtäglich aufzeichnete, was da passierte, und dies mit ein bißchen Rückgrat machte. Er berichtete also auch über Dinge, die nicht berichtet werden sollten.⁴²³

These things about which the chronicler reports – things that are not meant to be mentioned – are “ghostly matters.”⁴²⁴ It makes sense, then, that the figure in *Horns Ende* who forces both the reader and the narrators of the novel to focus on taboo matters in the GDR—suicide, the Stalinist show trials, the Nazi past—is a ghost. Without using the word ghost or highlighting the connection to *Hamlet*, Klaus Hammer describes this process of haunting in an early review of *Horns Ende*, as he writes: “Der Tod Horns lastet auf der Seele der Kleinstädter wie ein Alpdruck. Er spült Vergangenes, Unbewältigtes hoch, weckt gegen alle subjektiven wie objektiven Widerstände die Erinnerung, das

⁴²² Christoph Hein. “Die alten Themen habe ich noch, jetzt kommen neue dazu.” [Interview with Sigrid Löffler.] (March 1990). *Christoph Hein: Texte, Daten, Bilder*. Lothar Baier (Ed.). Frankfurt: Luchterhand, 1990. 38.

⁴²³ Christoph Hein. “Dialog ist das Gegenteil von Belehren.” [Interview with Klaus Hammer.] (February 1991). *Chronist ohne Botschaft*. Klaus Hammer (Ed.). Berlin; Weimar: Aufbau, 1992. 12-13.

⁴²⁴ Avery F. Gordon. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. Similarly, Walter Benjamin defines chronicling as follows: “Der Chronist, welcher die Ereignisse hererzählt, ohne große und kleine zu unterscheiden, trägt damit der Wahrheit Rechnung, daß nichts was sich jemals ereignet hat, für die Geschichte verloren zu geben ist.” (“Über den Begriff der Geschichte,” Thesis III)

Ringen um Gedächtnis, um Seele und Vernunft, Bewußheit und Mündigkeit.”⁴²⁵ This involuntary excavation of and wrestling with memory is what Horn subversively instigates.

The chronicling in the case of *Horns Ende* comes about not through a third-person narrator with overview focalization,⁴²⁶ but rather through multiple first-person, narrators with more or less internal focalization.⁴²⁷ It may seem counter-intuitive that such a narrative situation allows for chronicling. However, the subjectivity of such narrators allows for the percolation of the “deep psychic disturbance” manifest in Horn’s ghost. The multiplicity of narrators offsets the potential lopsided-ness of a single subjective narrator. Rather than being a single narration that claims to be objective, the narrations in *Horns Ende* create a more or less objective view of Horn, and the focalization of the narrators allows for the addition of personal details to the narration. Consider Thomas’s memory of seeing Horn’s corpse.

Wir gingen zu dem Toten. Neben ihm lag ein umgestürzter Hocker, der mit
Farbflecken bedeckt war. Der Hocker war aus der Burg, ich kannte ihn, Herr
Gohl hatte ihn machmal bei der Arbeit benutzt. ... Ich dachte den ganzen Weg

⁴²⁵ Klaus Hammer. “*Horns Ende*: Versuch einer Interpretation.” (1987). *Chronist ohne Botschaft*. Klaus Hammer (Ed.). Berlin; Weimar: Aufbau, 1992. 124.

⁴²⁶ Genette’s term is “zero focalization.” Genette’s concept of focalization is helpful. His term “zero focalization,” however is problematic.

⁴²⁷ In fact, Martinez and Scheffel cite *Horns Ende* as an example of in which an event is narrated by multiple narrators. They call this “multiple interne Fokalisierung.” Matias Martinez and Michael Scheffel. *Einführung in die Erzähltheorie*. Munich: Beck, 2007. 66. As Martinez and Scheffel point out, Franz Stanzel calls this type of perspective “multiperspektivisches Erzählen.”

über an den beschmierten Hocker aus dem Museum. Ich hatte auch schon auf ihm gestanden, wenn ich Herrn Horn half, die tiefen Schautische einzurichten.⁴²⁸

In Thomas's mind, the fact that he recognizes – and had himself even stood on – the stool with which Horn had used to hang himself, reinforces Thomas's connection to Horn and deepens the impression that seeing Horn's corpse makes on him. Such details, scattered throughout the narrations of the five narrators, combine to create a chronicling of Horn in Bad Guldenberg.

At this point, it may be useful to bring in another theorist of ghosts and haunting. Avery Gordon, in her peculiar and groundbreaking 1997 monograph, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, examines the sociological role of ghosts and haunting in two literary works: Luisa Valenzuela's *He Who Searches* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Gordon, however, achieves something well beyond the scope of these two novels. She defines ghostdom and haunting at the intersection of sociology and psychology. She gets there via literature, but she does so for the sake of sociology. Gordon has two main (interrelated) theses: 1) "... sociology needs a way of grappling with what it represses, haunting, and psychoanalysis needs a way of grappling with what it represses, society."⁴²⁹ This first thesis indicates the complex methodological contraption needed to deal with ghosts and haunting. It also indicates what traditional social-science disciplines cannot do alone. And – her study, it should be kept in mind, is not concerned directly with the social sciences – it hints towards the notion that literature

⁴²⁸ Christoph Hein. *Horns Ende*. Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1985. 252-253.

⁴²⁹ Avery F. Gordon. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. 60.

can do something that the social sciences cannot. After all, ghosts, as Greenblatt points out, are a type of personification. That is, literature is capable of giving haunting a face, or, at least, a voice. 2) Through the ghost, furthermore, literature can recognize (that is, imagine) and “reckon with haunting as a prerequisite for sensuous knowledge and ... ponder the paradox of providing a hospitable memory for ghosts *out of a concern for justice*” [italics are Gordon’s].⁴³⁰ If haunting is, as Greenblatt insists, “the making of what is absent to speak,”⁴³¹ then it makes sense that someone like Gordon, who has “a concern for justice,” will attempt to listen to the voice of the absent. Others have also provided images of the absent that speaks.

According to Robert Shandley, post-war (more specifically post-Holocaust) German representations of catastrophe morph, around the 1960s, into two different metaphors of catastrophic history in the present.⁴³² The first, deriving largely from Benjamin’s 9th Thesis on the Philosophy of History and finding later prominent expression in Wim Wender’s film *Himmel über Berlin*,⁴³³ is the angel, a voyeuristic, yet largely inactive (or rather not interactive) figure. In contradistinction to the angel, Shandley posits another metaphor of catastrophic history in the present: the ghost, an interactive, at times even threatening, figure. Shandley goes on to call *Hamlet* “the

⁴³⁰ *ibid.* 60. Here Gordon is alluding to Jacques Derrida, who writes in *Specters of Marx*, as Gordon cites earlier in her book: “To exorcise not in order to chase away the ghosts, but this time to grant them the right ... to ... a hospitable memory ... out of a concern for justice” (58).

⁴³¹ Stephen Greenblatt. *Hamlet in Purgatory*. Princeton UP, 2001. 251.

⁴³² Robert Shandley. “Hans-Jürgen Syberberg and the State of the Ghost.” *German Studies in the Post-Holocaust Age: The Politics of Memory, Identity, and Ethnicity*. Adrian Del Caro and Janet Ward (Eds.). Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2000. 140-147.

⁴³³ *Himmel über Berlin*. Dir. Wim Wenders. Road Movies, 1987.

hegemonic spectral trope,”⁴³⁴ a statement that once again leads back to Greenblatt.

Hamlet’s posthumous father and Horn’s posthumous voice are both clearly ghosts according to Shandley’s categorization. They are both interactive. They do not merely observe history passing by, but rather engage with figures in the present.

It makes sense, then, that Gordon should choose the ghost, the interactive figure, to interact with. However, Gordon, the sociologist, is less interested in ghosts than in what she calls “ghostly matters,” that is, the thing that the ghost represents, the historical injustice that the ghost brings to the present. In the case of Valenzuela’s *He Who Searches*, the ghostly matter is Argentine state-sponsored terror, that is, torture and disappearances. In the case of Morrison’s *Beloved*, the ghostly matter is slavery in the United States. These ghostly matters do not exist as such in the present, but they effect the present. Their shadows linger over the present. To return to Greenblatt, purgatory is a ghostly matter in two senses. It is a medieval matter that casts its shadow over Elizabethan England, and arguably still projects a shadow today. It is also ghostly, however, in the sense that all ghosts come from a sort of purgatory, Catholic or otherwise. It will be necessary to return to the concept of ghostly matters and purgatory in the conclusion. At this point, however, it is in order to read Horn’s ghost in Gordon’s terms.

Gordon’s sociological interest in welcoming ghosts “*out of a concern for justice*” and Greenblatt’s contention that haunting is “the making of what is absent to speak” are related points. Allowing the absent to speak is a move towards justice. In fact, Gordon, echoing Greenblatt almost exactly, writes: “The ghost or the apparition is one form by

⁴³⁴ *ibid.* 142.

which something lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us, in its own way, of course.”⁴³⁵ The question is then: What is the absent that speaks through Horn’s ghost, and how is that related to justice? It is difficult to pin this down. Horn wants Thomas to remember all of the events and circumstances surrounding his death in the mid-1950s in Bad Guldenberg, and they are many: the Stalinist show trials of 1955-1956; the persecution of Roma and Sinti, as well as mentally handicapped, people in Nazi Germany; the refusal of officials in the GDR to come to terms with the fact that such persecution occurred in the territory that became the GDR, in some cases by those very officials; the censorship of historians and museum directors in the GDR; and the general environment of fear in the GDR. This constellation of circumstances was censored in Bad Guldenberg and in the GDR.

Censorship, again, is part of the constellation, rendering it even more difficult to define the constellation as a single point. And the censorship of the constellation points back to Greenblatt’s definition of haunting, “the making of what is absent to speak.” Horn, as history professor, as museum director, and as ghost, wanted to allow the absent to speak. In a sense, then, Horn was trying to haunt all along. His posthumous voice, however, is probably the most successful of these acts of haunting. But how is Horn’s haunting related to justice?

According to Horn’s ghost, (counter)memory acts against injustice. Horn’s ghost tells the adult Thomas: “Sterben versöhnt nicht. Nicht, wenn die Erinnerungen unversöhnlich geblieben sind. ... der Tod ist nicht das Ende der Mühsal. Die Ruhe wird

⁴³⁵ Avery F. Gordon. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. 8.

dir nicht geschenkt.”⁴³⁶ Death, then, according to the ghost, does not end the injustice or remove the memory of it. Horn’s corporeal “Ende” is rather the beginning of the work of memory for Thomas and the other narrators. This work of memory confronts the constellation of “ghostly matters” in *Bad Guldenberg* and the GDR. In order to confront these matters, however, Thomas must not only remember things that he perceived first-hand. He must also engage what Marianne Hirsch has called post-memory, “a form of memory” whose “connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation,”⁴³⁷ as the ghost commands:

“erinnere dich an das Ungesehene.”⁴³⁸ Thomas replies that such an act of remembering is impossible, but the ghost, using a metaphor of memory as network, insists. Memory, the ghost explains, is an “unendliche[s] Netz,” which has to be “weiter[ge]knüpft[t].”⁴³⁹ The notion of memory as an infinite net creates the possibility of post-memory, as the associative work of memory digs deeper and deeper into the subconscious archive of events past. This associative work, the ghost argues, is not so much important for the (un)dead Horn, but rather for Thomas, for the living. This memory work by the living and for the living is the work of justice that concerns Gordon. Furthermore, the word “Netz” that the ghost uses to describe memory has a second meaning. The second meaning becomes apparent when looking at a larger segment of the passage. “Dein Gedächtnis hat alles festgehalten. Nur wenn du dich nicht Erinnerst, wenn du das unendliche Netz nicht weiterknüpfst, dann falle ich ins Bodenlose. Aber dann wird auch

⁴³⁶ Christoph Hein. *Horns Ende*. Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1985. 99.

⁴³⁷ Marianne Hirsch. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*. Harvard UP, 1997. 22.

⁴³⁸ Christoph Hein. *Horns Ende*. Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1985. 145.

⁴³⁹ *ibid.* 145.

dich keiner halten können.”⁴⁴⁰ Not only is memory a network, but it is also a safety net that catches the dead and stops them from falling into oblivion. But the net of memory catches not only the remembered but also the rememberer.

The relationship between ghosts and justice is further illuminated by Gordon’s major source for a theory of justice: Jacques Derrida, namely his essay “Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority”⁴⁴¹ and his monograph *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Debt, and the New International*.⁴⁴² In distinguishing between law [loi] and justice, Derrida does much to define the slippery term “justice.” Justice is a complicated matter, for, as Derrida tells us “aporetic experiences are the experiences, as improbable as they are necessary, of justice.”⁴⁴³ For Derrida, justice links past, present, and future. Derrida’s justice might be understood as a trinity of these three levels of time. Another way of understanding Derrida’s concept of justice might be to think about the three ghosts that haunt Ebenezer Scrooge in Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol* and then to rename them justice past, justice present, and justice future. In describing how justice interlinks the past and the present, Derrida tells us that justice is both a memory (past) and a responsibility towards memory.

One must [il faut] be *juste* with justice, and the first justice to be done is to hear it, to try to understand where it comes from, what it wants from us, knowing that it

⁴⁴⁰ *ibid.* 145.

⁴⁴¹ Jacques Derrida. “Force of Law: The Mythical Foundation of Authority.” *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld, David Gray Carlson (Eds.). New York: Routledge, 1992.

⁴⁴² Jacques Derrida. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Debt, and the New International* New York: Routledge, 1994.

⁴⁴³ Jacques Derrida. “Force of Law: The Mythical Foundation of Authority.” *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld, David Gray Carlson (Eds.). New York: Routledge, 1992. 244.

does so through singular idioms ... This responsibility before memory is a responsibility before the concept of responsibility that regulates the justice and appropriateness [justesse] of our behavior, of our theoretical, practical, ethicopolitical decisions.”⁴⁴⁴

Here Derrida already sounds like Horn’s ghost: “the first justice to be done is to hear it, to try to understand where it comes from, what it wants from us.” In Horn’s ghost’s conversation with Thomas, the ghost is both a personification of memory and a commentary and how Thomas should respond to that memory, namely that Thomas should remember further: “Erinnere dich. ... Erzähl! ... Weiter. Weiter. Du mußt dich erinnern.”⁴⁴⁵ Justice, however, is not merely a memory and commentary on that memory. For Derrida, justice is also the present: “... justice, however unrepresentable it remains, does not wait. It is that which must not wait.”⁴⁴⁶ Horn’s ghost’s speech is urgent: “Weiter! Erinnere dich!”⁴⁴⁷ Justice is both past and present. Part of the ghostliness of justice now becomes evident. Justice is, at the same time present and not present-able. It is something from the past that demands present urgency.

From the relationship of the past to the present in his concept of justice, Derrida moves to the relationship of the present to the future. Here Derrida explores the word

⁴⁴⁴ *ibid.* 248.

⁴⁴⁵ Christoph Hein. *Horns Ende*. Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1985. 5, 214, 249.

⁴⁴⁶ Jaques Derrida. “Force of Law: The Mythical Foundation of Authority.” *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld, David Gray Carlson (Eds.). New York: Routledge, 1992. 255.

⁴⁴⁷ Christoph Hein. *Horns Ende*. Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1985. 5.

“avenir”: “a ‘to come’ [à-venir]”.⁴⁴⁸ Derrida writes, “justice ... opens up to the *avenir* the transformation, the recasting or refounding [la refondation] of law and politics.”⁴⁴⁹ In short, justice opens up possibilities for a different future. Justice is also defined partly in terms of the future in the speech of Horn’s ghost.

“Du darfst mich nicht vergessen, mein Junge. Wenn du mich vergisst, erst dann sterbe ich wirklich. Aber dann wird die Hölle die Toten erwecken.”⁴⁵⁰ “... der Tod ist nicht das Ende der Mühsal. Die Ruhe wird dir nicht geschenkt.”⁴⁵¹ “Nur wenn du dich nicht erinnerst, wenn du das unendliche Netz nicht weiterknüpfst, dann falle ich ins Bodenlose. Aber dann wird auch dich keiner halten können.”⁴⁵² “So lange es ein menschliches Gedächtnis gibt, wird nichts umsonst gewesen sein, ist nichts vergänglich.”⁴⁵³ “Wenn ihr schweigt, dann werden die Steine schreien.”⁴⁵⁴

In all of these passages from the ghost, the future tense is used. Aggregated and simplified, these passages boil down to the following: if you do not remember, there will be no justice. Or to place the ghost’s speech back into Derrida’s terms: if you do not remember, there will be no “to-come.”

⁴⁴⁸ Jaques Derrida. “Force of Law: The Mythical Foundation of Authority.” *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*. Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld, David Gray Carlson (Eds.). New York: Routledge, 1992. 256.

⁴⁴⁹ *ibid.* 256-257.

⁴⁵⁰ Christoph Hein. *Horns Ende*. Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1985. 59.

⁴⁵¹ *ibid.* 99.

⁴⁵² *ibid.* 145.

⁴⁵³ *ibid.* 145.

⁴⁵⁴ *ibid.* 249.

There is one last image in *Horns Ende*, which is important and has been overlooked: Horn's hanging corpse. This image, morbid as it may be, is similar to both Greenblatt's and Gordon's ghosts and Benjamin's torso. Indeed, Gordon has already made the link between the ghost and Benjamin's "profane illuminations."⁴⁵⁵ In fact, as Gordon points out, Benjamin himself once wrote of "ghostly signals."⁴⁵⁶ The image is of Horn literally suspended above Thomas's head. The suspension of the corpse is key, as it represents the suspension of memory in Thomas's mind. To knead in Greenblatt's argument, purgatory is suspension. However, it is not only Horn's corpse and Thomas's memory that hang, suspended in air. *Hamlet* was suspended in the cultural memory in the GDR. More importantly, however, suicide, along with the cultural baggage that accompanies it, was suspended in the literary imagination of the GDR. Suicide in the GDR is what Gordon would call a "ghostly matter."

Suicide is a ghostly matter, but it is also a way into other ghostly matters. Here Stephen Greenblatt, Avery Gordon, and Christoph Hein are all on the same page. Haunting is chronicling. Stephen Greenblatt tells us, after his elaborate history of Purgatory, that the ghost from Purgatory can be, in the end, a rhetorical device. He writes: "*Prosopopoeia* – personification, the making of what is absent to speak – is the rhetorical device behind all haunting."⁴⁵⁷ That is, the ghost not only commands one to

⁴⁵⁵ Avery F. Gordon. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. 204.

⁴⁵⁶ *ibid.* 204.

⁴⁵⁷ Greenblatt, Stephen. *Hamlet in Purgatory*. Princeton UP, 2001. 251. Michael Douglas Schleihauß Zimmermann—although he more than once imprecisely calls the dialogues between the adult Thomas and the dead Horn "dreamlike dialogues"—comes close to making Greenblatt's point as he once refers to the posthumous voice of Horn as "personified memory" (119).

remember, but the ghost is unorthodox memory personified. In a similar, if less literary-informed, definition, Avery Gordon writes: “The ghost or the apparition is one form by which something lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us, in its own way, of course.”⁴⁵⁸ Both theorists define the ghost as an unapparent, unorthodox, un-“stated” memory, which uncannily finds its way to the surface of consciousness, whether as a literary device or as part of the unorthodox sociological imagination. Both of these definitions tie in to Christoph Hein’s oft-mentioned notion of chronicling. Horn, the historian and the ghost, seems to be conscious of all of this. He wishes to communicate about the past for the purposes of the present and the future. When his post as history professor in Leipzig fails to provide him with this opportunity—or rather when this opportunity is taken away from him by the Party—he tries to seize such an opportunity through the provincial museum that he is sent to Bad Guldenberg to direct. When he is denied this opportunity as well, he takes advantage – consciously or unconsciously – of suicide as a method of haunting and, therefore, insistent communication about the past for the sake of the present. Horn’s haunting, his act of forcing people in Bad Guldenberg, especially Thomas, to interpret and make relevant the events of the 1950s for the 1980s is, moreover, subversive.

Bad Guldenberg

The town of Bad Guldenberg represents ever more restrictive political space. But what can transcend borders more easily than a ghost? Indeed, Horn’s haunting loosens such restrictive political space. In order to begin such a reading, it is in order to ask: How

⁴⁵⁸ Avery F. Gordon. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. 8.

do we imagine the geography of cultural repression in the German Democratic Republic? Many works of fiction, from Christa Wolf's 1963 novel *Der geteilte Himmel* to Thomas Brussig's post-Wende novels *Helden wie wir* and *Am kürzeren Ende der Sonnenallee*, focus on the Berlin Wall, a construction which no doubt symbolizes containment and repression, not only for the GDR but also for the entire East Bloc. However, the image of the Berlin Wall simplifies the matter to a certain degree. It encourages an image of the GDR as one homogenous space. Moreover, it focuses only on the static borders. David Bathrick examines two metaphors of repression related to Stasi-activity in the GDR: the panopticon and the many-tentacled octopus.⁴⁵⁹ Since the panopticon implies an outside, unaffected viewer, the image of the octopus seems to win out for Bathrick. The major aim of this subsection is to point towards an imagining of restrictive space with moving, that is, mainly, retracting borders. Such borders are seen in *Horns Ende*, which, for the most part, takes place in Christoph Hein's fictional, provincial town of Bad Guldenberg, a small town near Leipzig in Saxony, which Hein himself says may resemble his own hometown of Bad Dübener.⁴⁶⁰ Three of Hein's works take place in Bad Guldenberg: *Horns Ende* (1985), *Von Allem Anfang an* (1997), and *Landnahme* (2004). For obvious reasons, the focus here will be primarily on *Horns Ende*.

Little has been written about spaces in the works of Christoph Hein. Perhaps the best discussion to date of space in Hein's oeuvre can be found in David Clarke's 2002 monograph *'Diese merkwürdige Kleinigkeit einer Vision': Christoph Hein's Social Critique in Transition*, in which he describes how ideological contradictions are reflected

⁴⁵⁹ David Bathrick. *The Powers of Speech: The Politics of Culture in the GDR*. University of Nebraska Press, 1995. 220-221.

⁴⁶⁰ "Wir werden es lernen müssen, mit unserer Vergangenheit zu leben" [Interview Krzysztof Jachimczak]. (1986). *Christoph Hein: Texte, Daten, Bilder*. Lothar Baier (Ed.). Frankfurt: Luchterhand, 1990. 59.

in architectural spaces in two of Christoph Hein's works, namely in *Der fremde Freund* (1982) (published in the Federal Republic under the title *Drachenblut*) and *Willenbrock* (2000). Clarke maintains that Claudia's Plattenbau apartment comes to represent not community, but rather a breakdown in community,⁴⁶¹ while Bernd Willenbrock's large house and accumulation of wealth brings about not freedom, but rather a restriction of freedom, as his security systems end up locking him into his own house.⁴⁶² Clarke mentions in passing that Thomas and Gertrude Fischlinger, two of the narrators in *Horns Ende*, experiences Bad Guldenberg in terms of "asphyxia and claustrophobia."⁴⁶³ He does not, however, elaborate on the point, nor does he mention that other characters in the novel also experience the town in terms of claustrophobia, nor does he tie it in with his discussions of space and ideology in *Der fremde Freund* and *Willenbrock*. Christl Kiewitz claims that "Bad Guldenberg ist eine Metapher für die Kontinuität des alltäglichen Faschismus in der neuen sozialistischen Gesellschaft."⁴⁶⁴ Kiewitz is correct in noting that Bad Guldenberg is a fictional place where there is some continuity from Third Reich into the 1950s in the GDR, a continuity that no doubt existed, in part, in reality. Such continuity, however, is not so much a metaphor as an element on the surface of the plot. It is important to go back to Clarke's reading of spaces in Hein's works and specifically Clarke's brief mention of claustrophobia. Andrea Hilbk and Uwe

⁴⁶¹ David Clarke. "*Diese merkwürdige Kleinigkeit einer Vision*": Christoph Hein's Social Critique in Transition. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002. 94.

⁴⁶² *ibid.* 312-315.

⁴⁶³ *ibid.* 126.

⁴⁶⁴ Christl Kiewitz. *Der stumme Schrei: Krise und Kritik der sozialistischen Intelligenz im Werk Christoph Heins*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 1995. 224.

Wittstock have also hinted towards reading Bad Guldenberg in a negative manner but without elaboration and without reading the town explicitly in terms of claustrophobia. This is an element of the novel that has yet to be explicated.

What else has been written about Bad Guldenberg? Most critics who have written about *Horns Ende*, such as Philip McKnight and David Robinson, focus on issues of history and memory. Critics who do write about the town—with the exception of Kiewitz—seem to do so merely to point out that three of Hein’s works take place there. Simon Bevan mentions the town to argue that, although *Horns Ende* and *Von allem Anfang an* both take place in Bad Guldenberg, the two texts are actually quite different.⁴⁶⁵ Astrid Köhler uses the town to group together *Horns Ende*, *Von allem Anfang an*, and *Landnahme*, arguing that together these three texts provide a relatively holistic view of the Saxon province in the 1950s.⁴⁶⁶ Although Köhler’s grouping of these three texts is appropriate, she does not go out of her way to describe the town or what it means for the characters in the book or the reader’s imagining of repression in provincial East Germany.

In order to explore the space of Bad Guldenberg, I engage the help of three narratologists who have dealt with space.⁴⁶⁷ Mieke Bal has made the following distinction between place and space: “The concept of *place* is related to the physical, mathematically measurable shape of spatial dimensions. ... These places seen *in relations*

⁴⁶⁵ Simon Bevan. “Change and Continuity in the Work of Christoph Hein: A Comparison of *Horns Ende* (1985) and *Von Allem Anfang an* (1997).” *East Germany Continuity and Change*. *German Monitor* 46. Paul Cooke and Jonathan Grix (Eds.). Amsterdam; Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000. 18.

⁴⁶⁶ Astrid Köhler. *Brückenschläge: Autoren vor und nach der Wiedervereinigung*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007. 137-144.

⁴⁶⁷ The problem of space was rarely confronted in classical narratology.

to their perception are called space” [italics are Bal’s].⁴⁶⁸ Lubomir Dolezel, in his 1998 monograph *Heterocosmica*,⁴⁶⁹ expands upon Bal’s distinction and broadens narratology by zooming out to examine the fictional worlds in which narratives take place and the relationships with which the fictional characters in the narratives have with those fictional worlds. Yuri Lotman’s engages narratologically with space by redefining the narratological building-block, event (sujet, Ereignis), in spatially-oriented terms, namely that an event involves movement across a semantically charged border.⁴⁷⁰ In examining the space of Bad Guldenberg, in the context of *Horns Ende*, I will ask to what extent Bad Guldenberg is perceived as an ideological space similar to those described by David Clarke and how the town might be related to the images explored by David Bathrick. In order to begin such an examination, it is worth asking what the town of Bad Guldenberg means for five characters in the novel.

First, for Gertrude Fischlinger, Bad Guldenberg reflects what she perceives as failure in her life. Her husband lives with a younger woman in Leipzig, while she remains in Bad Guldenberg. Despite her condition of phlebitis, she stands on her feet all day working in the town’s general store to support herself and her delinquent son. Her husband later takes Paul to the city, a move that she finds problematic since she finds her husband to be anything but a role model for her son. Thus two of the people most important to her have abandoned her for Leipzig. Finally, her quiet, but nonetheless present, renter kills himself, and she is left all alone.

⁴⁶⁸ Mieke Bal. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. University of Toronto Press, 1985. 93.

⁴⁶⁹ Lubomir Dolezel. *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds*. Johns Hopkins UP, 2000.

⁴⁷⁰ Jurij Lotman. *Die Struktur literarischer Texte*. Rolf-Dietrich Keil (Trans.). Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1993. 356.

Second, Bad Guldenberg represents restrictive childhood space for Thomas. Not only does he experience the pains and confusion of puberty, but he also has the feeling of being held back from his dreams, a feeling he strongly associates with Bad Guldenberg. He hints toward this relatively early in the novel as he describes the spatial experience of walking through town with his parents on Sundays. “Diese Sonntagsspaziergänge [...] waren wie drohende Grabsteine, die meine wild wuchernden Träume zurückhielten, ihnen irdische Schwerkraft aufdrängten.”⁴⁷¹ These images, gravestones and gravity, both indicate that Thomas feels that Bad Guldenberg is preventing his dreams from coming true. Furthermore, it is the act of walking through the town that gives him this feeling. Later, Thomas reveals more about this feeling as he thinks to himself: “mein Wunsch war es allein, mich von dieser Stadt und den schlimmen elf Jahren meines bisherigen Lebens vollständig zu lösen. Ich wollte sie vergessen, austilgen, so gründlich, als seien sie nie gewesen. Ich fürchtete, dass diese Stadt und meine Kindheit mir immer anhängen und nie mehr auszulöschen sein werden.”⁴⁷² Here again, Thomas associates the town of Bad Guldenberg with containment. He wants to leave the town and his childhood behind, but he fears that this is impossible.

Dr. Spodeck, also experiences Bad Guldenberg as restrictive space, although in a somewhat less political way than for some of the other characters. Spodeck is financially trapped in Bad Guldenberg. His father, a wealthy man who had multiple children by multiple women without marrying any of them, saw intellectual potential in Spodeck and paid for him to study medicine at the University of Leipzig and later Munich. Although,

⁴⁷¹ Christoph Hein. *Horns Ende*. Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1985. 36.

⁴⁷² *ibid.* 65.

Spodeck is much more interested in psychiatry, his father forces him to study medicine, stating that he is to live off of the sick, not the crazy. When Spodeck completes his studies, his father buys him a practice, under the agreement that he must stay in Bad Guldenberg and practice general medicine there for at least twenty-five years. After the twenty-five years are over, he cannot leave, because he is too old and tired. Spodeck comes to see nearly every aspect of the town as a trope of paternal suppression. He fantasizes about treating the mayor of the town, Kruschkatz, one day as a dying patient, saying that he will keep the dying, vegetating man alive as long as possible, so that he will suffer as much as possible. He then realizes the real cause of his hatred. “Es ist diese Stadt an der ich sterbe. Ich habe sie verabscheut, seit ich hier lebe, seit ich auf der Welt bin. Und ich hasse sie, seitdem mein Vater mir hier eine Praxis kaufte und mir sagte, dass er mich nur für diese Stadt hat ausbilden lassen.”⁴⁷³ For Spodeck, then, Bad Guldenberg represents a claustrophobia that is at once spatial, economic, and oedipal.

Fourth, the town of Bad Guldenberg is a restrictive space for Mayor Kruschkatz in a political, but also familial way. As an apparatchik, Kruschkatz came to Bad Guldenberg from Leipzig thinking that his tenure as mayor of the small town would be a stepping-stone or rather a rung up the Party ladder. In the end, however, he must remain there. It may even be the case, that the Party has sent him there to keep him from ascending the Party ladder. In any case, Bad Guldenberg proves to be a space of isolation for Kruschkatz. His wife never wanted to go there in the first place and made him promise here that she would not be buried in Bad Guldenberg. After she realizes that they will remain in the town indefinitely, she ceases to interact with him in any

⁴⁷³ *ibid.* 8.

meaningful way. In fact, she tells him, “Ich habe nie geglaubt, daß es einmal möglich wäre, aber ich ekle mich vor dir.”⁴⁷⁴ He manages to uphold his promise to her that she wouldn’t be buried in Bad Guldenberg, but not in the way she intended. Instead, he sends her back to Leipzig to stay with her family, as she falls ill with cancer. She dies in Leipzig three months later and is buried there. Kruschkat, however, knows that he had, for all practical purposes, lost her much earlier, as he notes, “schon lange bevor sie an Krebs starb, war sie von mir gegangen.”⁴⁷⁵ Thus, Bad Guldenberg isolates him from the person he loves the most. Moreover, Kruschkat is strongly isolated from any possibility of contact with other intelligentsia in Bad Guldenberg. Dr. Spodeck hates him, as noted earlier. Horn also avoids contact with Kruschkat, because Kruschkat was involved in reprimanding Horn earlier in Leipzig.

Fifth, Bad Guldenberg is one of a series of restrictive spaces for Horn. The more Horn attempts to communicate about these spaces, the tighter they become. He is sent to be the director of a museum in Bad Guldenberg as a punishment after he taught something at the University of Leipzig that the Party in its paranoia deemed inappropriate. The town of Bad Guldenberg, where the bulk of the novel takes place, proves even more metaphorically narrow than the already tight space of the University. At the museum in Bad Guldenberg, he creates an exhibit about an ancient Sorbian people who murder those who do not fit into the societal hierarchy. As Horn’s allegorical intentions are discovered, he loses his position at the museum. After two failed attempts at communicating about these claustrophobic spaces – each attempt leading to narrower

⁴⁷⁴ *ibid.* 53.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 52.

space – Horn communicates in a different manner: he kills himself and thereby haunts the memories of the narrators, especially that of Thomas.

Furthermore, as Bärbel Lücke briefly points out, the name of the town Bad Guldenberg (golden mountain) is ironic. As Lücke puts it, “Dort ist nichts Gold, und es glänzt auch nicht.”⁴⁷⁶ Indeed, Bad Guldenberg is a place of stillborn hopes. This can be seen also in Kruschkat’s description of the train station in Bad Guldenberg as he recounts the day his wife Irene first arrived there from Leipzig:

Vor Jahrzehnten wurde es als Denkmal einer großen lokalen Hoffnung in solchen Ausmaßen errichtet, einer Hoffnung auf Prosperität, die allzu sorglos die künftige Entwicklung des Kurbades sah. Und nun, da Wirtschaftskrise und Kriege die weitgespannten Pläne mit Rotstift und ausgebrannten Ruinen zunichte gemacht hatten, stand das Bahnhofsgebäude, unversehrt und überflüssig, als grauer Gedenkstein unerfüllter, vergilbter Wünsche.⁴⁷⁷

Here the train station serves as a metonym for the entire town. The large, ornate building is ironic, given its lack of use and its dilapidated state. Another image of Bad Guldenberg as a place of stillborn hopes emerges as Kruschkat calls the town a “Sackgasse”⁴⁷⁸ (a blind alley or a dead-end), providing the image of a street that leads nowhere. Indeed, Bad Guldenberg serves, in part, as a trope for not only the hopelessness of the individual characters in the novel, but also for the stillborn hopes of the German Democratic Republic itself.

⁴⁷⁶ Bärbel Lücke. *Christoph Hein. Horns Ende*. [Oldenbourg Interpretationen vol. 72]. Munich: Oldenbourg, 1994. 91.

⁴⁷⁷ Christoph Hein. *Horns Ende*. Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1985. 50.

⁴⁷⁸ *ibid.* 49.

Returning to David Clarke's description of the ironic use of space in Hein's *Der fremde Freund*, we can see how Bad Guldenberg is similar to the Plattenbau in which Claudia lives. Both the building and the town are designed as spaces for providing a sense of community, but both function as spaces in which a sense of community breaks down. In describing this phenomenon in the case of Claudia's building, Clarke writes: "Claudia's apartment block, as a microcosm of GDR society, is characterized either by the indifference of individuals to their neighbours ... or a suspicion encouraged [sic] by the state security services."⁴⁷⁹ Just as the relations among people who live in Claudia's apartment block range from indifference to suspicion, so are the relations among people living in Bad Guldenberg: Horn is suspicious of Kruschkatz. Spodeck is suspicious of Kruschkatz. Kruschkatz, at first indifferent towards Horn, eventually comes to blame Horn for the loss of his wife. Spodeck is suspicious of his father, and so on.

If Bad Guldenberg is—as Clarke claims Claudia's apartment block is—a microcosm of GDR society, it is in worthwhile, then, in conclusion, to ask whether the fictional world of Bad Guldenberg allows for a more complicated imagining of the geography of cultural repression in the GDR. In other words, how does the fictional town stack up against other spatial images of GDR society? It may seem odd to compare or contrast the image of Bad Guldenberg with that of the Berlin Wall, since *Horns Ende*—as well as the other two novels that take place there—take place during the 1950s, before the Berlin Wall was constructed. *Horns Ende*, however, was written in the 1980s when the Berlin Wall certainly existed. More importantly, Bad Guldenberg points

⁴⁷⁹ David Clarke. "Diese merkwürdige Kleinigkeit einer Vision": Christoph Hein's Social Critique in *Transition*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002. 94.

towards more complicated mechanisms in cultural repression in the GDR. The illusion of hope combined with mass hopelessness as well as the breakdown of communication and community – not to mention that the majority of GDR citizens did not live in Berlin – are not easily portrayed by the image of the Berlin Wall. Bad Guldenberg, moreover, can be seen as fortifying David Bathrick's assertion that the image of the octopus may be appropriate. In Bad Guldenberg, there are no good-guys and no bad-guys, nor is there an outside voyeur. Instead, the tentacles of the octopus are everywhere, squeezing spaces—as we have seen, especially in the case of Horn—into an unbearable restriction.

In order to translate Bathrick's tentacle metaphor into narratological terms, it is in order to return to Lotman's definition of event (*sujet*, *Ereignis*). For Lotman, an event requires the crossing of a semantic border. In *Horns Ende*, the borders move; they retract, and when they do, they cross semantic borders. We have seen how Gertrude Fischlinger, Thomas, Dr. Spodeck, and Mayor Kruschkatz feel static. Two more cases of the effect of retractable borders of human beings remain to be fleshed out. The Roma people—who have created problems not only for Mayor Kruschkatz, but also for many readers and critics of *Horns Ende*—represent the effects of the retractable political borders in a concrete, spatial sense. The limitation of their movement is not abstract. It is not only that they are not promoted, or that they feel lonely. They physically do not return to Bad Guldenberg. Many critics have asked what hides behind the relationship between the disappearance of the Roma people and the death of Horn. The answer is that both are rendered static—to the point of disappearance—by the retracting space of Bad Guldenberg. Horn, the ghost, however, loosens this retracting space by asking people to remember.

Suicide and Haunting

Before concluding, it is worthwhile to outline other suicides in Hein's works, in order further illuminate what is at work in Horn's suicide in *Horns Ende* and to further demonstrate the connection between suicide and haunting. Suicide is a prominent theme in the oeuvre of Christoph Hein. At least nine of his works deal to some degree with suicide. Six of these works were written and published in the GDR. The other three were written and published in reunited Germany. How do these nine works dealing with suicide connect with one another? Are there parallels? Can a typology of suicide in Hein's works be drawn? What is it about *Horns Ende* that deems it more relevant for this study than Hein's other works dealing with suicide?

Chronologically, Hein's other works dealing with suicide are *Schlötel, oder Was solls* (1974), "Die Familiengruft" (1979), "Frank, eine Kindheit mit Vätern" (1979), *Der fremde Freund* (1982), *Horns Ende* (1985), *Passage* (1987), *Landnahme* (2004), *In seiner frühen Kindheit ein Garten* (2006), and *Frau Paula Trousseau* (2007). They are divided here into works written in the GDR and works written in the twenty-first century. *Schlötel, oder Was solls* is a play that premiered in 1974, in which an overachieving sociology student from Leipzig is sent to Schwedt to work in a production brigade. Although (or perhaps because) Schlötel has "revolutionary" ideas about working, he does not get along with his coworkers. One night he is assaulted, and eventually he kills himself, it is assumed, as his body is found in the Baltic Sea. In "Die Familiengruft," one of the short stories included in Hein's *Ein Album Berliner Stadtansichten*, the narrator tells how his uncle, a Jewish actor hid with his family in their family crypt in order to

escape Gestapo violence during the Second World War, how the uncle poisoned his wife, his three children and himself there in the crypt, and how the narrator reads the uncle's suicide note decades later and goes to visit the family crypt. "Frank, eine Kindheit mit Vätern," another short story from Hein's *Ein Album Berliner Stadtansichten*, describes the unrealized desire of Frank's great-grandfather, grandfather, and father for their sons to receive a university education. Frank's grandfather and father could not attend university because of various reckless turns in world history. Frank, however, has severe learning disabilities. Conscious of the disappointment his condition causes his family, Frank fatally flings himself out of a fifth story window onto a cement sidewalk. The mention of suicide in *Drachenblut* is brief but important and will be further dealt with later in this subchapter. *Horns Ende*, the object of this chapter, needs no further summary. *Passage* is a play that premiered in 1987, in which German Jews in the 1930s are trying to flee across the Pyrenees Mountains into Spain in order to avoid persecution by the Nazis. One character, who remarkably resembles Walter Benjamin, does not make it into Spain and kills himself.

Landnahme tells the story of Bernhard Haber, who along with his parents was forced after the Second World War to migrate from their home in Silesia to the fictional town of Bad Guldenberg. Haber's father, a one-armed carpenter, dies and is reported to have committed suicide. In the end, however, the reader finds out that Haber's father, as Haber insists throughout, has been murdered. Although, the death of Haber's father is not a case of suicide, the novel nonetheless provides a contribution to the discourse on the taboo of suicide in the GDR. *In seiner frühen Kindheit ein Garten* tells the story of an elderly couple, Richard and Friederike Zurek, who are mourning the death of their son,

Oliver, a left-wing terrorist in West Germany, who according to the police and court system shot himself during a shootout with the police. The father believes he has evidence proving that the son was shot by a police officer. In the end, the reader never finds out for sure whether the death is a case of suicide or murder. Nonetheless, the novel provides a (West German) take on the taboo of suicide. *Frau Paula Trousseau* is the story of an artist who grew up in the GDR, later lives in France, and eventually kills herself and leaves her paintings to an old friend who has not seen her for years. In a way, it can be seen as a mystery novel in that the friend spends much of the novel trying to figure out why Paula killed herself.

Hein's first major work of narrative fiction, the novella *Der fremde Freund* (1982) illuminates the subversion in all of Hein's fictional suicides, particularly that in *Horns Ende*. Claudia, the novella's main character, ponders suicide. In examining her life after the death of her lover, Henry, Claudia, a medical doctor, thinks to herself: "In der Klinik gelte ich als robuste Person.... Würde ich Selbstmord begehen, stünden sie vor einem Rätsel."⁴⁸⁰ Claudia does not commit suicide in the novella.⁴⁸¹ What is important about Claudia's suicidal thought is Claudia's idea that her suicide would cause her coworkers to be puzzled. That is, it would force them to interpret the events surrounding Claudia's hypothetical suicide. Thinking about suicide in this way reilluminates the carried out suicide of Horn. Suicide, at least in the case of *Horns Ende*, causes people to ask why. This "why" allows for an interpretive process, an attempt at solving the

⁴⁸⁰ *Der fremde Freund/Drachenblut*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005. (originally published in 1982 by Aufbau). 171.

⁴⁸¹ It should be mentioned that Claudia and Paula Trousseau are the only women in Hein's works who even have suicidal thoughts, a fact that could be the basis of a different essay on suicide in Hein's oeuvre.

mystery,⁴⁸² and, ultimately, “the making of what is absent to speak.”⁴⁸³ To hark back to Derrida, suicide demands justice. Yuri Lotman lends insight into this as well. For Lotman, the approaching of the puzzle that Claudia describes is explained by unpredictability in history, that is, questioning what might have been.⁴⁸⁴ Such questioning allows for change in the present. “Or in other words, the content of memory is the past, but without memory we cannot think ‘here’ and ‘now’: memory is the deep-seated ground of the actual process of consciousness. And if history is culture’s memory then this means that it is not only a relic of the past, but also an active mechanism of the present.”⁴⁸⁵ Suicide, in Hein’s work’s, then, appears to be a catalyst for haunting and establishing memory as “an active mechanism of the present.” With this link between suicide and haunting in mind, the analysis of Horn’s ghost becomes a relevant point of entry into Hein’s other suicides. Horn’s ghost personifies what is at work in the other suicides in Hein’s oeuvre. That is, while those suicides all haunt, Horn really is a ghost.

Given Hein’s familiarity with *Hamlet* and the similarities between Horn’s ghost and that of Hamlet’s father, it is appropriate to see *Hamlet* as a hypotext in *Horns Ende*. *Hamlet* provides the hypotext for several of Genette’s examples of hypertextuality. Can one (or several) of Genette’s categories of hypertextuality shine light on *Horns Ende*? Into which of Genette’s categories of hypertextuality might the transformation from

⁴⁸² The language of detective fiction here is no accident. At least two of Hein’s works that deal with suicide, *In seiner frühen Kindheit ein Garten* and *Frau Paula Trousseau*, may be appropriately deemed detective fiction.

⁴⁸³ Stephen Greenblatt. *Hamlet in Purgatory*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton UP, 2001. 251.

⁴⁸⁴ Yuri Lotman. *Culture and Explosion*. Marina Grishakova (ed.). Wilma Clark (trans.). Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009. 123.

⁴⁸⁵ Yuri Lotman. *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*. Ann Shukman (trans.). London; New York: Tauris, 1990. 272.

Shakespeare's 1601 *Hamlet* to Hein's 1985 *Horns Ende* fall? What are the ramifications of such transformative hypertextuality? The transformation from *Hamlet* to *Horns Ende* is, at the very least, one of narrativization, that is, the type of transmodalization involving a shift from drama to prose. However, the hypertextuality of *Horns Ende* involves a much more radical transformation than simple prosification. Other works that have Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as a hypotext, for example Charles and Mary Lambs's *Hamlet* and Jules Laforgue's *Hamlet*, retain some of the same characters by name and have the story set in late-Medieval Denmark. The transformation from *Hamlet* to *Horns Ende* is also one of proximation, that is, the change in nationality, as we have seen with Ulrich Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* That is, *Horns Ende* does not take place in Denmark, but rather in the GDR. Still, the transformation from *Hamlet* to *Horns Ende* is more complicated than proximation alone. This transformation is even more complicated than the combination of narrativization and proximation. Indeed, this transformation—if it is one of hypertextuality, as opposed to the much broader umbrella category of transtextuality—is extremely complicated. In order not to overstate the case of its looseness vis-à-vis its hypotext, Shakespeare's 1601 *Hamlet*, it is in order to briefly describe the elements that are not transformed from the one work to the other. There is little or no transvaluation involved in this transformation. That is, neither the ghost of Horn nor the ghost of Hamlet's father is seen as a negative figure. Moreover, some of the actions in the two texts are very similar. Both involve a father-figure being brought to death by the state in one way or another, who returns from the dead to command that the son-figure remember. Indeed, this is the point of the relationship between the two texts. Given the multiplicity of transformations from *Hamlet* to *Horns Ende*, it may be difficult

to perceive this case of transtextuality as a case of hypertextuality. It may be tempting to label this as a case of architextuality.⁴⁸⁶ Such an argument would see the ghost story as a genre and would imply that *Hamlet* is no more a hypotext of *Horns Ende* than it is for any other story including a ghost. Such an argument, furthermore, would point out that Genette defines a hypertext as a text that is transformed from another text by either imitation or “*simple transformation*” [italics are mine].⁴⁸⁷ However, I argue that the relationship between *Hamlet* and *Horns Ende* is, nonetheless, a case of hypertextuality, albeit a complex one. In a different context, Genette has insisted upon the fact that categories overlap more frequently than not. Furthermore, Genette admits that, in *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, he deals with “the sunnier side of hypertextuality: that in which the shift from hypotext to hypertext is both massive (an entire work B deriving from an entire work A) and more or less officially stated” (9).⁴⁸⁸ Such a confession implies that there is a darker side of hypertextuality. If this is true, *Horns Ende* belongs to that darker side of hypertextuality. The hypotext of *Hamlet* gives *Horns Ende* a power – primarily through proximation – through which it makes a statement about memory in the GDR.

In considering *Hamlet* as a hypotext of *Horns Ende*, it is in order to posit comparisons of other characters in both works. Although the comparison of the ghosts is the main point, other characters have similarities in the ways in which they interact with the ghost. Anthony Low writes of Hamlet that he “does not know why or how he should

⁴⁸⁶ Gérard Genette. *The Architext: An Introduction*. (1979). Jane E. Lewin (trans.). Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

⁴⁸⁷ Gérard Genette. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Trans.). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997. 7.

⁴⁸⁸ *ibid.* 9.

remember ...”⁴⁸⁹ The same can be said of Thomas. Just as Hamlet questions his father’s ghost’s command to remember him: “Remember thee?”⁴⁹⁰ Thomas too questions Horn’s ghost’s command to remember throughout his dialogue with the ghost, complaining that he was so young then, that it has been so long, that he is afraid, that he cannot be of much help. Both Hamlet and Thomas are confused. They are trying to understand past abuses for which they were barely present.

If we can see the ghost of Horn as the ghost of Hamlet’s father, in that both come with the command that a young man remember, and thus relieve claustrophobic political pressures, we might also see Kruschkatz as Claudius, in that both advocate forgetting. One of Claudius’s speeches from Act I, Scene II may be seen as potential evidence towards such speculation.

But to persever
In obstinate condolement is a course
Of impious stubbornness, ‘tis unmanly grief,
It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient ...
Fie, ‘tis a fault to nature,
To reason most absurd, whose common theme
Is death of fathers ...⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁹ Anthony Low. “Hamlet and the Ghost of Purgatory: Forgetting the Dead.” *Culture Wars*. (June 2000). <http://www.culturewars.com/CultureWars/2000/June/hamlet.html>

⁴⁹⁰ William Shakespeare. *Hamlet*. 1.5.95.

⁴⁹¹ *ibid.* 1.2.92-104.

As Anthony Low points out, this monologue is opposed to the notion of purgatory and as such is opposed to dissenting memory. A direct comparison of Kruschkatz and Claudius may be a stretch, as Kruschkatz can be read as a partly sympathetic character and is at least not a king. However, demonstrating this connection may highlight the similarities between the ghost of Horn and that of Hamlet's father. Claudius's Protestant bias against praying for the dead focuses on hope rather than remembrance and therefore partially resembles the logic of the Stalinist show trials of the 1950s that make up part of the theme of *Horns Ende*.⁴⁹² Moreover, Kruschkatz, as ample scholars have shown, is in favor of forgetting. He has become disillusioned with history and even believes that history is both impossible and pointless. Moreover, both Claudius and Kruschkatz are, at least in part, responsible for the downfall of Hamlet's father and Horn, respectively. This gives both Claudius and Kruschkatz added motivation for forgetting, because remembering would emphasize their own guilt.

Gertrude, furthermore, is interesting because her name is the same as that of Hamlet's mother. If her character is to be seen as deriving in part from that of Hamlet's mother, she is the only character in *Horns Ende* whose name is the same as the corresponding character from *Hamlet*. It is difficult, however, to find many similarities between the two Gertrudes. Both are mothers, but the Gertrude in *Horns Ende* is the mother of Paul, not of Thomas. Both are also amorously involved with the man who dies and returns as a ghost. Gertrude in *Horns Ende*, however, does not – as far as the reader knows – later become involved with Kruschkatz or any other Party functionary. Furthermore, Gertrude in *Horns Ende* is no queen. On the other hand, Gertrude can be

⁴⁹² Low points out the emphasis on hope in the context of the Reformation denial of Purgatory.

read here as an ironic case of transvaluation. That is, Gertrude in *Horns Ende* is precisely not a frail queen-figure, but rather a working-class, single mother. Furthermore, while Gertrude in *Hamlet* says of the player queen, “The lady doth protest too much, methinks,”⁴⁹³ Gertrude in *Horns Ende* herself sees wrongdoing in Bad Guldenberg and often complains. In other words, whereas Shakespeare’s Gertrude seems to blindly accept the “stated memory,” Gertrude— although she does not protest it to the degree that Horn does—does not.

In conclusion, *Horns Ende* is about memory and history as many critics have suggested. However, it is about memory in a way much richer than they have implied. Not only do different narrators in the novel have different philosophies of history and different ways of remembering, as Fischer and others have noted, their memories are rich and potentially subversive. Horn’s suicide, which left his corpse suspended from a tree in a Guldenberger forest instigated unorthodox memory. In the end, then, Horn, through his suicide and spectrality—as well as through the greater cultural and literary discourse on suicide and ghosts—is able to break loose of the restrictive, claustrophobic, even retracting space of Bad Guldenberg and communicate un-“stated” memory. Just as the retracting space of Bad Guldenberg haunts the people of Bad Guldenberg, Horn’s ghost, in turn, haunts that space, loosening, if not exploding, those retracting borders.

Horns Ende utilizes haunting, an element from *Hamlet*—a play that was well received in the GDR—that was overlooked by GDR cultural authorities, in order to force readers to remember both fascism and Stalinism and the extent that those ideologies remain influential on the GDR of the 1980s. The censors, furthermore, overlooked the

⁴⁹³ William Shakespeare. *Hamlet*. 3.2.236.

importance of haunting in the novel. They thought that the death of Horn and the emphasis on his death via the novel's title indicated a break with that unsavory past. Such was not the case. They perhaps also thought that Horn's suicide shows that he and his attempts to remember such past events were irrational. This was also not the case. Horn's suicide and his haunting are precisely the subversive instigators of memory that the censors feared. The element that they feared least, turned out to be the most subversive element.

Conclusion:

The Reality of Fictional Suicides

*Und käm es heraus übers Jahr
Daß der Selbstmord kein Selbstmord war*

Wolf Biermann⁴⁹⁴

Slavoj Zizek begins his monograph *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* by relating a joke from the GDR in which a person who is sent to Siberia promises to write to his friend and tells him that if the letter is written in blue ink everything in it is true.⁴⁹⁵ If the letter is written in red ink the statements made in the letter are false. The letter arrives in blue ink and explains how wonderful Siberia is and lists many nice things that are readily available in Siberia. In conclusion, the friend writes that the only thing not available in Siberia is red ink. Zizek asserts that the punchline of the joke indicates that the friend in Siberia found a way to communicate the incommunicable. The letter-writer, lacking the language needed to express his discomfort, finds an alternative way of communicating. While Zizek relates the joke in order to describe matters at work in twenty-first century, Western capitalism, it can be reapplied to the GDR in order to describe literary works from the GDR in the seventies and early eighties that make use of the suicide motif. That is, fictional suicide in GDR narrative fiction of the seventies and eighties is a literary

⁴⁹⁴ Wolf Biermann. "Mich traf ein Mädchen." *Deutschland im Herbst*. Dir. Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Filmverlag der Autoren. 1978. Biermann's song was composed for Fassbinder's film.

⁴⁹⁵ Slavoj Zizek. *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*. London; New York: Verso, 2002. 1.

theme that communicates ideas that are otherwise difficult to communicate. This dissertation demonstrates that those suicides allude to suicides from canonical works of literature in the wrong color ink, as it were. Not only do they broach the taboo topic of suicide, they also perform transformative readings of GDR literary heritage.

Read narratologically, the fictional suicides examined in this dissertation together comprise a literary historical trajectory. The ways in which those fictional suicides transform earlier texts that deal with suicide become increasingly abstract. After Honecker's "No Taboos" speech in 1971, Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* (1973) tests Honecker's statement by having Edgar Wibeau read Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* without its GDR-constructed, literary historical context and killing himself with an electric painting machine, thus proximating Goethe's text to the context of GDR youth culture of the early 1970s. In Plenzdorf's work, it is unmistakable from the work's title, from the Edgar's readings of *Werther*, from Edgar's constant commentary on the parallels between Werther and himself, from the Charlotte-figure being named Charlie, and from Edgar's suicide that the work is an explosive reworking of Goethe's *Werther*. Its semiotic explosion, furthermore, lies in its proximation of that text. Werner Heiduczek's *Tod am Meer* (1977) confronts the GDR reception of Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* by having the Aschenbach-figure, Jablonski, to narrate his own story. Such vocalization allows for the detection of Jablonski's memory, revealing how intertwined his life has been with self-destructive Stalinism. Christa Wolf's *Kein Ort. Nirgends* (1979) reads Kleist and Günderrode reading ancient Greek literature against German classicism and against prescribed GDR notions of ancient Greek literature. It does so by adopting Kleist's and Günderrode's technique of transvaluation,

creating a parallel between their reevaluation of German classicism and Wolf's reevaluation of GDR literary heritage. Finally, Christoph Hein's *Horns Ende* (1985) establishes counter-memory with its use of Shakespearean haunting. Although this text represents a subtle proximation, it is its architextual haunting that is truly subversive.

The official literary heritage of the GDR was itself suicidal. It was invented and contrived. It was largely dictated by Georg Lukács. The fact that it was dictated at all indicates that it was a construction. And it's very constructedness made it self-destructive. The more it was probed, the less logical it appeared, and the more potential it bore for subversion. *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* and *Kein Ort. Nirgends* make this especially clear. The former demonstrates how illogical it is that the dogmatic cultural authorities of the GDR should praise Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen W.* by proximating it into the context of early 1970s East Germany. The latter gives a voice to Kleist and Günderrode, so as to take their concerns and readings seriously, thereby portraying a perspective that radically counters the literary historical tradition constructed by GDR cultural authorities.

Fictional suicides in the GDR were also tended to instigate counter-memory. This is especially the case in *Horns Ende*, as Horn haunts Thomas, forcing him to remember the events surrounding Horn's suicide. Horn speaks on behalf of memories that have been suppressed. Similarly, Edgar Wibeau, in Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* haunts. His friends and family attempt to inform themselves about the events surrounding his death. Only Edgar's hauntings, both his ghostly voice and his tape recordings, have the answers for them. Also, characters try to find out why Jablonski kills himself in *Tod am Meer*. The autobiographical fragment that Jablonski leaves

behind is the best explanation available and it contains horrific memories of both German fascism and German communism.

Another reason why fictional suicides in the GDR were subversive is because they hint toward the fact that at least two founding figures of GDR cultural policy, the Socialist Unity Party (SED), and the Eastern European communist project were suicidal or at least self-destructive. During the First World War, Johannes R. Becher, who would later become the First Minister of Culture of the GDR, attempted suicide by purposefully getting shot. In 1918, Becher's younger brother committed suicide, after which Becher himself frequently attempted suicide. Becher was also dependent on morphium and consumed an abundance of cocaine, despite understanding, as a doctor, the detrimental effects that these substances had on his body.⁴⁹⁶ Georg Lukács pondered the prospect of committing suicide to the extent that he composed a suicide note. In 1911, his first wife, Irma Seidler, committed suicide by leaping from a Budapest bridge into the Danube. Lukács then spent much of his life contemplating suicide.⁴⁹⁷ As mentioned in the chapter on Heiduczek in this study, Stalin's wife committed suicide, and Montefiore even thinks that Stalin committed suicide. Slavoj Žižek, describing the show trials of Bukharin, indicates that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was self-destruction.⁴⁹⁸ And there is no shortage of thinkers who consider communism itself to be self-destructive.

⁴⁹⁶ Benjamin Robinson. "Morphine as the Tertium Quid between War and Revolution: Johannes R. Becher." 73.4 (2000). 387-400.

⁴⁹⁷ Levee Blanc. "Georg Lukács: The Antinomies of Melancholy." *Other Voices: The (e)Journal of Cultural Criticism*. 1.1 (March 1997). <http://othervoices.org/blevee/lukacs.php>

⁴⁹⁸ Slavoj Žižek. *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism: Five Interventions in the (Mis)use of a Notion*. London; New York: Verso, 2002. 88-140.

As demonstrated in the chapter on Heiduczek in this study, *Tod am Meer* points toward such self-destruction. Jablonski self-destructs. He writes himself to death. He detects his biography—and that of Stalin—and abjects the elements that he finds unpleasant until there is nothing left of him. Several other characters in the novel are also self-destructive, including Imme and Schippenschiß. The other three works examined in this study can also be viewed as indicating the self-destruction in the context of East German communism, especially Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* Edgar Wibeau, in a sense, works himself to death. He kills himself while trying to assemble an electric painting machine to help his construction brigade. Horn, in Hein's *Horns Ende* is reprimanded to the point that he commits suicide, a matter that literally haunts the town of Bad Guldenberg.

Studies of GDR literature tend to focus on history, power, and resistance, a logical approach given the historically peculiar and politically charged nature of that country. Purely historicist views of GDR literary history, however, inevitably fall flat. Reading GDR literature qua literature allows not only for close readings of some astonishingly artistic texts, it also allows a more focused lens for viewing resistance at work in those texts, and it allows for a literary history that takes into account the literary texts themselves, rather than their mere location in political history. Reading fictional suicides in GDR literature only as a historicism reflection of suicide in GDR society cannot precisely describe what is at work in those texts.

With the GDR now dead and gone, with its literature a matter for specialists, it might seem that the trope of suicide in the context of the GDR is now irrelevant; such is not the case. To the contrary, suicide continues to inform the way people think about the

GDR well after reunification. It remains a dominant trope for understanding life in the GDR. The social science oriented conviction—one that not even social scientists such as Grashoff and Matussek believe any more—that the GDR was full of real suicide cases as political protest has dominated the view of suicide in the GDR. For that reason, it is now well worth turning briefly to a fictional film, one produced after the collapse of the GDR but is diegetically, for the most part, in the GDR. In March 2006, *Das Leben der Anderen*,⁴⁹⁹ a dramatic film about the horrors of the State Security in the German Democratic Republic, appeared in cinemas in Germany. The following year, it was released in the United States as well, where it received both good and bad reviews. In a particularly critical account of the film, “The Stasi on Our Minds,”⁵⁰⁰ Timothy Garton Ash outlines many of the film’s faults. Ash, a historian of the GDR, asserts that the film misrepresents several details about the GDR. He writes that the Stasi uniforms are inaccurate, and that the main character, Georg Dreyman, behaves more like a chic Westerner than a drab East German. He asserts that the film represents the GDR as a colorful melodrama, rather than a dreary, gray place of banality. He mentions that the language in the film is often Western and almost even aristocratic sounding. Furthermore, the film takes the complicated and crass experience of the GDR and forces it into a typical Hollywood film formula, complete with a love story and a somewhat happy ending. The West German, aristocratic director of the film, Florian Maria Georg Christian Graf Henckel von Donnersmarck, has largely agreed with Ash, but has

⁴⁹⁹ *Das Leben der Anderen*. Dir. Florian Maria Georg Christian Graf Henckel von Donnersmarck. Bayerischer Rundfunk, 2006.

⁵⁰⁰ Timothy Garton Ash. “The Stasi on Our Minds.” *The New York Review of Books*. 54.9 (May 31, 2007): <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/20210>

apparently attempted to defend himself by insisting that, if his film more accurately portrayed the Stasi and life in the GDR, no one in the West would understand the film. Ash, however, takes special issue with the quick and simple—indeed almost Saul-to-Paul-like—conversion of Wiesler from evil Stasiman to almost saintly defender of the writer he is observing.

Like Ash, Slavoj Zizek also takes issues with the film's lack of historical accuracy, albeit in a rather different manner.⁵⁰¹ Zizek notes that the film fails to portray the horror of GDR state security, although it attempts to do exactly that. Zizek observes that such horror is represented in the film by a mere personal betrayal, something that could happen in any society. Zizek also observes that Dreymann, the young playwright in the film, is only reprimanded because of personal affairs. Where was Dreymann during the Biermann affair, Zizek asks, and what does the regime think of his literary works, about which the viewer knows nothing. Zizek goes on to demonstrate the problem with Dreymann with a joke from the East Bloc: "Of the three features—personal honesty, sincere support of the regime and intelligence—it was possible to combine only two, never all three."⁵⁰² Dreymann, however, combines all three of these features, a matter that makes his character utterly unconvincing.

While the film is, as Ash and Zizek correctly maintain, not historically accurate, the film also fundamentally misunderstands the role of suicide in the GDR imagination. The two suicides in the film are atypical, according to Grashoff's historical assessment,

⁵⁰¹ Slavoj Zizek. "The Dreams of Others." *In These Times*. (May 18, 2007) <http://www.inthesetimes.com/article/3183/>

⁵⁰² *ibid.*

and, frankly, unrealistic. The film detaches suicide from the rhetorical role that it often played in the GDR in the seventies and eighties. (Most of Donnersmarck's film takes place in 1984.) The suicide of actress Christa-Maria is performed at the spur of the moment and is narratively simplistic. The aging playwright, who commits suicide because he can no longer publish in the GDR, in addition to possibly using suicide to commit an act of protest, might have been writing something that disrupts the official literary heritage of the GDR, but this information does exist in the text, and his character remains largely unexplored. Instead, the suicide of the actress shifts the focus of the film to the love story between her and the young playwright, Georg Dreymann. That is, by passing over the suicide of the older playwright, the film overlooks the rich history of suicide stories in the GDR. Moreover, the playwright Dreymann, rather than writing a play about suicide, writes a journalistic essay on suicide rates in the GDR, which he submits to the West German news magazine *Der Spiegel*. The fact that the only piece the playwright composes in the film is a journalistic essay implies that writers in the GDR were merely journalistically reflecting the society around them. Such was not the case. GDR writers who dealt with suicide did so with complex literariness, using suicide in ways that were much more subversive than merely stating that people in the GDR killed themselves. What the film ignores entirely is the relationship between suicide and literary heritage in the GDR.

Wolf Biermann's lyrics from the song "Mich traf ein Mädchen" (1977) cited in the epigram of this chapter pose the same question that this study has pondered.⁵⁰³ If, as

⁵⁰³ The song originally appeared in the 1978 West German film *Deutschland im Herbst*, where it functions as a Brechtian commentary on the alleged suicide of Ulrike Meinhof, a leading member of the left-wing terrorist organization Rote Armee Faktion. Biermann's song asks, what if it emerges that Meinhof did not

historian Udo Grashoff has convincingly demonstrated, the suicide rates in the territory that became the GDR were not higher during the forty-year communist tenure and that most of the real suicides in the GDR were not directly politically motivated, as is commonly assumed and recently propagated by Donnersmarck's melodramatic film, what do the suicides in GDR narrative fiction represent? The answer to this question lies in the fact that fiction often contains more truth than simple, realistic reflections of society. The fact that there was no great amount of protest-oriented suicides in the GDR, however, does not mean that the fictional suicides in GDR literature are not subversive. Suicides in GDR narrative fiction of the 1970s and 1980s perform functions that are much more subversive than merely suggesting that people commit suicide under communist regimes. Among other subversive functions, these fictional suicides disrupt the official literary heritage of the GDR and suggest that such literary heritage is self-destructive.

commit suicide, but instead was murdered by the state (the Federal Republic), as many German leftists believe.

Epilogue

“Selbstmord“

Die letzte aller türen

Doch nie hat man
An alle schon geklopft

- Reiner Kunze⁵⁰⁴

Kunze's poem is, on the surface, an inspirational poem concerned with suicide prevention. It concretizes suicide as a “way out” and then gives the hope that there is another, less violent way out. Implicit in this reading of the poem is also the idea that no one should ever reach the door of suicide, an idea that may strike some as condescending and moralistic. Jean Améry, for example, deplored both psychological and sociological approaches to suicide, because they take the volition away from the person who commits suicide.⁵⁰⁵ Michel Foucault, furthermore, defends one's right to take his own life.⁵⁰⁶ In other words: Who is Reiner Kunze to say that there are always other open doors? Such a debate, however, is about real, historical suicides.

⁵⁰⁴ This poem, along with an English translation and a brief biography of Kunze, can be found in: Charlotte Melin (Ed.). *German Poetry in Transition 1945-1990*. Hanover, NH: UP of New England, 1999.

⁵⁰⁵ See: Jean Améry. *On Suicide: A Discourse on Voluntary Death*. John D. Barlow (trans.). Indiana UP, 1999. Irène Heidelberger-Leonard. *The Philosopher of Auschwitz: Jean Améry and Living with the Holocaust*. London; New York: Tauris, 2010.

⁵⁰⁶ Michel Foucault. “The Simplest of Pleasures.” Sylvère Lotringer (ed) *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961-1984*. Sylvère Lotringer (ed.). New York: Semiotext(e) 1999. 295-297.

Read somewhat differently, however, Kunze's poem, provides an appropriate image for this study. The poem does not indicate where the doors of suicide leads, nor does it indicate whether it is an exit, as most readers might assume, or whether it might be an entrance. Each door has (at least) two sides. For the study of GDR literature, fictional suicides are not only a way out, but also a way in. The poem indicates, furthermore, that there are myriad such doors. Fictional suicides allow the scholar, as well as the writer and the reader, to enter into issues of memory and transtextuality in the GDR, as much as transtextuality provides a way into the idea of suicide. Suicide is one of many doors into GDR literature, but it is one that has, until now, remained largely shut.

This dissertation has opened a door into suicide in GDR literature, but it has not knocked on all possible doors of suicide in GDR literature. As the poem's genre indicates, this study's focus on narrative fiction is not the only door into suicide in GDR literature. Studies are needed of GDR poetry and drama, for example, that deal with suicide. There is no shortage of such texts. There are also GDR films that deal with suicide. There are GDR works of narrative fiction that contain suicide attempts. And there are works of fiction written by Party hacks that condemn suicide. In short, suicide in GDR literature deserves much more examination.

It is my hope not only that such work may be completed, but also that it will take into account the fact that GDR literary suicides are more than mere historicist reflections of suicide in GDR society. Approaching such literature qua literature allows for close readings that reveal rhetorically powerful literary devices that may be much more subversive than the undoubtedly subversive statement that GDR citizens killed

themselves. As Christa Wolf insisted in 1968: “Literatur und Wirklichkeit stehen sich nicht gegenüber wie Spiegel und das, was gespiegelt wird.”⁵⁰⁷ Literature and reality correlate, but not as mirror images. Scholars studying suicide in GDR literature—indeed, scholars studying GDR literature—will do well to keep this in mind, not despite the highly politically and rhetorically charged nature of the GDR, but precisely because of it.

⁵⁰⁷ Christa Wolf. *Lesen und Schreiben*. Darmstadt; Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1968. 213.

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