REPRESENTING TERRORISM: AESTHETIC REFLECTION AND

POLITICAL ACTION IN CONTEMPORARY GERMAN NOVELS

(GOETZ, KLEIN, TELLKAMP)

By

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To my family, because there is nothing worth sharing

like the love that let us share our name

and

To Dr. Christoph Zeller, without whom

this work would not have been possible

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Schließlich aber sind die Worte hin gedruckt nicht Hinweis auf sich selbst und ihre Wirklichkeit, die sie jetzt stumm gefroren sagen, sondern viel stärker Hinweis auf die Leidenschaft des Schreibers, der sie fest gebannt hat durch die Abschrift. Wer der Welt der Worte in der Abschrift nur den Spiegel ihrer selbst vorhält, [...] um irgendetwas vorzuführen, zu beweisen oder zu entlarven, zeigt schließlich genau umgekehrt unweigerlich am meisten nur auf sich."

– Rainald Goetz, *Kontrolliert*

1. Terrorism and Literature

Novels that portray or examine terrorism from any but the most damning of stances are approached with extreme caution by critics leery of such a constellation because of a deep-seated distrust regarding the relationship between terrorism and writers. The author who writes about terrorism falls prey to criticism of his own ideological position and terrorism's relationship thereto. Critics typically ask what sort of violent, destructive desires of the author are given voice in his or her portrayal of terrorism. Because this is almost without fail the typical approach to works that contain terrorism – and especially to the works to be discussed in this study – an interpretive block forms that has thus far hindered the examination of more aesthetically-oriented elements of these works.

The following study is one of contemporary German literature, not terrorism. Because of the complexity of how the element of terrorism functions in literature, detours through historical and theoretical discussions of terrorism will, at times, be required.

Terrorism, however, will need to be examined because it will help to explain the aesthetic structure and form of the texts that will be discussed: Rainald Goetz' *Kontrolliert*, Georg Klein's *Libidissi*, and Uwe Tellkamp's *Der Eisvogel*.[1] These novels offer insights into the nature of terrorism and these insights will be expounded upon in order to gain a better understanding of the novels' figuration of literature and the literary function of terrorism. The assumption here is that knowing more about what is being presented helps to better understand the representation; knowing more about the nature of terrorism outside of literature will make it more clear how terrorism is being used inside of literature.

This study developed partly from the seemingly simple linguistic problem of finding the right preposition to connect the two main elements that appear in all three of the novels: 'literature' and 'terrorism.' Either main characters in these novels are terrorists or terrorism is the dominant sociopolitical force in the texts' plots. But when paired with the works' other major element – literature – a disturbing but confounding tension is formed. Each of these works is explicitly and fundamentally concerned with texts and the writing process; this takes place on both a thematic level – some characters are writers or the text is structured as a collection of written documents – and on a meta-level – these novels are what is often called "metafiction," "self-reflexive texts," or "reflexive novels." They are self-consciously engaged in examining their own status as literary fiction and a central focus of each work is their own process of creation. Because of this strong element of self-reflection a holistic interpretation of these works requires an approach that examines how in each novel terrorism plays an important roll in either the act of

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[1] Rainald Goetz, <u>Kontrolliert: Geschichte</u>, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), Georg Klein, <u>Libidissi</u> (Berlin: Alexander Fest Verlag, 1998), Uwe Tellkamp, <u>Der Eisvogel</u> (Berlin: Rowohlt-Berlin Verlag, 2005).

writing or as a means of examining that act; in these texts terrorism functions as either a metaphor for writing or as the opposite of writing and therefore as the element in the novel that delineates writing and its attendant values like a black line that delimits a white shape. That is to say that terrorism has been incorporated into these texts to help in the portrayal of the writing process and help define what is created in or with the novels.

For the interpretive task of connecting these two quite different elements all previously-used grammar structures fall short. 'Terrorism with literature' or 'terrorism in literature' implies that terrorism is just a theme of a work, that such a work is merely portraying an object that could be cleanly interchanged with another subject without upsetting some deeper connection between content and form. 'Literature on terrorism' implies that a novel functions as a textbook that is tasked with explaining some phenomenon in the world; the use of 'on' foregrounds a pedagogical use of literature that turns art into a tool of scientific explanation. 'Literature against terrorism' situates literature as a political or policing tool that should combat or directly engage terrorism.

As regards the novels to be discussed, the connection between terrorism and literature is obviously much more complex than can be expressed with a series of prepositions. Going forward, this study will not be concerned with what literature can tell us about terrorism but rather: Why has terrorism been used in these texts about texts? Why have these novelists chosen terrorism as a main structuring element in their self-reflexive works? To assure focus on the literature as such, the examination will not become sidetracked by asking political questions about the author or by trying to pinpoint

characters' ideologies in order to draw parallels to groups or individuals outside of literature in hopes of learning something about the author's political sympathies.

The typical critical focus on the author's own beliefs is understandable when one takes into account the attempts of some artists and critics to overly conflate terrorism with art and literature. The following section will examine these critical voices in order to better portray the problematic history of the connections between terrorism and art.

2. Connections Between Art and Terrorism

The conflation of terrorism and art often occurs because there are, on certain levels, similarities between the two; however, the extent of the similarities is – it will be argued – more structural than ideological, as has been claimed. The following section will examine the aesthetic and structural similarities that are emphasized in recent "readings" of terrorism to make clear the problematic state – in certain critics' eyes – in which artists find themselves vis-à-vis terrorism. Though suspicion regarding the parallels between art and terror is not new, it has become especially obvious and exaggerated since the events of September 11, 2001. The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, which have been perceived as the largest and most spectacular to date, have led to the continuation of an old debate about the connection between terrorism and the arts. A better understanding of the rhetoric of similarity between terrorism and art, will offer a first set of coordinates for mapping the critical terrain crossed by Goetz, Klein, and Tellkamp.

The contention that there is "eine tiefe Wahlverwandtschaft" between art and terrorism is now commonplace in certain circles.[2] In the German context, one line of thinking offers the historical narrative that the leftist terrorist group, the Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF) – unlike literary authors and philosophers, who were ridiculed by the RAF for remaining purveyors of sentiment – was able to overcome the apparently frustrating and typical contemporary conflict between 'word' and 'deed'; theory and praxis. The so-called *Gewaltfrage* of how or whether the political Left should use violence was a constant subject of debate in the 1960s and 1970s. In their own minds, the RAF was resolute enough to pair their political, social, and economic theory with physical and increasingly violent action. In the political climate around 1968 the debate about whether mere words could any longer make a difference was very active and heated; in this climate the RAF received much attention and support for acting on what activists had, to that point, only discussed. Of course, the RAF reversed the normal sequence of word to deed by issuing statements *after* their attacks; this order was more in keeping with their belief in the "Primat der Praxis"[3] but is also a structural necessity if one wants to maximize the shocking effect of an unanticipated attack.

This idea was expressed a hundred years earlier by Carlo Pisacane, the nineteenth century Italian revolutionary and anarchist, with his idea of the "propaganda by deed." "The propaganda of the idea is a chimera," Pisacane wrote. "Ideas result from deeds, not the latter from the former, and the people will not be free when they are educated, but

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[2] Luca Di Blasi, "Die besten Videos drehte al-Qaida." <u>Die Zeit</u> 28 May 2003: Kultur 21.

[3] This is the title of the fourth section of the RAF's major programmatic text "Das Konzept Stadtguerilla." See <u>Rote Armee Fraktion. Texte und Materialien zur Geschichte der RAF</u>, ID-Verlag, ed. (Berlin: ID-Verlag, 1997) 27-48.

educated when they are free."[4] Pisacane believed that violence was necessary for both

bringing attention to a cause and educating and motivating the masses. Normal modes of

political communication – pamphlets or rallies – could never match the didactic power of

violence. Even though Pisacane's "propaganda by deed" has informed most terrorist

actions for the last century and a half, it is interesting to note that most attacks are

followed by statements in which terrorists claim responsibility for their 'action' and

explain the (intended) purpose of their assault.

    A second possible connection between literature or art and terrorism comes from a

similar line of thinking, which sees in acts of political violence the realization of avant-

garde artists' – especially the Surrealists and Situationists – desires to break down the

barrier between art and life, between word and deed, between the symbolic order and the

real world. Luca Di Blasi has argued that "Der Terror begleitete bereits die Herausbildung

des modernen Kunstsystems wie sein Schatten."[5] Di Blasi describes the debate

surrounding the connections between art and terror that was reopened after the terrorist

attacks of September 11, 2001:

> Den Anfang machte der Direktor des Musée Picasso Jean Clair, der
> manche Künstler als Wegbereiter des Terrors vom 11. September
> bezeichnete. Bereits die Surrealisten der zwanziger Jahre, so Clair, hätten
> die Zerstörung zu ihrer Lebensaufgabe erklärt und wollten alles
> vernichten, was die westliche Überlegenheit ausmacht.[6]

For Clair the origins of modern terrorism lie in the aesthetic protest of a group of long-

dead artists. That he was not alone in his thought process was demonstrated at a press

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[4] Quoted in Bruce Hoffman, Inside Terrorism (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

[5] Di Blasi 21.

[6] Ibid.

conference a few days later in the composer Karlheinz Stockhausen's remarks on the

attacks. "Was da geschehen ist," he said, "ist – jetzt müssen sie alle ihr Gehirn umstellen

–, das größte Kunstwerk, das es je gegeben hatte."[7] Stockhausen and Clair's comments

are criticized by Di Blasi as, on the one hand, "Avantgardisten−Bashing," (Clair) and, on

the other hand, "eine erschreckende Mischung aus Anerkennung, luziferischer

Begeisterung und Eifersucht auf die Terroristen" (Stockhausen).[8] However, even as Di

Blasi argues against the perceived connection between art and terror he cannot help but

portray a certain competition between the two when he writes that one could call a

terrorist a "Kunstverhinderer" because "er verhindert avantgardistische Kunst. Im

Ausnahmefall, im Aufblitzen echter Gewalt oder Souveränität, erscheinen

avantgardistische Gewaltsimulationen läppisch und überflüssig. Mit dem Einbruch des

Megaterrorismus ist die Zeit einer in terroristische Fantasien abgeglittenen

Neoavantgarde abgelaufen."[9] This sense of competition between artists and terrorists will

be discussed further in chapter two; for now it is enough to see that such approaches to

examining possible connections between art and terrorism mistake terrorists for artists

because they share an enthusiasm about doing away with the differences between the real

and the aesthetic. As seen in the examples of Clair, Stockhausen, and Di Blasi artists and

aestheticians have felt compelled to examine terrorism not as citizens or political

commentators but as specialists in the world of the aesthetic. Even though these thinkers'

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[7] Quoted in Klaus Theweleit, <u>Der Knall. 11. September, das Verschwinden der Realität und ein Kriegsmodell</u> (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld, 2002) 122. Theweleit notes that the major probem with Stockhausen's statement is that he did not say "like" but "the" – 9/11 was the greatest artwork ever.

[8] Di Blasi, 21.

[9] Ibid.

final conclusions are not accepted here, their work points to an important connection

between terrorism and art: the aesthetic elements of both.

3. The Aesthetics of Terrorism

Even though the claim that there is a deep and meaningful connection between

terrorism and art is as spurious as it is often repeated, there is, nonetheless, an important

similarity between the two that needs to be understood. It could be said that that terrorist

acts offer, for the "target audience," an *aesthetic experience*. This is because "successful"

terrorist acts are, on a structural level, products of and in a medium; this necessary

prerequisite of a medium is paralleled in works of art. In this way a terrorist attack is not

greatly different from a movie, TV show, or performance art piece.[10] Bruce Hoffman

describes the structure of a terrorist attack from a political science perspective:

> The modern news media, as the principal conduit of information about
> such acts, thus play a vital part in the terrorists' calculus. Indeed, without
> the media's coverage the act's impact is arguably wasted, remaining
> narrowly confined to the immediate victim(s) of the attack rather than
> reaching the wider "target audience" at whom the terrorists' violence is
> actually aimed. [...] "Terrorism is theatre," Brian Jenkins famously
> declared in his seminal 1974 paper, explaining how "terrorist attacks are
> often carefully choreographed to attract the attention of the electronic
> media and the international press." [11]

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[10] Performance art's claim to have done away with the medium are false. At the very least the performer's body acts as the medium. Also, the role of "documentary" photographs and textual descriptions of past performances preserve the ephemeral performances inside the media ecology. See RoseLee Goldberg, Performance: Live Art Since 1960 (New York: Harry N. Abrams Publishers, 1998) and Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present (New York Thames & Hudson, 2001).

[11] Hoffman 174.

Jenkins' famous quote is just an analogy but that has obviously not stopped others from wanting to connect the two worlds more directly. Terrorists want to gain access to modern mass media because electronic media acts as an amplifier so that a small group of people can have a larger impact than would be otherwise possible. However, this does not make a terrorist a user of a medium in the same way an artist uses his or her chosen medium.

One could say that art and terrorism are – structurally – comparable in their reliance on and use of a medium to create their "work" of providing perceptual input to their audience. "The event is not what happens," Allen Feldman asserts, "The event is that which can be narrated."[12] Both art and terrorism also require reception and interpretation in order to be understood. An act of violence is, like every other signifier, in itself absent of meaning: why it happens and what its results should be are always products of interpretation; without the determining powers of language, violence remains an incomprehensible signifier. In this way an act of violence is given meaning only in relationship to and inside of a much larger act of signification and consequent interpretation. For example, on May 19, 1972 the Rote Armee Fraktion exploded three bombs inside of the Hamburg office building of the Axel Springer publishing company, injuring 17 people. The Springer company had been a representative enemy of the student movement since one of its papers had been connected to the 1968 attempted assasination of student leader, Rudi Dutschke. Springer's most widely-read newspaper, the *Bild Zeitung*, was seen as one of the RAF's major enemies because the group believed that the newspaper was spreading lies about the "New Left" and using its pages to create a witch

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[12] Allen Feldman, <u>Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland</u> (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) 14.

hunt against the RAF.[13] Indeed, before his attempted assassination, Dutschke had

discussed wanting to destroy the press machinery.[14]

Though the Springer offices were warned of the bomb twice, they did not evacuate

the building. This fact was used in the RAF's post-bombing statement to substantiate why

Springer was a worthy target of critique, and bombs, by writing that "Springer ging lieber

das Risiko ein, daß seine Arbeiter und Angestellten durch Bomben verletzt werden als das

Risiko, ein paar Stunden Arbeitszeit, also Profit durch Fehlalarm zu verlieren. Für die

Kapitalisten ist der Profit alles, sind die Menschen, die ihn schaffen, ein Dreck."[15] The

RAF was thus able to turn its own attack on a newspaper office, meant initially to disrupt

production of its newspapers and bring attention to the questionable journalistic practices

therein, into yet another unveiling of the "true evil" of such conservative papers and their

capitalist owners.

The appropriation of a signifier with no pre-determined referent is, of course, of

major importance in literature and other works of art. All elements of a novel – for

example: plot, action, characters, rhetoric, symbols, or dialogue – are consumed by the

novel and given meaning by how they are used in the text's complex structure; the

portrayal of political violence, for example, in a novel is thus not necessarily meant to

mimic and thus have the same political effect as a terrorist attack. What the violence in

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[13] It is interesting to note that Heinrich Böll was the first to make a public statement about the *Bild's* role in manipulating public perception in regards to the RAF's acts. One could say, however, that the *Bild* was integral to making the RAF as "newsworthy" as it was, by increasing the hype around its actions and possibly increasing these act's psychological impact on the population.

[14] See Willi Winkler, RAF: Die Geschichte der RAF (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2007) 204.

[15] Rote Armee Fraktion 147.

the novel (or any other signifier) *does* mean is a result of many factors in the novel and its historical and societal context.

Although an examination of the connections between art and terrorism would yield interesting results regarding the aesthetic and media strategies of terrorists, this study will not focus on elements outside of the literary critics' realm of expertise. The goal here is to analyze how the novels by Goetz, Klein, and Tellkamp define themselves vis-à-vis terrorism. The result will be a better definition of literature. Nevertheless, the notion of terrorism needs to be defined before moving forward into individual chapters on specific works in order to determine the differences between literary expression and terrorist action rather than emphasizing the similarities between them.

4. Definitions and Functions of Terrorism

Defining 'terrorism' is one of the most demanding tasks for the would-be scholar of this phenomenon. While certain definitional elements are universal – such as violence – it has proven nearly impossible to outline the *scope* of terrorist activities; finding a meaningful and objective delineation of actions and actors that should be called 'terrorism' and 'terrorists' requires input from both political scientists and philosophers.

Bruce Hoffman offers a useful initial definition when he writes that terrorism is "fundamentally and inherently political. It is ineluctably about power: the pursuit of power, acquisition of power, and the use of power to achieve political change. Terrorism is thus violence – or, equally important, the threat of violence – used and directed in

pursuit of, or in service of, a political aim."[16] His definition is especially accurate if a broad definition of politics is used, since many terrorist groups also seek fundamental social and economic changes as well. Most experts would want to include a final element: that this violence (or threat thereof) is directed towards innocent civilians.[17]

Hoffman follows another terrorism scholar, Konrad Kellen, in trying to focus on the essence of the terrorist's motivation: "The terrorist is fundamentally an altruist: he believes that he is serving a 'good' cause designed to achieve a greater good for a wider constituency – whether real or imagined – which the terrorist purports to represent. […] *The terrorist is fundamentally a violent intellectual*, prepared to use and indeed committed to using force in the attainment of his goals."[18] Hoffman might be overreaching in his equation of misguided altruism with an idealism that only intellectuals could achieve; this is presumably because intellectuals live to a greater extent in their mind, not amongst the more concrete, 'on-the-ground' facts of reality. Hoffman's label of a terrorist as a "violent intellectual" is important, especially in regards to the types of ideological terrorism portrayed in the novels by Goetz and Klein; here the violence is perpetrated in the name of some system of thought that originated as a product of philosophy. This type of terrorism is often distinguished from religious terrorism, which is meant to appear as though it is done in the name of a god, or territorial/ geographical terrorism, which seeks justice regarding some specific, mappable grievance. Based on this part of Hoffman's definition, it is no wonder that artists and writers are

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[16] Ibid. 14.

[17] See: Andrew Sinclair, <u>An Anatomy of Terror: A History of Terrorism</u> (London, Basingstoke, and Oxford: Macmillan, 2003) 327.

[18] Hoffman 43, emphasis mine.

confronted with strong criticism, when they take on the topic of terrorism; if the only

difference between a thinker and a terrorist is that the terrorist acts (violently) on his

thoughts, then an artist might just be a member of an emergent sleeper cell.

Geoffrey R. Skoll takes a more linguistically-oriented approach in claiming that

"Changes in the meaning of terrorism are part of shifts in politics and power as much as

they are linguistic changes."[19] The term 'terrorism' first entered the English lexicon

through Edmund Burke's usage to describe the revolutionary violence of the French

Revolution. Some definitions of terrorism have included state terror, this phenomenon is

usually understood as (severe) law enforcement, while only sub- or trans-state groups are

designated as 'terrorist.'[20] Skoll is, however, interested more in the different uses of the

term 'terrorism' and not the consistencies in various historical usages. To this end he

remarks:

> Context is everything. What rules context is culture and history. The
> terrorist event means something different in 1972, 1995, or 2001.
> Moreover, the event gives meaning to subsequent cultural and historic
> moments. The terrorism of the Munich Olympics kidnapping is different
> from that of the Oklahoma City bombing, which is different from the
> September 11 attacks.[21]

Skoll argues that culture and history are influenced by economics and politics as

determined by governmental legislation; Skoll wants to examine how legislation (and the

changing definition of terrorism in legislation) has been used to "discipline the

population" and shape public understanding of the term.[22] Skoll is following a similar

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[19] Geoffrey R. Skoll, "Meanings of Terrorism," <u>International Journal for the Semiotics of Law</u> 20
(2007): 107-127, here 107.

[20] Ibid 108.

[21] Ibid 112.

[22] Ibid 113.

path to Thomas Butko who claims that all definitions of terrorism are "meaningless because they neglect to consider the hegemonic basis of its [terrorism's] conceptualization" and finally defines 'terrorism' as "counter-hegemonic political violence."[23] That is to say that terrorism is always an attack on – and thus an opposing force to – the prevailing socio-political structure.

While both Skoll and Butko stray too far from this current study's path, their insight is useful. By combining their thoughts on the plasticity of language based on context (and the extreme version of this regarding 'terrorism') with the idea that terrorism is always counter-hegemonic violence, the role and definition of terrorism in literature takes on a different importance. However, this study will not attempt to offer a definitive description of terrorism, because the novels each define terrorism differently, for their own purpose, and in the context of their own text. Next, a brief summary of my interpretations of these works – with an emphasis on the role of terrorism therein – will lead into a deeper discussion of the second major element of all three novels: reflections on writing and literature. To use Skoll and Butko's work to understand why Goetz, Klein, and Tellkamp have, generally-speaking, chosen to portray and examine terrorism in their highly self-reflexive works, it can be said that literature's analytical and (re)descriptive underpinnings form the prevailing paradigm ("hegemony" is the slightly different and more extreme version of this) for which – and against which – terrorism is carried out.

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[23] Thomas Butko, "Terrorism Redefined: Terrorism as "Counter-Hegemonic Political Violence," <u>Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice</u>, 18:1 (2006) 145-151, here 145.

Kontrolliert

A major part of Rainald Goetz' 1988 novel *Kontrolliert* is the narrator's attempt to tell "die Geschichte des Jahres 1977," the year that marked both the end and high point of a decade of terrorist violence perpetrated by the RAF and other leftist terrorist groups in Germany. The first and longest section of the book is structured around the narrator's recollection – in 1987 – of his thoughts and activities on the fringes of the leftist scene during 1977. Though often read as a highly-ideological 'terrorist text' of propaganda because of its unflinching use of some aggressive and violent statements, the novel is in fact an intense investigation of the inherent opposition between the active life of the terrorist and the contemplative life of the writer. Between its covers the novel first presents (with seeming gusto and zeal) members of the RAF as well as thoughts, theories, and sayings typical of the RAF and the radical Left in the 1960s and 1970s. Because these thoughts and theories are placed into and thus under the "control" of the writing/ narrating process, they are examined thoroughly by this very process. Under such close scrutiny the narrator is able to see and express the contradictions and inadequacies of such one-dimensional rhetoric; the novel shows that this sort of necessary scrutiny (made possible by the writing process) is not achievable in the active world of terrorism and this lack of intellectual oversight is in itself a cause of terrorist violence.

The narrator encounters how this procedure of submitting experience and thought to the reflective process of writing is in fact the way in which one defines and therewith creates the self. By first writing what he sees, hears, and reads, the narrator can then read and better contemplate these elements of the world outside of his own self so that he can,

finally, determine his own stance vis-a-vis these elements. Without this whole process, the novel shows, one is susceptible to unquestioning acceptance of such absolutist doctrine as that of the RAF. In *Kontrolliert,* leftist terrorism and its accompanying ideology thus function as the outer boundary of the subjective self; it is one of many phenomena in the world out of which and in opposition to which the narrator forms his own self.

The resulting text is one in which the lines become blurred between vignettes of the events in Germany in 1977 and the narrator's critique (in 1987) thereof. That is to say that the novel is the site of, tool for, and result of an individual's critical treatment of events and ideologies. *Kontrolliert* shows that the self-creating process of writing – a process that constitutes modern literature itself – is still a valid and necessary pursuit especially against and in the midst of the most radical politics.

Libidissi

The role of narrator in Georg Klein's novel *Libidissi* (1998) is shared by both the main narrator, a German spy named Spaik stationed in the city that gives the novel its name, and the secondary narrators, two newly-arrived killers sent by the agency to kill Spaik. The killers hunt their prey as the city prepares itself for the imminent terrorist act that will "celebrate" the ninth anniversary of the televised suicide of the Great Gahis, the native revolutionary prophet who briefly took control of the city after the departure of the German colonial forces.

As the plot progresses, the narrators offer often opposing versions of the history of both the city and Spaik's own past in Libidissi. These typical elements of spy and crime genres – the withholding and revealing of truths as well as the search for identity – are used to show how the novel's main narrative, as offered by Spaik, is in fact a completely delusional cover-up, a lie Spaik tells in order to conceal to himself (and to the reader) the extent of his own sordid involvement in the city's terrorist violence.

Spaik's spying assignment is to learn about and report on the Gahist terrorists that constitute a constant violent threat in Libidissi. As he tells it in his narrative, Spaik has immersed himself in the city's complex post-colonial society and made it his home without too much difficulty. However, the opposing perspective of the killer narrators makes clear that Spaik is not a noble political scientist or cultural anthropologist hoping to offer an enlightening, cohesive account of Libidissi's difficult history and the resulting problem-ridden society. Rather, during his time in the city, Spaik has become a brutal killer, who has spent so much time investigating the Gahist terrorists that he has – mentally and aesthetically – become one himself. In the same way that Spaik hides the bodies of his victims behind the facade of the *Goethe Institut*, he also uses the act of narration to mask the full extent of his mental decline and involvement with the terrorism in the city.

In *Libidissi*, literature is portrayed as an instrument of therapeutic manipulation, with which the narrator reframes past transgressions and the current chaos of both the city and his mind into a coherent, tolerable whole. Such simplification of complexity is often a characteristic of 19th century Realism, that is criticized implicitly in metafiction's

constant self-reflection on its own constructedness. Only at the very end of the novel does *Libidissi* realize its metafictional insights, when the killers discover what lies beneath the facade of the story: Spaik's real work. Spaik is able to mimic – with the use of empathy and interpretation (both of which are necessary skills for enjoying art and literature) – the way in which the Gahists analyze and interpret the Great Gahis' video-prayers in order to determine what the next terrorist action should be.

One way in which Klein's work differs from both Goetz' and Tellkamp's is that its direct thematization of terrorism acts as a trap for the reader. The obvious spectacle of political violence is meant to hide deeper connections to violence and terrorism which function as a *sub*text or foundation of the story. Indeed, the whole story (this work of literature) is meant to function as a facade that masks the harsh truths, which the narrator represses.

Der Eisvogel

In opposition to Goetz' portrayal of leftist terrorism in the 1970s, Uwe Tellkamp's first major novel, *Der Eisvogel* (2005), deals with ultraconservative, anti-democratic, right-wing terrorism in the twenty-first century. While the difference is great on the level of content, the use of this terrorism on the text's meta-level is similar in many ways. The novel is a collage of texts – mostly bits of legal statements directed towards the lawyer of one of the two main characters, the unemployed philosophy Ph.D. Wiggo Ritter – about Wiggo and his terrorist friend Mauritz Kaltmeister, the other main figure. Both Wiggo, the frustrated but reserved philosopher, and Mauritz, the angry and violent terrorist, are

allowed free range *inside* the novel to express their extreme emotions and ideologies with a powerful pathos that has unsettled many critics. This pathos, which supplies the terrorist figures with compelling rhetorical force, has – much like the reaction to Goetz' quotations of radical leftist language – convinced critics that the ideas expressed must be those of the author himself. Otherwise, why – so the argument goes – would Tellkamp imbue only the right-wing terrorists with such strong passion and not offer other characters or a narrator with opposing viewpoints to counterbalance their ideology?

In order to understand the novel completely, its self-reflexive structure must be explained because the structure is what offers the strongest "oppositional" voice to the pathos-heavy claims of the terrorists that appear in its content. There is one clue about the title of the work and it appears as almost an aside when Wiggo is visiting the home of Mauritz' uncle who is also the intellectual father of the terrorist organization. On the wall hangs a still-life painting of a bird – an *Eisvogel* (kingfisher) – painted with painstaking detail ("besessener Akribie") that emphasizes the bird's "strong beak."[24] However, upon closer inspection Wiggo realizes that the still-life is actually made up of two pictures; the still-life with bird (which, as Wiggo notes, already goes against convention because it allows a live animal into its composition) is forced into a small square shape that, in turn, sits on a wallpaper-like plane.

The still-life painting presents the reader with a clear self-portrait of the novel structure itself. When focused on directly, the still-life of the *Eisvogel* is a highly-accurate portrayal of a powerful species; it does not deny the bird any of its typical characteristics.

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[24] Tellkamp 78-9.

For the Kaltmeisters, the bird acts as a "Wappentier" and to their obviously less-trained eye, the painting is just a representation of the bird, which is symbolic of (political) halcyon days. Wiggo, a more sophisticated observer, sees the tension created between the inner image of the bird and the constraining square structure that borders and thus limits it. Indeed, the square and wallpaper-like texture behind it are meant to show that the bird is just an image – expertly recreated and full of life as it may be – but nonetheless a mere portrayal.

In the same way, the novel portrays its own very life-like content – right-wing terrorists, brimming with pathos – while nonetheless complicating and guiding the greater meaning and importance of the content through its collage-like form made up of 442 pieces. This form, which places Mauritz' fanatical harangues next to Wiggo's philosophical pondering about the impossibility of action, forces the reader to constantly reevaluate both the pathos and the philosophy of all the characters. That is to say that the text's form never allows the passionate demands for a return to a conservative society to have much space in which the reader could have an emotional reaction; the constant breaks and collisions of text fragments keep the reader fully alert and searching for connections between fragments. Tellkamp's novel has taken powerful examples of pathos-driven figures in the form of terrorists and successfully portrayed the depth of their beliefs while simultaneously, with a demanding self-reflexive structure, limited the extent of their passions. The novel tests the ability of art to portray a subject thoroughly and fully without – therewith – supporting or furthering the figures or ideas portrayed.

What is clear from all of these short introductions to the three novels that will be

examined is the prevalence of metafictional tendencies and elements. These three texts are engaged in their own self-examination as literary works and an important part of this examination is the terrorism that they also portray. The final section of this chapter offers a definition of metafiction, that will help situate these novels in a longer tradition of literature, which will make clear that these works are focused mainly on literature itself and not any other ideas or ideologies they present, at times, in their pages.

5. On Metafiction

'Metafiction' is generally credited to author and critic William H. Gass, who used the term in the 1960s to define what he saw as a new wave of anti-Realist novels in that decade. These novels did not match standing terms such as "antinovel" because they not only experimentally broke with Realist conventions but also directly commented on literary form and literary experimentation at the same time.[25] Since Gass' initial christening of the term, many other critics have offered their own notions – "self-conscious" literature (Booth), "parafiction" (Rother), "the reflexive novel" (Boyd), and "narcissistic narrative" (Hutcheon), to name a few – with the result that a unified definition is no longer clear.[26] For many this confusion was increased when the term began to be used to describe tendencies of *some* works throughout *all* modern literature since Don Quixote. However, this type of timeline saves the concept from being lost to

[25] William Gass, "Philosophy and the Form of Fiction," <u>Fiction & the Figures of Life</u> (Boston: Godine, 1978).

[26] Wayne C. Booth, "The Self-Conscious Narrator in Comic Fiction before *Tristram Shandy*," <u>PMLA</u> 67 (1952) 8-12; James Rother "Parafiction: The Adjacent Universe of Barth, Barthelme, Pynchon, and Nabokov," <u>Boundary 2</u> 5 (1976) 21-44; Linda Hutcheon, <u>Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox</u> (New York and London: Metheun, 1984); Michael Boyd. <u>The Reflexive Novel: Fiction as Critique</u> (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1983).

the history of literary trends or to fading fads in literary critical terminology; looking at self-reflexivity as a component of all or most modern literature increases the concept's usefulness in describing an important facet of literature expression.

Literary reflexivity can either exist as one element of a text or as a major constituting element of the entire composition, i.e. as a *type* of text. Some critics see metafiction as a "form of critique that doubles as fiction;"[27] however, this separation implies that literature cannot or does not have elements of self-reflexivity in it unless it is first and foremost criticism; this separation implies that literature itself cannot, at times, step beyond itself. It is more useful and precise to say that 'self-reflexivity' exists in various quantities in many or even most works of literature, but that the term 'metafiction' is best used for those works in which the work's examination of itself as literature is so strong that it takes up an equal amount of space as the content being portrayed. Determining which works should be dubbed as 'metafiction' is a matter of interpretation and might be a task that is possible only to certain types of readers who are aware of the possibility of a meta-level in literature and therefore constantly on the lookout for subtle or even blatant (but initially confusing) breaks in the narrative.

Metafictions sometimes have an overt form – their self-consciousness is "explicitly thematized or even allegorized with the 'fiction'"[28] – while others might have a more covert, internalized layer of self-reflexivity. Regardless of the amount of self-consciousness, most critics see metafiction as one type of antirealist novels, the common characteristic of which is a rejection of mimesis. Boyd points out, however, that, "the

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[27] Brian Atterby, "Stories of Metafiction," <u>Paradoxa</u> 4:10 (1998) 185-192, here 185.
[28] Hutcheon 23.

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violence of this rejection, the fact that antirealism is almost single-mindedly concerned with attacking and questioning a powerful literary tradition, makes it even more strongly tied to that tradition."[29] If the major characteristic of realist literature is its creation of worlds similar to the one every human experiences everyday, then literature that wants to show the life of the mind as the true reality is equally "realistic," it just chooses a different concept of 'reality' from which to start. Boyd continues:

> It is only when the search for a new language in which to portray the life of the mind leads to an awareness of the artificiality of all invented languages that the various forms of psychology fiction prepare the way for a rejection of verisimilitude as a norm. By freeing the writer from the restrictions of everyday language, the novel that pretends to render the stream of consciousness inevitably forces upon us a sense of the strangeness of words, and this awareness will lead quite naturally to a focusing on the words themselves rather than on the mental reality they purport to represent.[30]

This final stage of awareness permeates the novels by Goetz, Klein, and Tellkamp. While Goetz has done away with any semblance of plot, Klein and Tellkamp offer initially realistic-seeming plots and characters that are subsequently undermined by a more subtle self-reflection on the level of the work's structure. Consequently, it can be said that metafiction is a form of literature that seeks to incorporate the intricacies of thinking and thinking's role in the construction of experience/reality. "The lowest common denominator of metafiction," Waugh writes, "is simultaneously to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction."[31] The 'creation' of a fiction takes place in the 'mind' of the narrator (inside of the text) or the author (on a meta-level).

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[29] Hutcheon 19.
[30] Boyd 20.
[31] Waugh 43.

While some authors might seek to make the reader more aware of the constructedness of their tales through the narrator's metanarrative statements, this type of false self-reflexivity can be used, conversely, to shore up the fictional illusion, just on a more pseudo-self-aware level. Metanarrative statements can help create a convincing portrayal of the narrative process and, in train, the "reality" of the narrator herself; in this way illusion is created on a slightly higher level than that of the narrated plot, but the fiction that should take place inside of the novel's covers happens nonetheless. "Metanarrative comments," Monika Fludernik writes, "enhance the credibility of the narrator: his/her difficulties in teasing out the truth of what happened or the search for the right words to use are taken by the reader as proof of authenticity."[32] However, this type of metanarrative garnish, meant to re-create the illusion of narrative truth, does not apply to Goetz, Klein, and Tellkamp; the three novels examined here share a self-reflective complexity that functions on an essential, constitutive level.

Reflexive novels are not a new phenomenon. Linda Hutcheon writes that the type of "early self-consciousness" in Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* or Laurence Stern's *Tristram Shandy* did not change in later versions of metafiction, but merely increased in magnitude: "Art has always been 'illusion,' and as one might surmise, it has often if not always, been self-consciously aware of that ontological status. This formal narcissism is a broad cultural phenomenon, not limited by art form or even period."[33] Hutcheon is working here with René Wellek, who wrote in 1963 that, "It seems to me an oddity of our time that this simple insight into the aesthetic fact is construed as a denial of the

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[32] Monika Fludernik, <u>An Introduction to Narratology</u> (New York: Routledge, 2009) 61.
[33] Hutcheon 17.

relevance, humanity and significance of art. [...] 'Realism' is not the only method of art. It excludes three-quarters of the world's literature. It minimizes the role of imagination, personality, 'making.'"[34] Metafiction and its attendant denial of totalizing illusion have been targeted by those who are concerned about the "death of the novel;" there is a fear that the rejection of realism is simultaneously the rejection of the novel, which is an established – one could say "bourgeois" – form of representation. However, the rejection of realism is not the same as the rejection of the novel per se, but rather the rejection of certain realist elements that have traditionally been connected to the novel. Patricia Waugh argues that, in fact:

> metafictional writers, highly conscious of the problems of artistic legitimacy, simply sensed a need for the novel to theorize about itself [...]. Only in this way might the genre establish an identity and validity within a culture apparently hostile to its printed, linear narrative and conventional assumptions about 'plot', 'character', 'authority' and 'representation.'[35]

Waugh sees the use of metafictional elements as a conscious aesthetic choice meant to make certain art forms safe from any criticism that they might be inherently and unconsciously connected to a certain set of ideological values. Metafictional elements are used by novelists interested in denying any single authority or absolute representation of the world, but who nevertheless find value in the novel form, which novel has often been seen as the best genre for societal criticism.[36]

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[34] René Wellek, "Some Principles of Criticism," <u>The Critical Moment: Essays on the Nature of Literature</u>, ed. (London: Faber, 1964) 40-47.

[35] Patricia Waugh, "What is Metafiction and Why are They Saying Such Awful Things About It?," <u>Metafiction</u> Mark Currie, ed. (New York: Longman, 1995) 39-54, here 46.

[36] See Priscilla P. Clark's, <u>Battle of the Bourgeois: The Novel in France, 1789-1848</u> (Montreal and Paris: Didier, 1973).

Waugh's insight is especially interesting in connection to the status of literature in the radical political climate of the 1960s and 1970s. Due to a perceived powerful demand for political engagement, many intellectuals and artists of the time rejected art as a meaningful pursuit, because it seemed to lack any direct involvement with the political events that filled their days. Those that did not completely spurn art sought new forms with which they could work inside of and accurately portray the socio-political climate of that time period. At the time the novel was perceived to be *the* literary form of the Left's enemy: the bourgeoisie. The eighteenth-century novel was understood by many to be the site of modern self-creation, which – in the eyes of many in the 1960 – promised a freedom of subjectivity that was not realizable outside of literature. At the time, not thought but deed became the new means for realizing a better reality for the average citizen.

The more modern version of the reflexive novel is a reaction to a classic realistic novel's "well-made" plot that gives the reader "the feeling of completeness that suggests, by analogy, *either* that human action is somehow whole and meaningful, *or* the opposite, in which case it is art alone that can impart any order or meaning to life."[37] The modern "ambiguous, open-ended" (i.e. self-reflexive) novel is in many ways a result of curiosity about literature's ability to create a sense of order to experience; literature of this sort wants to examine this impulse to create 'real' worlds by first creating such fictions and then unmasking them as fiction. That is to say that the reflexive novel still uses typical

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[37] Hutcheon 19.

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traits of literature such as plot and character (though these are greatly problematized) but these traits are simultaneously questioned and criticized.

The reader is given a much stronger role in his or her dealings with reflexive prose. If modern literature (from the Romantics to psychological realism) expands its object of mimesis to include the process of writing in its representation: the inner world of thought and creativity became objects as well. The result was that the process of reading was more difficult and the reader was accordingly forced to be more active. Self-reflexive literature expands this focus on the *writing* process to include the *reading* process: "The reader is explicitly or implicitly forced to face his responsibility towards the text, that is toward the novelistic world he is creating through accumulated fictive referents of literary language."[38] The creative and indeed world-constructing act of writing is mirrored 'am eigenen Leib,' so to speak, of the reader; the result is a greater awareness of language on the part of the reader.

It is typical to examine a novel by saying that its 'meaning' is found in the comparison of how the work portrays the world to the 'reality' of the world outside of the text. "When we say we 'understand' a narrative," Boyd writes, "we mean that we have found a satisfactory relationship between these two worlds."[39] However, this relationship is different in metafiction because "the reflexive novel does not simply replace one notion of reality with another. It elucidates the conditions that must be met before we can speak

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[38] Hutcheon 27.
[39] Boyd 23.

of the relationship between art and life."[40] In other words, metafiction is a consistent and fundamental problematization of the relationship between fiction and reality.

Indeed, the choice to write a work of metafiction is often construed as the choice to explore "a more general cultural interest in the problem of how human beings reflect, construct and mediate their experience of the work. [...] If our knowledge of this world is now seen to be mediated through language, then literary fiction (worlds constructed entirely of language) becomes a useful model for learning about the construction of 'reality' itself."[41] Literature has used language to construct worlds for millennia; self-reflexive literature offers examples of such constructions, while, at the same time, offering critical insight into how and why it happens. Literature of this sort no longer seeks to mimetically present the 'real' world beyond its own pages or represent an imaginary world in which the reader might become completely engrossed. Rather, it seeks to examine the writing act itself; the reflexive novel, "pauses to look at itself, to consider itself as a novel" and the many implications thereof.[42]

In each subsequent chapter of this study the exact nature of each novel will be discussed in greater detail, the self-reflexive elements will be elucidated and explicated. For now it is enough to say that the function of terrorism in these texts becomes more complicated when one takes into account the strong self-reflexive elements in these texts. Just how these work together will be explored in depth in the chapters to follow.

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[40] Ibid.

[41] Waugh 41.

[42] Boyd 15.

CHAPTER II

PREVIOUS CRITICAL RESPONSES TO TERRORISM AND LITERATURE

1. Terrorism as Theme of Literature and Literature as Cultural Memory

To date the most thorough study of terrorism in German literature is Thomas

Hoeps' *Arbeit am Widerspruch: "Terrorismus" in deutschen Romanen und Erzählungen*

(1837-1992), which seeks to present a general "Überblick über die stoffgeschichtlichen

Entwicklungen und Differenzierungen."[43] In his approach Hoeps positions terrorism,

first, as merely one of the many subjects about which literature can tell a story:

> Terrorismus erscheint zunächst als Stoff wie jeder andere auch.
> Beweggründe, sich für seine literarische Bearbeitung zu entscheiden, sind
> schnell zu benennen: die massive Konzentration radikaler Normbrüche im
> Ausnahmezustand, die paradoxale Verbindung von Verbrechen und
> Idealismus und der tragische Widerstreit von Individuum und Gesellschaft
> etwa haben als literarische Themen große Tradition und versprechen
> gesellschaftliche Brisanz, Konfliktreichtum und Spannung sowie ein
> Potential an – negativen wie positiven – Helden.[44]

Terrorism is, then, material for literary processing because it offers a contemporary set of

symbols for age-old, tried and true themes of human history. In the figure of the modern

terrorist hide the basic elements of the traditional (anti)hero. Seen in this light, terrorism

is not a new phenomenon but just the most recent version of human and social issues that

art has always dealt with.

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[43] Thomas Hoeps, <u>Arbeit am Widerspruch: "Terrorismus" in deutschen Romanen und Erzählungen (1837-1992)</u> (Dresden: Thelem bei w.e.b., 2001) 9.

[44] Hoeps 12.

Hoeps collects and offers a basic description of forty-one German literary works that have dealt with terrorism in some way or, as he puts it, works "in deren Mittelpunkt […] terroristischer Aktivismus oder seine gesellschaftlichen Auswirkungen stehen."[45] Measuring frequency of usage, Hoeps finds that the years between 1970 and 1992 were the "'Blütezeit' des Stoffes" because terrorism becomes a topic of literature, "wenn in der Gesellschaft terroristisch gehandelt wurde, bzw. gehandelt worden war."[46] Hoeps is interested in how literature captures terrorism's effect on German society during times of high terrorist activity; that is to say that Hoeps is more interested in what is captured and not specifically on what is capturing. Hoeps focuses on content, which he is mostly able to separate from form. While this is surely an important historical project, it limits literature to its use as a medium of cultural memory.

In a recent study of the "History and Cultural Memory of German Left-Wing Terrorism," Gerrit-Jan Berendse and Ingo Cornils enlist Aleida Assmann's work on memory to discuss how literature acts as a device for remembering.[47] Writers of literature, whom Assmann calls "Gedächtniskünstler":

> have the task to conserve what has been stripped away from the past and cannot be reconstructed by those who have been personally associated with or lived through the events. At the same time, however they operate as interpreters of this past. When traces of memory fade away, cultural documents become important aids for reading *and* reviewing the past –

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[45] Ibid. 16.

[46] Ibid. 17. Hoeps does offer a few examples of how terrorism was dealt with in the Kaiserreich but mostly restricts his study to the 1970s, 80s, and 90s.

[47] Gerrit-Jan Berendse and Ingo Cornils, ed., Baader-Meinhof Returns: History and Cultural Memory of German Left-Wing Terrorism, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008). German Monitor 70 Emphasis in the original.

they also present themselves as alternatives to historiography and eyewitness accounts.[48]

Berendse and Cornils share an understanding of literature whereby the author's words act as creative mortar to shore up and improve upon the deteriorating bricks of history out of which it is built. Literature defined in this way not only claims to present a valid version of history, but to have a more influential role later, when "historical" or eyewitness accounts have lost their impact because of a change in context or a degradation of the physical existence of the account giver. The literary author, armed with a strong sense of empathy and artistic license, apparently has an advantage in re-constructing the past to make it legible for both contemporary and later readers.

Berendse and Cornils write that literature presents itself as an alternative to history and use the example of Heinrich Böll's *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum* (1974) to make the claim that such works have, after 30 years, transcended their "archival status" and "helped to activate memory. As such, they offer new interpretations of the past in conjunction with official historiography."[49] The authors call upon Assmann again to claim that "remembering the past via literature and the visual arts consists of both a passive, archival mode and a more active, ongoing process for recalling the past. It is the interaction between both mechanisms of memory that advances our understanding of what happened rather than relying on the support of merely one mode."[50] For Berendse and Cornils literature is a storehouse for others' memories and a tool for dismantling and

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[48] Berendse and Cornils 9-10. They quote Assmann's <u>Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses</u> (München: Beck, 1992) 29.

[49] Berendse and Cornils 13.

[50] Ibid.

reshaping both the memories and the past events from which they stem. Just how a literary text acts as both objective preserver of pre-formed experience and subjective critique in fictional form is presumably explained in the edited volume's many chapters.

The assumption in this study will be that when a historical figure or event is portrayed, it functions in the same way as any other fictional element: as a signifier in a system of meaning. Understanding the historical element is useful for increasing the reader's understanding of the text but not necessarily – or better: necessarily not – history or, as the next approach will show, politics.

2. Using Literature to Understand Terrorism and Politics

Many critical approaches to the constellation of literature and terrorism have as their goal the analysis of the political phenomenon terrorism. To use literature to examine terrorism assumes that literature offers a better view of terrorist actions than more linear, scientific texts, which seek to explain terrorism from a certain political standpoint or in relationship to specific theoretical underpinnings. The assumption is made that literature is free of such limiting structures and that, because literature is a much more complex system of signification, it is more useful in demonstrating the complexities of terrorism. Such an approach does not consider the possibility that terrorism is not just an object portrayed in literature for examination, but an object positioned as a point of reference in literature's process of self-evaluation. The understanding of how literature and terrorism might work together that will be developed here relies upon a more specific definition of literature (specifically modern literature) as always – despite what it might evidence on

the level of content – engaged in self-examination and self-portrayal. Hoeps'

understanding of literature is obviously quite different as he sees literature's engagement

with terrorism as an "Arbeit am Widerspruch":

> Es handelt sich vielmehr um eine literarische "Arbeit am Widerspruch",
> die in verschiedenste Richtungen wirkt und viele Formen kennt – und sich
> den einfachen Antworten verweigert. Sie bewahrt in ihren Schilderungen
> den terroristischen Widerspruch gegen ein herrschendes System ebenso
> auf wie den Widerspruch gegen eine Reduktion von Politik auf den
> (beidseitig aktiven) Austausch von Gewalt; sie erzählt von historischen
> Notwendigkeiten und subjektiven Motiven und Konsequenzen; wendet
> sich gegen die Freund-Feind-Schemata der Kommandoerklärungen und
> der Presse-Bulletins, die das Fundament der Eskalation der Gewalt gießen,
> oder aber sie reproduziert sie und fordert damit zur kritisch reflektierten
> Stellungnahme heraus; schließlich richtet sie sich gegen die Normen des
> offiziellen Terrorismus-Diskurses und die Mythen des bewaffneten
> Kampfes, oder sie macht sich selbst zu derem emphatischen Agenten und
> gestattet so – ob intendiert oder nicht – Einblicke in ihre Mechanismen
> und Wirkweisen.
>   Immer aber ist es ihre ästhetische Gestalt, die Erkenntnis und Erfahrung
> jenseits einer opaken Faktizität der Ereignisse erst ermöglicht.[51]

For Hoeps, terrorism's complex context can best – and maybe only – be portrayed and

examined with the help of literature, which is able to visualize and sustain terrorism's

seemingly constituent contradictions and predictable oversimplifications of political

realities. Aesthetic reshaping allows terrorism and not literature to be seen more directly

and clearly because in it terrorism can be seen without all the real-world political points

of contention. The idea is that a fictional account of terrorism – without the emotionally-

loaded names and places that appear on the front page of a newspaper – allows the reader

to distance himself from the harsh, real-world facts of terrorism and anti-terrorism.

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[51] Hoeps 8.

Alex Houen's study of terrorism and modern, English-language literature is predicated on the idea that authors have needed to create new literary devices or approaches in response to terrorism. Like Hoeps, Houen seeks to better understand terrorism with the help of literature: "(I)n attempting to trace the complex dynamics of terrorism, there is much to be learned from examinations of it from within literature itself. By analysing how different literary writers have responded to specific instances of terrorism in the twentieth century, I shall thus be aiming to offer a more adequate account of terrorism's figurative aspects [...]."[52] However, he takes his study one step further by, "asking to what degree these literary responses have meant trying to refashion the force of literature itself."[53] Although Houen partially focuses on literary form and his analysis is quite impressive, his attempts at understanding terrorism through literature must be met with caution. In examining literature's portrayal of terrorism, one must ask how the *work* portrays terrorism not how terrorism is portrayed. The idea that a novel passively represents socio-political realities is naive; terrorism – like any other subject matter – is always subjected to change when manipulated into a work of art.

Hoeps, Houen, and Berendse do not consider that literature's ability to better depict terrorism's complexity is more a reflection on literature than on some true but hidden nature of political violence. It is clear that literature's ability to make the familiar strange – and vice versa – is useful for providing perspective on political or historical

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[52] Alex Houen, Terrorism and Modern Literature: Joseph Conrad to Ciaran Carson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 19.
[53] Ibid.

incidents, but this perspective is at best metaphorical in nature since aesthetic transformation is necessarily an act of creation and not lossless translation.

But while Hoeps' and similar approaches to literature and terrorism misunderstand the abilities of literature as a medium, they at least do not seek to completely change its entire socio-political role as the following critics will. These critics will be looking for ways to turn words on pages into weapons of terror that will act as a direct means of attacking and influencing the political scene.

3. Literature as Terrorism

Almost all of those who write about terrorism and art or literature address a perceived connection between the two in the realm of the aesthetic; these critics see modern terrorism as not just a political phenomenon but also as a practice that incorporates aspects of media, aesthetics, performance art, and symbolism. They argue that terrorists and artists are similar because they both understand how to create dramatic, symbolic events which have a profound effect on their audiences because both groups are adept at the use of "media" – a term which often goes problematically undefined in these studies – to transport their ideas and actions.

Studies that seek to conflate artists and terrorists emphasize characteristics of terrorism and *art* are that usually not characteristics of *literature*. For example, the case is then often made that, in regards to their broadest goals, terrorists are creators of images to form aesthetic experiences in their "audiences" that should, they hope, be marked by fear and shock. Another source of confusion in studies that confuse art and terrorism stems

from a terminology issue: in the last half of the twentieth century the term "media" has become generally understood to be the "news media" or "mass media" – newspapers or video news programs. When one speaks too broadly of both terrorists and artists as experts in their medium, two very different worlds are brought dangerously close together.

But literature does not deal in images (other than those presented to the mind's eye) and it does not use newer media (especially not the printed novels to be discussed here). Indeed, Margaret Scanlan does not exaggerate when she writes that "Political reality is driven by images and shaped by the narrative conventions of television and film; the novel, tied to an outdated belief in the personal voice, is simply beside the point."[54] This statement is meant as a lament by one of many critics saddened by literature's loss of relevance in the world of politics, which seems to be the only important world; the aesthetic realm apparently is no longer a desirable stomping ground for these thinkers of literature.

In several studies Uwe Schütte has dealt with literature's relationship to terror. In an essay about "Kunst-Terrorismus" he writes:

> Als reines Sprachgebilde ist [Literatur] eine gänzlich ephemere Kunstform. Anders als etwa Aktionisten, Musiker, Tänzer oder Schauspieler, aber auch anders als Bombenleger und Flugzeugentführer arbeitet die Literatur nicht mit dem Körper und hat auch keine Instrumente zur Verfügung, um in direkter oder struktureller Form Gewalt auf den Rezipienten oder dessen Umwelt auszuüben. Eine konkrete Begegnung

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[54] Margaret Scanlan, <u>Plotting Terror: Novelists and Terrorists in Contemporary Fiction</u> (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2001) 14.

von Autor und Leser ist der Ausnahmefall, eine Gewaltausübung dabei noch seltener.[55]

In this passage Schütte correctly locates literature's realm as that of language and contemplation. Writers do not torture, they build texts and leave behind only traces of ink by carving words into long-dead paper with rather blunt implements. But then Schütte moves in a direction that is surprising but nonetheless typical for the majority of critics who work on literature and terrorism. He admits a strain of jealousy towards the power, impact, and relevance of both other media and terrorism in contemporary culture. This jealousy is directly but un-reflexively discussed in much of the critical work that will be examined below: the *critics* read texts as a statement of jealousy by literary *authors*, but the critics' own limited interpretive focus points to their own concerns and not necessarily to those inherent to a work. For Schütte, literature's unfortunate unconnectedness to terrorism must be combatted:

> Lässt sich die Feder, der Bleistift, die Schreibmaschine oder das Textverarbeitungsprogramm dennoch zu einer Waffe machen? Was wäre ein terroristischer Text, eine terroristische Poetik? Wenn ein literarischer Text extremistisch oder gar terroristisch sein will, so müsste er die Welt nicht nur auf eine radikal neue Weise denken, sondern darüber hinaus einen Handlungsakt darstellen. Der ästhetische Akt müsste ein Moment des Anschlags von Literatur zu Wirklichkeit enthalten, angetrieben vom Glauben an diese Möglichkeit, vermittels des literarischen Wortes eine reale Änderung herbeiführen zu können, die Kluft zu überbrücken oder vielleicht besser vorsichtig formuliert: als überbrückbar zu erweisen.
>   Es wäre dies eine Form der Einflussnahme, die nicht im planen Sinne politischer Tendenz- oder Agitationsliteratur auf didaktische Beeinflussung, Reformation, Aufklärung des *Menschen* abzielt. Durch

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[55] Uwe Schütte, "Was ist und zu welchem Ende studieren wir den 'Kunst–Terrorismus'? Einige vorläufige Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Kultur, Gewalt und Politik im 20. Jahrhundert und darüber hinaus," Mythos Terrorismus: Vom Deutschen Herbst zum 11. September, ed. Matteo Galli and Heinz-Peter Preußer, (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Verlag, 2006) 191-206, here 200-201. Schütte will return as an import critical interlocutor in the chapter on Rainald Goetz' Kontrolliert.

eine extremistische Poetik muss vielmehr in die *Welt* selber eingegriffen werden. Literatur will dabei aktive Zeichen setzen einer gänzlich anderen Form des Handelns.[56]

The argument will be made throughout the ensuing analysis that Schütte's desired "terrorist literature" does not and cannot exist other than as an example of a contradiction in terms. These two words cannot be placed together without completely destroying the traditional definition of either term. As Schütte's thought process shows, the attempt to integrate the two terms leads to failure – it would be a failure at least for anyone interested in maintaining art's connections to any of its typical, historical characteristics. Not a "completely new rethinking of the world" is required but a complete rethinking of one's worldview. Does one continue to believe in the Enlightenment values by which literature is a means of taking part in reasoned discourse in the public sphere? Or is one, conversely, interested in bypassing individual autonomy and reform the world directly without recourse to reasoned debate?

"Es scheint doch erheblich einfacher zu sein, aus Terrorismus Kunst zu machen als Kunst zu einem Mittel des Terrorismus."[57] Schütte is looking for examples of successful art-terrorism. He allows the two to be connected because, for him, terrorism always has to do with "eine konkrete Form von Gewalt […] gegen Menschen oder zumindest gegen sozio-kulturell bedeutsame Dinge wie etwa die Twin Towers als Symbol des amerikanischen Kapitalismus."[58] For Schütte the element of the symbol connects the

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[56] Ibid. 201. Emphasis in the original.
[57] Schütte "Kunst-Terrorismus" 194.
[58] Schütte.

two worlds unproblematically; the differences in how symbols are actually used by terrorists and artists is not examined.

After analyzing various performance art pieces in which violence is done to the most important social symbols of late capitalism (the burning of dollar bills, for example) or to the artist's own body, Schütte moves to the Canadian artist John Fare's robotic operating table. Fare used the table for various "performances" to give himself a lobotomy and remove various body parts. That Fare was consequently put into a psychiatric ward only proves that his provocative art was too much for society to handle because it broke out of "die festgezurrten Fesseln bürgerlicher Ästhetik."[59] Schütte makes a quick jump from Fare to Kafka, from Fare's table to a strikingly-similar table in the latter's *In der Strafkolonie.* Schütte admits that it is unclear to what extent Kafka's text acted as the 'inspiration' for Fare. To Schütte's mind what connects the two works is something shared by both artists: "den Willen mit den Mitteln der Kunst etwas Extremistisches in die Welt zu setzen, die einem traditionell vorgehenden sekundären Interpretationsdiskurs letztlich inkommensurabel bleiben soll."[60] Schütte tries to show how Fare and Kafka successfully used art to create terror in the world because these two works can be discussed but not comprehended ("Man kann zwar über dergleichen Kunstwerke reden (verwundert, angeekelt, empört etc.) sie aber nicht nachvollziehen"[61]). In Schütte's view of things the terror-artist Franz Kafka has long ago infiltrated the

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[59] Ibid. 195. Fare is generally considered to be a fictional creation in the performance art scene of the 1970s but Schütte does not question whether or not Fare even exists. See Vivian Rehberg, "The Last Piece by John Fare," <u>Frieze: Contemporary Art and Culture</u>, 108 (2007) 251.

[60] Ibid 200.

[61] Ibid. Emphasis in original.

cultural canon and been working to undermine the bourgeois world of culture and capital ever since. Though Fare and Kafka use different media, Schütte believes that their work has broken the same bourgeois taboos.

Hoeps also spends time thinking about what a 'terroristic literature' might look like. He begins by seeing that literature and terrorism stand opposed in the "Wort-Tat-Konflikt"; literature is – usually – concerned with "Wort", which he defines as "[einen] auf gleichberechtigten argumentativen Austausch ausgerichteten kommunikativen Prozeß."[62] He defines terrorism as the "Zurückweisung des Ideals des 'kommunikativen Einverständnisses'" and the attendant demand for "Sinnhaftigkeit" and "Diskurs."[63] Hoeps sees the existence of terrorism – the alternative to communication it presents – as a challenge for authors who wish to 'confront' it with their work. The first possibility available to an author would be in the writing of a "selbst 'terroristisch' agierenden Text," which the author hopes to posit "in und gegen den herrschenden (auch literarischen) Diskurs"; this type of text acts to unsettle a public because the author finds him- or herself in a time of "einer narkotisierend-integrativen 'Verständingungskultur' und der Gleichgültigkeit in der postmodernen 'Inflation der Diskurse.'"[64] That is, an author might seek to mimic the effect of terrorism by writing something that confronts his audience with a textual system that cannot be integrated into their current worldview or understanding of how the world is structured. The result would be a reader that is confronted with not communication (in the form of affirmative and consumable content)

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[62] Hoeps 12.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.

but the unsettling "Schweigen der bösen Bilder."[65] Hoeps alludes to Karl Heinz Bohrer's use of the term of "böse," which he understands as its own and, indeed, a highly modern aesthetic category.[66] It is unclear how Hoeps' first example of a 'terroristic text' is different than any other text that seeks to expand a reader's mental horizon. Indeed, if such a text is to be categorized as 'terroristic' – and all texts accordingly as terroristic – then one could flip Bohrer's argument on its head and say that 'literature' is an aesthetic category of evil (terror); but such approaches to understanding the nexus of terrorism and literature are meant to be questioned here and the very concept of a terrorist text is rejected.

Hoeps has seen only one example of a second type of terrorist text in Rainald Goetz' *Kontrolliert*. This second type is not a complete denial of communication but stretches the limits thereof to a radical degree; it leads, "zu einer nachhaltigen Verstörung des Lesers […] und gründlich die Sabotage eines von der 'realistisch-psychologisch-politischen-Wahrheits-und Bekenntnisliteratur' bestimmten Diskurses betreibt:

> Anstelle einer "Imagination, die selbst teilhat an dem Bösen, das sie darstellt", indem sie sich gegen die Konstitution von Sinn sperrt, besteht ihre Strategie im Gegenteil in einer Sättigung des Romanes mit "Reflexion und Argument", deren Wahrheitsanspruch aber explizit jeweils auf den "Augenblick" des Aussprechens bzw. Aufschreibens fixiert ist. Die imaginative Durchmessung divergierender Perspektiven zählt dabei ebenso zu ihren Mitteln wie die Überschreitung von Genregrenzen, so daß sie schließlich eine "phantastische Genauigkeit" hervortreibt, die sich vom Verlangen nach klarer Identifikation entgegenstellt und damit zugleich "Aufkündigung der kulturellen Norm" exekutiert.[67]

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[65] Ibid. Schütte follows here in the footsteps of Karl Heinz Bohrer's "Das Böse – eine ästhetische Kategorie," <u>Nach der Natur: Über Politik und Ästhetik</u> (München: Hanser, 1988) 110-132.
[66] Cf. Bohrer, "Das Böse."
[67] Hoeps 13.

The exact nature of Goetz aesthetic – his "Aufschreiben des Lebens" – will be discussed in chapter two; Goetz style is nothing but an exaggerated or possibly manic version of self-reflexive prose that has – depending on ones understanding – either been a constituent part of literature since the beginning of time or, at the very least, typical since the nineteenth century. Hoeps does not see a major trend of 'terrorist texts' but still feels the need to take several pages of his study to point out strong candidates and at the same time attempts to give literature a political position and power that it never has had or will have.

But while Schütte's (and to a lesser extent, Hoeps') style of presentation and untenably wide-reaching goals leave him more open for criticism, there are many other critics who follow a similar if not straighter line of argumentation that examines a perceived competitive relationship between authors and terrorists. These will be examined to show that the relationship is not one of competition but of literature's reaction to terrorism in order to repair and reaffirm the values, the epistemology of its tradition.

4. The Competition Between Terrorists and Novelists

There is a troubling trend in the typical discourse surrounding literature and terrorism that portrays the two as being in competition with each other. For these critics both artists and terrorists want to wield influence over the public mind, but terrorists, who use newer media, produce a stronger effect on their target audience and are better at using shock and fear to bring about an aesthetic effect in their audience. Artists who prefer a

more traditional medium such as literature are worried – so it is said – that their

abstracted words on paper cannot sufficiently reproduce spectacular or violent events and

thereby satisfy the demands of their paying customers.

Margaret Scanlan, for example, has written on mostly English-language novels

that she sees as providing evidence of a recurring "motif of the writer as terrorist's victim,

rival, or double":

> I ask why so many writers have been drawn to these terrorists and what
> affinities they find between literary and terrorist plots, between literature
> and violence. I see both writers and terrorists in these novels as remnants
> of a romantic belief in the power of marginalized persons to transform
> history. I argue that serious terrorist fiction develops an increasingly
> pessimistic account of the novel's social power, a pessimism that some
> recent novelists extend to the revolutionary impulse itself.[68]

While her approach is generally sound, there is a problematic unspoken premise to her

framing of terrorism in contemporary society that can be found throughout the discourse

in this area. First, Scanlan sees a connection between writers and terrorists because they

share a common origin. What she ambiguously calls "romantic" refers to both German

(or English) Romanticism and something that is idealized and unrealistic. This way, she

connects terrorism with literature and philosophy as much as with starry-eyed thinking.

Either way she suggests that both writers and terrorists seek to have a similar effect on

the (political) world around them. The development she traces in her work is that of the

writer losing "power" in the political realm while the terrorist, whose work is somehow

more in keeping with twentieth-century society, is gaining power.

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[68] Scanlan 2.

Scanlan re-creates the history of a relationship between writers and revolutionaries that formed in the nineteenth century. She suggests that writers of that era acted as interpreters and as a philosophical vanguard for political movements; their texts were meant to prepare the way for action, to make the values of the revolutionary group understandable to the public at large so that their violence would also be more comprehensible. Since the second half of the twentieth century such massive revolutions are no longer possible and terrorism has become the only oppositional force; the writer has, accordingly, lost his basis in politics.

In her analysis Scanlan uses the term "novelist" and "writer" (of revolutionary pamphlets) interchangeable and this is part of the problem. She suggests that past revolutions used writers to communicate about and explain the violence (away); Scanlan implies but does not clarify what has changed: in the age of terrorism the writer's services are no longer needed because modern terrorism – "violence *as* communication"[69] – carries within itself its own mediation. The terrorist act exists inside its presentation by mass media; this mediation is what distinguishes it from more common acts of violence. The eminent terrorism researcher Bruce Hoffman writes: "The modern news media, as the principal conduit of information about [terrorist] acts, thus play a vital part in the terrorists' calculus. Indeed, without the media's coverage the act's impact is arguably wasted, remaining narrowly confined to the immediate victim(s) of the attack rather than reaching the wider 'target audience' at whom the terrorists' violence is actually aimed."[70]

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[69] Alex P. Schmid and Janny de Graaf, <u>Violence as Communication: Insurgent Terrorism and the Western News Media</u> (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1983) 15. Emphasis mine.
[70] Hoffman 174.

With this changed relationship between political violence and communication, the 'writer' is no longer needed.

But in fact the post- or pre-terrorist act statement (Erklärung/Bekennerschreiben) is still necessary, since all symbolic acts require interpretation, all irrational energies a logical form. From the RAF's numerous texts to Osama Bin Ladin's various video-taped "press releases," the spoken or written statement still goes hand in hand with the terrorist act to guide the public's interpretation thereof. When Scanlan does not distinguish political writers from literary authors she confuses two very different uses of the same medium. While an author can surely write a political essay as a private citizen, it does not follow that the same author's novel, which might even contain overtly political themes or symbols, is necessarily an attempt to take part directly in political debates. Indeed the main difference between pro-terror texts and novels, which are necessarily less "optimistic" about the effect of direct action in political change, is that the latter have an aesthetic foundation. As works of art, these novels function in a different way.

The old connections between writer and pro-violence revolutionary are still quickly made when an author has, in his or her role as public figure, engaged the phenomenon of terrorism with any but the most damning of stances. In such instances these authors are still seen as instigators of terrorist violence and their artistic work receives similar criticism. Heinrich Böll came under fire after publishing a single article entitled "Will Ulrike Meinhof Gnade oder freies Geleit?" in *Der Spiegel* on January 10th 1972. Böll's intention, as naive as it may have been, was to start a dialogue in West Germany as a means to stop the violence (which he had already openly and vehemently

condemned) and provide a way back into society for Meinhof and her comrades. His

intention was ignored and Böll himself was accused of being a "Sympathisant" and an

"intellektuell[er] Helfershelfer" of the RAF, while members of a contemporary Christlich

Demokratische Union convention stated that "Das eigentliche Problem des Staates sind

nicht die Terroristen selbst, sondern [...] die sogenannten Intellektuellen und

Linksliberalen."[71] Even decades beyond the agitated atmosphere of the Deutscher Herbst,

both Goetz and Tellkamp have received such criticism despite having made no public –

i.e. non-literary – statements on the topic. This is evidence of a continued

misunderstanding of literature that deals with terrorism.

     Gerrit-Jan Berendse takes a slightly less problematic approach to the relationship

between author and terrorism, whereby literature acts as a means of creating

understanding in the face of a terrorist attack, which Berendse includes in the general

category of "traumatic event." While literature has always done well at

"Traumadeutung," modern terrorism's tactics offer new difficulties:

> Das terroristische Agens ersetzt jedwede Verbalisierung von Zweck und
> Ziel der politisch motivierten Gewalt. Diese Verschiebung in der
> Kommunikationsmethode bietet gerade für Schriftsteller in dem Moment
> eine gigantische Herausforderung, da das Medium Sprache nicht (mehr)
> ausreicht, den Rezipienten in einen kathartischen Schreckenszustand zu
> versetzen. Der Terrorist wird zum Rivalen des Autors.[72]

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[71] Quoted in Luise Tremmel, "Literrorisierung: Die RAF in der deutschen Belletristik zwischen 1970 und 2004," Die RAF und der linke Terrorismus, ed.Wolfgang Kraushaar. (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2006) 1117-1154.

[72] Gerrit-Jan Berendse, Schreiben im Terrordrom: Gewaltkodierung, kulturelle Erinnerung und das Bedingungsverhältnis zwischen Literatur und RAF-Terrorismus (München: Text + Kritik, 2005) 19.

The writer, who once served as an interpreter of violent acts and who could regenerate language that was brought to silence after an attack, is overtaxed in the face of modern terrorism's new aesthetic impact. For Berendse, the terrorist has become the author's rival because the latter can no longer use fear for her or his own ends; terrorists have cornered the market on fear and rendered aesthetic catharsis impossible. Berendse conflates here a state of terror brought on by viewing a terrorist attack or a blockbuster movie and aesthetic catharsis, which is a highly problematic move. For Gotthold Ephraim Lessing catharsis brings pity and fear into their proper balance.[73] That is to say that aesthetic catharsis has harmony and order as its true goal and is obviously quite different than the goal of a terrorist attack.

Underlying these concerns about literature's place in a world of immediate terror, in which the boundaries of aesthetics that originated in bourgeois society have been bent or broken in the service of political propaganda, is also a concern about the impotence of the very medium of literature. Indeed, what does literature have to say in a world in which electronic visual media create the limits of the new transcendental illusion?[74] Accordingly, for many critics not just authors and terrorists are in competition, but also literature and newer media. Literature is apparently unable to take on the "weit spektakulärer[e] und verkaufskräftiger[e] Reproduktionen der Gewaltsszenarien in den populären, meist interaktiven Medien."[75] Berendse traces what he sees as a currently

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[73] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, <u>Gesammelte Werke in zehn Banden</u>, Volume 6, <u>Hamburgische Dramaturgie</u>, ed. Paul Rilla (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1968).

[74] Cf. Niklas Luhmann, <u>The Reality of the Mass Media</u> (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

[75] Berendse 35.

pervasive trend of fascination with terrorism as spectacle – one does not want to turn

away from the horrific scene, one wants to watch, one wants to experience this

'aestheticized violence,' a term used here to mean both violence offered to an audience's

senses and violence made beautiful through choreography and composition. For Berendse

horrific scenes of mangled bodies and exploding buildings are – no matter if the medium

is a literary text or a blockbuster film – the ingredients for a popular work. The

implication that 'popularity' and 'shock' have always been the goal of both high and low

aesthetic production is the first of many troubling points in the argument along with the

lack of consideration as to the possibly signifying role of this violence inside of each

work. This line of thinking would turn Charles Baudelaire's "A Carcass" into a

necrophilic text of voyeurism.[76] Nevertheless, Berendse continues:

> Die Literatur befindet sich zusehends in einem Konkurrenzverhältnis
> sowohl mit der Wirklichkeit als auch mit dem von der Kulturindustrie
> produzierten technischen Know-how, Terror ungemildert und ohne
> Umwege virtuell vor Augen zu führen, und scheint somit längst als einst
> mächtiges künstlerisches Repräsentationsmedium an Einfluss gebüßt zu
> haben.[77]

To Berendse, literature is especially unsuited for delivering scenes of terror because it is

unable to match the perceived immediacy offered by newer media. Berendse and,

following his interpretation, the authors he examines regret literature's loss of influence

in the world. However, if this is true regarding literature's role, the lament might best be

directed at a loss in *society* not *literature*: the loss of desire to confront the complexities

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[76] Charles Baudelaire, "A Carcass," <u>Complete Poems</u>, trans. Walter Martin (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1997) 116.

[77] Berendse 38.

of reality in a any deeper way, to search for anything beyond the numbing pleasure of spectacle.

Berendse begins with a very different understanding of literature that cannot be applied to the novels to be discussed here, which offer strong examples of reflexive texts that have incorporated terrorism as a main constituting element in their own self-analysis. That is not to say that some works of literature merely portray terrorism while others – self-reflexive novels – use terrorism as either a reflective surface or border-creating element. Rather, in self-reflexive novels the complex role of 'content' is more obviously problematized and these novels are therefore clearer case studies for examining terrorism in *literature*.

5. Conclusion

In the examination above of critical texts dealing with literature and terrorism, it becomes clear that a focus on the *literature* of this constellation is almost completely lacking; critics drawn to this topic are more interested in the contemporary and captivating *terrorism* aspect.

In the following pages it is accepted that the novels by Goetz, Klein, and Tellkamp are self-reflexive. Because of their self-reflexive nature, the terrorism in these texts must necessarily take on a very different function than has been previously seen by critics. If these works are not meant to create and portray a world that is analogous to the 'real,' experienced world then they are also not attempting to make truth claims with their fiction. That is to say, that the terrorism portrayed is not the actual focus of the texts;

though the nature of terrorism is examined, this examination is meant to help contrast the examination of literature that stands in juxtaposition to political violence.

The contention here is that these texts position their self-examination in opposition to terrorism, because even as the two share certain characteristics, they are completely contradictory in nature. At the same time, these novels present arguments defending the necessity of literature in society, even in a society in which the realization of political goals now seems to require violence, not reason.

Rainald Goetz' *Kontrolliert* is one of the first novels to directly portray the terrorist violence that permeated 1970s Germany, but its pages are filled with equal parts radical leftist rhetoric and highly-conservative pleas for the role of literature in that politically-tumultuous time period. The novel situates literature – and the type of thinking about oneself that literature makes possible – as the means with which the type of one-dimensional thinking that leads to terrorist violence can be avoided. Literature allows for the creation of a complex subjectivity, that ameliorates (though it does not allay) the contradictions of modern existence.

CHAPTER III

"DAS SICHERSTE VERSTECK WAR IMMER NOCH EIN ICH": RAINALD GOETZ' KONTROLLIERT

Reviews of Rainald Goetz' *Kontrolliert* tend to contradict each other.[78] Some approach the novel as a sympathizer's "terrorist text," attempting to mimic a terrorist attack in writing. Others find one of the twentieth century's most artistically demanding treatments of German Romantic aesthetic and philosophical thought in Goetz' intricate fiction. *Kontrolliert*, published in 1988, is in fact a complex investigation of the necessary opposition between the active life of the terrorist and the contemplative life of the writer. The novel's three parts provide a space for the narrator to express, examine, and unify his own contradictory (and sometimes volatile) thoughts on the subject.

One reason for the contradictory readings of the novel might be a complex narrative structure, which easily allows for multiple interpretations. The narrator springs lightly between conceptually-opposing yet textually-adjoined viewpoints. In *Kontrolliert* the distance is often not far between sympathizing with anti-establishment terrorists and praising the most bourgeois and cultural elitist of values. Another reason for these extremely different approaches to the text can be found in Goetz' media presence, which has often caused a prejudiced reading of his works.

Born in 1954, Rainald Goetz received a Ph.D. in history and an M.D. with an emphasis in youth psychology. During his studies he published children's book reviews

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[78] Rainald Goetz, <u>Kontrolliert: Geschichte</u>, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988). Further references to this edition are given in parenthetical citations.

in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and pseudo auto-biographical essays in journals such as

Kursbuch (*Der macht seinen Weg. Privilegien, Anpassung, Widerstand* 1978). His works

have dealt with topics ranging from psychiatry to rave music (*Rave* 1998) and encompass

a variety of genres from novels to dramas, music magazines (*spex*) to an Internet journal,

Abfall für Alle (1998/9)*,* which was published in book form a year later. Throughout his

career he has received many established literary prizes including the Heinrich-Böll-Preis

in 1991, the Else-Lasker-Schüler-Dramatikerpreis in 1999, and the Wilhelm-Raabe-Preis

in 2000.[79] He was even invited, in 1998, to give the *Frankfurter Poetik-Vorlesungen*,

which he entitled *Praxis*.

But his career began with a scandal that has since effected how he is perceived as

an artist. For many critics the 'real' Goetz showed himself during a televised reading in

Klagenfurt at the competition for the Ingeborg-Bachmann-Preis. Seated in front of an

audience and running cameras, reading frenetically from his text *Subito*, Goetz slides a

straight razor from under his table and calmly, precisely cuts into the flesh of his

forehead. He finishes his reading as if nothing happened, as blood streams down his face.

The cameras zoom in on his text where blood and ink are provocatively mixed on paper.

This media event, which took place so early in his career, has shaped most critical

engagement with his works since. For some he is a publicity-hungry upstart, for others an

avant-garde performance artist. In the end, the over-emphasis and misunderstanding in

secondary literature of elements of violence, hate, or terrorist sympathizing in Goetz'

texts have pushed out of focus the interesting and valuable literary and philosophical

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[79] Thomas Kraft, ed. <u>Lexikon der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur seit 1945</u>, vol. 1 (München: Nymphenburger, 2003) 132.

contributions he offers. *Kontrolliert* has been especially discriminated against, coming as it did at the end of a decade-long artistic silence about the terrorism and violence of the *Deutscher Herbst*.

1. Research on Kontrolliert

Research on Rainald Goetz' novel *Kontrolliert* could be organized into two categories labeling the critics themselves: those who are interested in the text and those who are interested in the author and the historical situation of his literary production. This divide is quite typical of most work on terrorism in literature. Most critics seem to have been thrown off track by elements in the text that refer to historical aspects of terrorism in Germany: the rise and continual threat of the *Rote Armee Fraktion* (RAF), the Hanns Martin Schleyer kidnapping of 1977, and the Lufthansa skyjacking of the same year. Only one of the critical studies of this work has been able to avoid the shock and surprise of what for many is an attempt to mimic terrorism in writing. Understanding the reasons for this critical breakdown will situate Goetz' novel at the correct and literary pole of the oxymoron "terrorist text."

Some studies are as extreme and one-dimensional as they claim Goetz' work to be. The title of Uwe Schütte's recent monograph, *Die Poetik des Extremen: Ausschreitungen einer Sprache des Radikalen*, says much about ideas regarding what kind of company Goetz supposedly keeps. Schütte cloaks his approach in aesthetic terms and attempts to follow in rather lofty footsteps: "In ästhetischer Hinsicht kommt der Extremist kaum vorbei an der Zerstörung literarischer Normen und sprachlicher Regeln. [...]

Extremistische Literatur intendiert immer eine Zumutung an den Leser. Sie ist ein 'Vorwurf' im Sinne Kants."[80] Eventually, however, the limits of his critical gaze are reached as he confuses art and action: "der 'terroristische' Gestus eines Textes [kann] nicht im politischen Status der staatsfeindlichen Position seines Autors begründet liegen, sondern allenfalls in der Wirkungsabsicht: nämlich eine nachhaltige Verunsicherung des Lesers auszulösen."[81] Schütte unfortunately declines to define his terms and leaves the reader thinking that "Verunsicherung" is something more violent or abnormal than a critical, self-reflexive thought triggered by reading a book, which surely is an element of any aesthetic education.

Schütte includes Goetz with other "extreme" authors such as Heinrich von Kleist, Georg Büchner, and Walter Benjamin: "Ihr gemeinsamer Nenner ist ein antibürgerlicher Widerstand gegen die herrschende Ordnung, der sich oftmals auf die dafür repräsentativen Autoritätspersonen erstreckt – träumte Kleist davon, sich mit Goethe zu duellieren und Napoleon zu erschießen, so phantasieren die Erzähler bei Goetz über die Ermordung von US-Präsidenten Ronald Reagan und Bundespräsidenten Richard von Weizsäcker."[82] Schütte conflates biography with literature; for him "extremistische Poetiken entwickeln sich kaum im Rahmen sozial konformer Lebensläufe. Biographie und Ästhetik, Literatur und Leben sind immer auf das engste miteinander verknüpft, ihre Tendenz geht in Richtung der Identität."[83] However, Schütte only half-way interprets

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[80] Uwe Schütte, <u>Die Poetik des Extremen: Ausschreitungen einer Sprache des Radikalen</u> (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006) 13.
[81] Schütte 396.
[82] Ibid 12.
[83] Ibid.

Goetz' text and thus confuses the highly self-reflexive work for a "RAF-Roman."[84]

For Schütte, *Kontrolliert* is a "Haßdichtung," it is a "militante[r] Versuch einer Freisetzung des Extremistischen durch Sprache dem historischen Scheitern der RAF, der literarische Ausdruck einer eigenmächtigen Kriegserklärung gegen das Bestehende."[85] If the novel is a declaration of war then it is a war that has been ongoing for two centuries since literature and subjectivity were formed together.

Niels Werber's article, "Intensitäten des Politischen: Gestalten souveräner und normalistischer Macht bei Rainald Goetz,"[86] sparks initial excitement in its engagement with Michel Foucault's work. One would hope that Werber would use either Foucault's studies of subjectivity or his discussions of the internalization of disciplinary measures to get at Goetz' own intensive treatment of these subjects in *Kontrolliert*. That the novel's narrator is hand-copying Foucault's book, *The Order of Things,* could help the critic see how the philosopher's work is used as both foil and playful metaphor for his own narrative task; yet none of this is ever mentioned by Werber. As is typical for much written about this work, the article does not further an understanding of the actual novel because Werber simply uses Goetz to talk about politics much in the same (though converse) way that Goetz uses terrorism to talk about art.[87] This is obvious in the patchwork way in which Werber quotes Goetz to support his own argument: by cutting and pasting inflammatory, politically-loaded words and phrases without mentioning the

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[84] Ibid 410.

[85] Schütte 431.

[86] Niels Werber, "Intensitäten des Politischen: Gestalten souveräner und normalistischer Macht bei Rainald Goetz," <u>Weimarer Beiträge</u> 46:1 (2000) 105-20.

[87] At one point, over the span of two sentences, Werber joins Goetz, Deleuze and Guattari, and a *Bundestagsdebatte* from 1977 in order to make one "cohesive" point (117). Werber focuses solely on the commonalities in the texts but he leaves out the very anti-political stance of Goetz' novel.

continual problematization or even rejection of such ideology, Werber constructs an

image of *Kontrolliert* that serves his own interests and strays too far from the novel as a

whole.

Uwe Wittstock introduces the problem of critically engaging with certain German

prose texts that have terrorism as a theme by saying, "Für viele Rezensenten endet,

stoßen sie in einem Roman auf das Thema Terrorismus, die ästhetische Reflexion: Sie

prüfen statt dessen penibel und mit verfassungschützerischem Ingrimm die Gesinnung

des Autors, aus der sie dann ohne viel Federlesens ihr Urteil über seine poetischen

Fähigkeiten und Absichten herleiten."[88] Wittstock's awareness of the critic's difficulties

with texts on terrorism runs parallel to a similar difficulty experienced by the texts'

authors. He offers an often-quoted maxim for writing about terrorism: "Wehe dem

Schriftsteller, der den Terror durch die Figuren eines Buches nicht offensichtlich genug

verurteilen läßt – der ist unwiderruflich des Bösen."[89]

However, even Wittstock, who wants to approach Goetz' novel with careful critical

steps, stumbles at the dissonance created by the combination of terrorism and text. His

study thus exemplifies the typical critical breakdown in confronting such texts. If a text

or artwork offers images of terrorism then – so runs the (faulty) logic – it must, at the

very least, be political art; that is, the artist must be using an artistic medium to make a

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[88] Uwe Wittstock, "Der Terror und seine Dichter. Politisch motivierte Gewalt in der neuen deutschen Literatur: Bodo Morshäuser, Michael Wildenhain, Rainald Goetz," <u>Neue Rundschau</u> 101:3 (1990): 65-78, here 67.

[89] Ibid.

political statement.[90] For now and without going into the contradictions and intricacies of such an argument, this often-made connection between art and politics usually marks the very limits of criticism. Wittstock puts it this way: "Da [Terrorismus] eine extreme Gegenposition bezieht zur bestehenden, von den Autoren nach wie vor ungeliebten Ordnung, wird er als radikale und kompromißlose Existenzform intellektuell erwogen."[91] Two typical assumptions are made here that are unsubstantiated in *Kontrolliert*. The first is that Goetz – like, apparently, all authors – is necessarily against the current sociopolitical order of things. It is clear that the *narrator* of *Kontrolliert* is highly critical of the state of politics and his thoughts are filled with alternatives to this. However, it obviously does *not* follow that these are the author's unfiltered thoughts. What underlies this first assumption is the inability to differentiate the author from narrator or text when the text is so potentially politically volatile. The second assumption is that these authors understand terrorism to be an alternative to this order and that "authors" choose terrorism as a topic in order to contemplate possibilities for resistance. To put Wittstock's criticism another way: art is the space for utopian protest or: art and leftist terrorism are politically aligned. Neither of these assumptions, which guide Wittstock's reading and many other critical readings of *Kontrolliert*, is supported in the novel. Indeed, Goetz' text argues exactly against such an understanding of terrorism and the role and nature of art: both art and, in train, modern concepts of identity and subjectivity are intractably – though problematically – bound to the current status and structure of politics and society.

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[90] Art is surely always political in that it offers a reflective mirror or refracting contrast to the sociopolitical reality in which the artist lives. Wittstock understands art – of the post-68 period, at least – to be merely another medium for political expression and thus a medium measured by communicative utility not expressive or reflective power.

[91] Wittstock 68.

Kontrolliert is partly a reflection on the difficulties caused by the intersecting paths of the modern state and the modern, Romantic concept of identity. Literature and the sense of aesthetic identity created therein are necessary pre-conditions for each other. That the modern political state's values of democracy and individual sovereignty are so bound up with art becomes a highly-complex turning point in the novel, but in no way does the novel evidence an outright rejection of contemporary politics.

Only two studies have successfully engaged the true complexity of Goetz' writing and directly contribute to an understanding of the work itself, though only one deals with *Kontrolliert* directly. Both articles concentrate on the two main themes that will be discussed later in this chapter: the subject ("Ich") and its creation in art. Philipp Müller and Kolja Schmidt's article "Goetzendämmerung in Klagenfurt: Die Uraufführung der sezessionistischen Selbstpoetik von Rainald Goetz"[92] appears in a volume edited by Ralph Köhnen, aptly titled *Selbstpoetik 1800-2000. Ich-Identität als literarisches Zeichenrecycling*. Köhnen's book provides an excellent context for studying Goetz' work and it is unfortunate that Müller and Schmidt's focus does not widen to encompass *Kontrolliert*. At the very least, the article offers a first step towards understanding Goetz' work before *Kontrolliert*.

The second article of interest is Rainer Kühn's "Bürgerliche Kunst und antipolitische Politik. Der 'Subjektkultkarrierist' Rainald Goetz."[93] Kühn's much too

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[92] Philipp Müller and Kolja Schmidt, "Goetzendämmerung in Klagenfurt: Die Uraufführung der sezessionistischen Selbstpoetik von Rainald Goetz," <u>Selbstpoetik 1800-2000. Ich-Identität als literarisches Zeichenrecycling</u>, Ralph Köhnen, ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001) 251-270.

[93] Rainer Kühn, "Bürgerliche Kunst und antipolitische Politik. Der 'Subjektkultkarrierist' Rainald Goetz," <u>Neue Generation - neues Erzählen. Deutsche Prosa-Literatur der achtziger Jahre</u>, Walter Delabar, ed. (Opladen: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1993) 25-33.

brief article agilely avoids the traps sprung by other critical ventures into Goetz' texts:

terrorism and violence are understood as the hindrances to what Goetz seeks in the

"heiliger Bezirk" of literature: "Orientierung … Schutz … Kraft."[94] A brief discussion of

these two articles will bridge into the bulk of this chapter's discussion of *Kontrolliert*.

2. Selbstpoetik and Subjektkult

Ralph Köhnen finds the origin of *Selbstpoetik* in late eighteenth-century Romantic

literary pursuits of aesthetic self-creation – "Selbsterfindung … mit künstlerischen

Mitteln, der Versuch, sich ein Bild zu geben und sich in symbolischen Formen

auszuprägen."[95] What could be seen as mere aesthetic activity soon had strong social and

political consequences. *Selbstpoetik* always has two sides: the private (subjective) and the

public or societal (objective). Self-creation relies on reservoirs of external, shared

systems of signification such as symbols or language. These creations of the self are thus

also works of art that transcend the individual subject and can be used in the creation of a

larger, cultural identity. Köhnen weaves Georg Simmel into this turn to the public sphere:

> Die "Formung des Lebens in begrifflichen und ästhetischen Bildern"
> transzendiert insofern das Subjekt [...] und dient zur Entwicklung eines
> kulturellen Selbstverständnisses, an dem der einzelne mitarbeiten kann.
> Soziologisch beschreibbare Bereiche werden hier in Termini von Ästhetik
> analysiert – sie zeigen umso deutlicher die techné, die Architektur des
> Sozialen, die sich, ob in Wirtschaft oder Politik, immer in Kunstformen
> ausdrückt.[96]

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[94] Kühn 28.

[95] Ralph Köhnen, "Selbstpoetik 1800/1900/2000. Ich-Identität als literarisches Zeichenrecycling," <u>Selbstpoetik 1800-2000. Ich-Identität als literarisches Zeichenrecycling</u>, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001) 7-18, here 8.

[96] Köhnen 8.

The modern artist is positioned between the subjective and objective, between the individual and the social/political. The artist's work does not, however, have any direct effect on political action: the artist interrogates public discourse and public discourse interrogates the artist and her or his work but the only point of contact is in the store of signs shared by both groups. Köhnen supports this position with his concept of *Zeichenrecycling* in which the artist must necessarily create his or her identity ("Ich") from pre-given and culturally-determined reservoirs of stereotypes, images, and symbols. The artist must use these symbols in order to communicate in a meaningful way with others who also use these systems and is only free to choose a new arrangement or to slightly vary them. In this way, the work of the artist does not create aesthetic autonomy (à la Foucault) but should be understood as "Mitarbeit an der Kultur als sozialer Praxis."[97]

Köhnen's approach to the complex constellation of art and action, word and deed, subject and object, offers a compelling starting point for an analysis of Rainald Goetz' novel *Kontrolliert* because it makes clear that these aspects are very intricately interdependent, that to speak of one is to speak of its opposite. Köhnen and the volume's contributors are engaged in exposing this complexity, not offering one-dimensional interpretations that ignore it.

This approach to art and action also offers insight into the nature of terrorism, which similarly appropriates cultural symbols – but instead destroys them or turns them

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[97] Köhnen 10.

into fear-inducing objects.[98] The greatest difference between art and terrorism is, of course, that the physical, violent act of terrorism is a denial of all attempts to communicate and (re)build cultures and cultural identities through reasoned discourse or aesthetic contemplation. In this sense terror and art are completely opposed.

What does warrant more discussion are the similarities between the aesthetic experience of art and the way in which the so-called "target audiences" experience terrorism (as always already mediated). It would seem that a confused suspicion about this relationship between art and terror underlies many of the critical studies of this subject constellation. Some critics seem to want to extend the power and viability of literature by lending it the terrorist ability to shock and attack (e.g. Wittstock) while others are obviously confused about what to do with seemingly radical, politically-loaded phrases and statements in a literary text (e.g. Werber). *Kontrolliert* is, in fact, focused on defending quite traditional and relatively conservative ideas and values of subjectivity in order to protect society *against* those who seek to destroy it using terrorism and against the type of simplified intellectual status of their ideology.

Philipp Müller and Kolja Schmidt's study of Goetz' *Klagenfurtlesung* begins with a portrayal of the socio-literary scene of 1960s and 70s as a constant debate and attempt, "Literatur und Leben in eine Praxis zu überführen, in der Kunst und Wirklichkeit miteinander verschmelzen. Die Beziehung zwischen Tat und Text, Aktion und Literatur wurde neu gefasst und ihre dualistische Trennung programmatisch aufgehoben."[99] These

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[98] One thinks here of seeing the first airplane flying overhead after the terrorist attacks of 9/11/01 or of the World Trade Center itself, once a symbol of American economic strength, which has been used in recent film and television as a nostalgic symbol for a pre-9/11 innocence in, for example, *World Trade Center* and *Munich*.

[99] Müller and Schmidt 252.

critics see the Rote Armee Fraktion's terrorist acts as the high-point of a decade-long

attempt to synthesize text and action – as a more recent attempt to realize what André

Breton famously considered the "simplest Surrealist act" which "consists of dashing

down into the street, pistol in hand, and firing blindly, as fast as you can pull the trigger,

into the crowd."[100] Müller and Schmidt continue: "Den avantgardistischen Überlegungen

folgend lassen sich die Umtriebe der RAF als ein beständiges dialektisches Wechselspiel

von Wort und Tat lesen: Ihren Aktionen gingen schriftliche Erklärungen voraus, die dem

zukünftigen revolutionären Handeln den Weg weisen sollten, und auf Taten der Gewalt

für Öffentlichkeit eindeutig lesbar zu machen."[101] This dangerously optimistic aesthetic

appraisal of Germany's most destructive and murderous terrorists acts is, of course,

highly problematic. Müller and Schmidt recover from this stumble to make a typical and

valid move by Goetz scholars: to posit the *Deutscher Herbst* as the determining

environmental and historical factor for Goetz' writing. That is, they see Goetz' texts as an

attempt to reassess the apparently volatile imbalance in the roles of action and thought at

the end of the 1970s.

It is difficult to underestimate the importance of the need to reevaluate the status of

art after the Red Decade which spanned the time period from the student revolts of 1968

to its dramatic ending in 1977.[102] A long blurring of lines between art and life, thought

and action forced artists of Goetz' generation to reassess their own status: were they

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[100] André Breton, Selections, Mark Polizzotti, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) 154.

[101] Müller and Schmidt 252.

[102] The term "rotes Jahrzehnt" comes from Gerd Koenen's book Das rote Jahrzehnt: Unsere kleine deutsche Kulturrevolution 1967-1977 (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2002).

artists who plumb inner depths of the mind or were they politically-engaged intellectuals who saw no place for art in a world that needs active engagement? This meta-level thinking about these topics undoubtedly permeates Goetz' texts, but discovering Goetz' personal ideas on leftist terrorism is unnecessary to engage the novel.

Müller and Schmidt are correct in stating that Goetz "setzt die Differenz von Text und Wirklichkeit erneut in Szene," however, their next step proves troublesome: "Aber seine alternative Lösung des Konflikts zeichnet sich durch einen Verzicht auf Gewalt gegen andere aus und nimmt den Umweg über Literatur. Anstatt andere zum Gegenstand sprachloser Gewalt werden zu lassen, wendet er diese gegen sich selbst: 'Und weil ich kein Terrorist geworden bin, deswegen kann ich nur in mein eigenes weißes Fleisch hinein schneiden.'"[103] Goetz' *Klagenfurtlesung* is interpreted by Müller and Schmidt not as a performance but as a political statement of a frustrated activist. It is sensational yet unproductive to conclude that the only difference between Goetz and the RAF is the direction of the target of its "violence": towards oneself or towards others. Indeed, to describe Goetz' work as in any way "speechless" is to ignore the author's intense focus on language.

Taken out of its context, the *Klagenfurtlesung* can easily be misunderstood. Rainer Kühn corrects this by positioning Goetz as an exaggerated 1980s version of the "Skandaltradition" which originated in the 1960s and 1970s with artists like Peter Handke and Rolf Dieter Brinkmann. Goetz' texts contain the same balanced proportions of "Authentizität und Konstruiertheit" as these authors of New Subjectivity and

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[103] Müller and Schmidt 253. They are quoting <u>Subito</u>.

Sensibility.[104] These authors of *Innerlichkeit* chose to continue writing literature about highly-subjective perceptions to avoid creating documentary texts, which were based on the pretense of explaining or giving meaning to sociopolitical aspects of the world.[105] Such artists reacted against the political "literature" that accompanied Hans Magnus Enzensberger's heralding of the 'Tod der Literatur' in 1968.[106] Kühn reminds his fellow critics of recent literary history lest they forget that the 1970s took place.

For Kühn, the core of all of Goetz' writing is a desire to escape "die Geschichte der Anpassung," which begins in the parental home and permeates most aspects of society. A pseudo-autobiographical essay from the late 1970s, tellingly-titled *Der macht seinen Weg. Privilegien, Anpassung, Widerstand*, criticizes "Das hochmoralische Weltverbesserungsklima der siebziger Jahre," which only allowed for constructive, i.e. party-line, criticism. Any oppositional voices to the APO – the *Außerparlamentarische Opposition* (extra-parliamentary opposition), which consisted of mostly young people disillusioned by the government's contemporary form – were as strictly controlled as anywhere else, showing that "Kritik und Kontrolle zur entscheidenden, in sich verworbenen Konstellation wurde."[107]

Kühn pairs this early, politically-critical (or anti-political) writing with Goetz' first published works – children's book reviews (!) – in order to substantiate his understanding of the artist. The apparently highly-political poet of terror writes: "Wir, unsere Kinder,

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[104] Kühn 26.

[105] Ralf Schnell, <u>Geschichte der Deutschsprachigen Literatur seit 1945</u>, (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1993), 397.

[106] Enzensberger claims that aestheticized, fictional literature is undesirable and demands instead a politicized, "operative" literature, cf. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Gemeinplätze, die neueste Literatur betreffend," <u>Kursbuch</u> 15 (1968): 187-197.

[107] Kühn 26.

sind Phantasiekrüppel geworden unter dem Wortschwall der Welterklärungen. Die

neugierigen Fragen bleiben aus, erst recht die Antworten ohne Fesseln."[108] Here Goetz

demands of literature "'Sprachbesessenheit', Stringenz von Logik und Handlung der

Geschichte, Detailtreue, Bewußthalten der 'Differenz von Wissen und Imagination.'"[109]

Goetz' high standards for both art and politics betray an elitist, rather conservative

demand for aesthetic purity which has nothing to do with the politicized author and work

presented by most critics, for whom Goetz is at worst a terrorist of the text and at best a

writer of interesting propaganda.

At the core of Goetz' texts lies "Das einfache wahre Abschreiben von Welt"[110]

which, for Kühn, "erzählt von den zugemuteten Brüchen, denen eine Individuation

unterliegt. Die Weigerung der Gesellschaft, das Subjekt nach dem Ideal zuzulassen,

Identitätsbildung zuzulassen, führt zu Schreibweisen, welche einmal zur

Selbstvergewisserung des 'Ichs' hin zu führen scheinen – eine verzweifelte Verteidigung

des Subjekts."[111] This is Kühn's most important contribution to a more balanced reading

of Goetz' works and offers a good first step in engaging *Kontrolliert*. The point is that this

"Abschreiben von Welt" can necessarily only work on one world: that of an individual's

perceptions; it does not claim to offer a glimpse at any sort of objective totality. To

observe one's own perceptions is to focus on how the influx of external stimulus is

processed, analyzed, evaluated, and criticized by the individual. Thus, writing a detailed

account of these perceptions is a constant monitoring or controlling of the borders

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[108] Kühn.

[109] Ibid. 27.

[110] From Goetz' text *Hirn*, quoted in Kühn, 28.

[111] Ibid.

between the individual and the world: "Wer der Welt der Worte in der Abschrift nur den Spiegel ihrer selbst vorhält, scheinbar superkühl oder auch als toller Sepp, um irgendetwas vorzuführen, zu beweisen oder zu entlarven, zeigt schließlich genau umgekehrt unweigerlich am meisten nur auf sich. Der Abschreiber hält sich für unbestechlich, Wort für Wort erweist er sich jedoch als der Betrüger" (49). Writing is writing about oneself, one's thoughts.

3. Kontrolliert: *Geschichte*

Kontrolliert is made up of three parts and each text part is prefaced by a motto or quote and an artwork; this is a similar format used by Goetz in his earlier novels *Irre* (1983) and *Hirn* (1986). Each part tells the story of 1977, each from a different perspective. The first part, "Schwarze Zelle," is a 100 page monologue by the narrator. It is a highly self-conscious text that shifts from the narrator's memories of 1977 to reflection on the nature of memory, from the implications of re-creating memory to the foundation of subjectivity. The time structure of this section is rather confusing and often misunderstood. This thickly-collaged frame story seems to take place as the narrator is attempting to write his dissertation during the fall of 1977 in Paris. However, it expresses knowledge of events that happened in the 1980s.[112] The section consists, on the one hand, of the narrator's recounting of various experiences from the summer of 1977 – from the Wittgenstein books he reads in class to radio stories he hears about terrorist attacks. On the other hand, it is a highly self-reflexive combination of musings on writing, art,

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[112] Two glaring anachronistic elements are the discussion of the arrest of Christan Klar's – a second generation RAF member – in 1982 and the death of Andy Warhol in 1987.

language, and the nature of memory. Many critics misread this frame's obsessive tracking of the time from midnight to the next morning as the recounting of the *Todesnacht* (October 18, 1977) during which the last remaining members of the first generation of the RAF committed suicide in Stammheim prison. However, it could equally be read as the narrator's reflections on 1977 from a ten year remove – from 1987. The second part, "Diktat," is broken into nine subsections which span the first nine months of 1977 leading up to what is considered the *Deutscher Herbst,* the term for the time in 1977 which encompasses the kidnapping of Schleyer on September 5, the hijacking of the Lufthansa jet "Landshut" on October 13, and the *Todesnacht.* These nine sections are roughly told from the perspective of the narrator in 1977; this more traditional narrative style confronts "die Geschichte des Jahres neunzehnhundert siebenundsiebzig" more directly, with less reflective removal (115). The 44 sections of "Im Namen des Volkes," the third part, are told from many different perspectives; they mirror the 44 days of Hanns Martin Schleyer's captivity by the RAF. This third section is then a pannarrative that confronts the totality of history as a totality of interwoven individuals' stories.

Uwe Wittstock sees in this structure of thirds a narrative zoom: "Goetz zoomt von der Nahaufnahme bis zur (sozialen) Totale;"[113] for him the different perspectives simply provide different angles on the same cultural phenomenon. That is, for Wittstock the text tries to show that sympathy for political revolution permeates all layers of society (mirrored in the three levels of narration) though the use of terror is always found to be inadequate. But the attempt to encompass multiple perspectives is in fact a means to

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[113] Wittstock 76.

compare and contrast three ways of narrating history through artistic form. The text

grounds itself, in the first part, in a self-aware and self-critical process of recollection and

concern about the artificiality of this process; this part is about the limits and functions of

an *Ich*. The next two parts, while seemingly more traditional in narrative style and level

of self-consciousness, show what happens on a larger level when other *Ichs* step forward

and tell their own highly-personal *Geschichten*. The result is a fragmentary, collaged

portrayal of intimate individual thought – not an all-encompassing totality. Indeed, the

lack of an authorial contextualization is one element that makes *Kontrolliert* difficult for

the reader to navigate: no anchoring and controlling frame other than the year "1977" is

laid around the fragmentary elements. The novel's collage-like form of the *Zettelkasten*

will be discussed in more depth below.

In the novel's form, bourgeois values are reflected in the attempt to respect other

voices while not claiming to speak for others. The fragmentary narrative voices found in

the third part can make no claims to authenticity as such claims had already been denied

earlier in the text, as will be discussed below. These voices do act as placeholders for

"real" voices, the content of which must be filled in by others, individually. Exactly how

the narrator functions is an important and confusing aspect of *Kontrolliert*. Understanding

how the narrator imposes limits upon himself is key to understanding the text's purpose;

the limit is his own subjectivity, the make-up of which must be examined more closely.

4. Choosing Literature

Before discussing subjectivity in *Kontrolliert*, the text must be situated in its sociopolitical context. There is no need to follow in other critics' steps and unnecessarily discuss what the author's own revolutionary intentions for the text might have been or to measure how much of Goetz' political anger or frustration is (unsuccessfully) sublimated into the text. This is because there is already an inherently political act bound up with the choice of medium – with the choice to write a work of literature and not tendentious essays or even take up a gun. This choice to maneuver inside a text, to influence others with just writing, is historically bound to a bourgeois value system, the core ideal of which is a certain type of freedom. Its most important philosophical underpinning was "the notion central to the self-understanding and legitimation of the bourgeois form of life: the free, rational, independent, reflective, self-determining subject."[114] It could be argued that this central bourgeois value brought about a modern concept of rights and freedoms unheard of before the seventeenth century. The "counter-culture" movements of the 1960s and 70s from Communists to Maoists overlook or deny any positive aspects of bourgeois subjectivity's role in the creation of modern autonomous agents. The most radical and violent elements of these groups turned to terrorism in order to free the world, so they thought, from elitist bourgeoisie oppression, which for them was equivalent to capitalism. Other interconnected bourgeois concepts such as freedom of thought and self-determination were also discarded.

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[114] Robert B. Pippin, The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

The correlation between subjectivity and art is not just that art is the medium of subjectivity (as *Kontrolliert* will show) but that the aesthetic realm is the last place for individual self-determination. Inside the laws and structures of the ever-more bureaucratic eighteenth-century State the individual citizen's political activities were limited to choosing between alternatives offered by and inside the government. This sort of structure provided unheard of potential for individual safety, protection, and development because it limited to the *private* sphere what was actionable for the individual. In the *public* sphere, a new standard for civic interaction was installed: reasoned discourse. Where once war and violent overthrows determined the political course, now – ideally – only through the exchange of ideas and by the forces of rhetoric and reason could one influence (not force) others. Thus, for the individual citizen, the private sphere became the space of unobstructed freedom, and nowhere more so than inside one's own private, subjectively-created space: in one's writing and artistic pursuits.

Jürgen Habermas' famous study, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*,[115] written in 1962, describes the creation and composition of the public sphere (*Öffentlichkeit*) during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The public sphere of the Enlightenment period developed out of the civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) of the High Middle Ages, in which multiple opposing realms were slowly carved-out: the state became opposed to society while society was made-up of both public and private spaces. Public debate was meant to discuss and influence political (state) issues.

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[115] Jürgen Habermas, <u>Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der Bürgerlichen Gesellschaft</u> (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1979).

Habermas' study seeks to save a certain element from this historically distant model of the public sphere: "an institutional location for practical reason in public affairs and for the accompanying valid, if often deceptive, claims of formal democracy."[116] This institution formed in the world of letters, where debate held tightly to reasoned argument as the standard for persuasion. The contemporary increase of the number of magazines and journals – but also the expansion of literary production and publication – provided a space for these arguments to be offered to other members of the public sphere.

Habermas argues that the public sphere developed as the original realm of private autonomy, which was inherently opposed to the State. The public sphere thus acts as a protective buffer zone between the individual's private world and state concerns. In this political construct, criticism in literature acts as the proving ground for ideas to be used in subsequent political debate – that is, literature is the space for individual expression and criticism that has an indirect effect on the political realm. The public sphere allows for the sharing of ideas which are weighed by others and then might enter into public opinion and, eventually, into state structures. Thus, to write in the tradition of eighteenth-century literature is to maintain and reaffirm this distinction of where and how individuals can influence each other and the political issues of the state.

The public sphere is a two-sided construction which "depends upon both the quality of discourse and quantity of participation."[117] The *Wandel* Habermas traces is marked by the expansion of the public sphere from the interaction of individuals, who sought

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[116] Craig J. Calhoun, <u>Habermas and the Public Sphere</u>, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), 2. Habermas does not defend the major flaws of this eighteenth-century model, which restricted the members of its sphere to land owners with a certain level of education.

[117] Calhoun 35.

consensus with rational debate, to a broader public, which is marked by powerful individuals and corporations who use media to manufacture consent that matches their own concerns. The *Wandel* is for Habermas the cause of the slowly degrading quality of argumentation and discourse in the public sphere.

The narrator of *Kontrolliert* very consciously chooses to write literature and not, therefore, take part in other ways of effecting the political world. This choice positions him with authors from the eighteenth century, whose work was also considered an integral part of the public sphere. The narrator's choice turns him necessarily into a defender of a societal structure and system of values that first arose long ago. To write, to aim for artistic goals and not political heads of state, is to choose to live by a certain set of values that rest at the core of the modern (bourgeois) State apparatus. The narrator of *Kontrolliert* finds this relationship problematic but never denies it and in many ways the novel is a reflection on the dichotomy of art and politics: "Schließlich muß man am Heimweg jeder doch wieder alleine mit sich selber fertig werden, ich mit meiner bürgerlichen Kunst, Konrad [his politically-engaged friend] mit seiner antibürgerlichen Politik, ich darf ihn zurecht den Lüstemensch und Penner schimpfen, er mich den Subjektkultkarrieristen" (47).

For the narrator the choice to write and indeed read literature is a means to distinguish himself from those around him, be they terrorists or just sympathizers. Even if he does have thoughts about taking action, in the end his choice has long since been made: "Dann aber saßen wir, während der herrlichen Wochen, in denen Schleier inhaftiert war, täglich im Park des Luxembourg und träumten davon, vielleicht selber mal als Täter

terroristisch tätig zu werden. Da ich Antikritikantikörper in mir habe, war ich dann doch auch in diesem Herbst, wie schon in den sieben Jahren davor, wieder eher von echten poetischen Büchern gefesselt als von der Politik ... Da verträumte ich die Zeit der Sommersemester schon eher lässig im englischen Garten, immer ein bürgerliches gutes Buch zur Hand" (100).

The next section will analyze the novel's understanding of and demand for subjectivity as a means of internal regulation which will lead into a discussion of narration or creating literature, which is understood as the means for producing that subjectivity. Then, the next two sections will look at other literary elements treated by the novel: language and collage form.

5. "Ich" and the Others: Subjectivity in *Kontrolliert*

Kontrolliert begins with its own limitation: "Ich erzähle hier die Geschichte des Jahres neunzehnhundert siebenundsiebzig" (15). The first word of the first line situates the entire text that follows: it is a product of an *Ich*, an I. This first person point of view is not just a question of style, but an admission of the factor that controls and indeed determines which story can be told; the subjective boundaries of an individual's experience are this necessary limitation. It is not merely a question of style because parts of the novel's second section and most of the third section are told in the third person. *The* story of 1977 is the *narrator's* story; it is limited to the experience of the narrator's perceptions of the events of that year plus his own thoughts – no matter what narrative style or voice he might lay over this.

The first section of the novel, "Schwarze Zelle," is a highly self-reflexive, self-conscious telling of story-telling. During the events of the *Deutscher Herbst* the narrator begins his story from his Paris apartment which he calls a "Zelle" (38), making it both a removed space for monk-like meditation and forced imprisonment. The text that is or will become *Kontrolliert* is however the second text the narrator has attempted to write: "Ursprünglich sollte hier der Staat verhandelt werden. Gut ein Jahr lang habe ich die Vorarbeiten in diese Richtung hin getrieben, vergeblich. Der Anspruch war vermessen, falsch, nicht richtig vermessen, nicht für mich, Resultat war Lähmung. Der Staat ist ungeheuerlich, die Ungeheuerlichkeit, die ein einer, wie ich hier, nicht fassen kann" (15). The next, rather complex passage contains one of the most important moments of the novel – the awakening of the narrator's self-consciousness and subjectivity.

What exactly subjectivity is has been a point of contention for the entire history of philosophy. Most lexica avoid any strong definitions, preferring philosophers to battle it out individually: "Der moderne philosophische Begriff des Subjekts bezieht sich auf denk- und handlungsfähige Einheiten, denen damit auch ein spezifisches Selbstverhältnis eignet."[118] Subjectivity, as it is understood here, is a "constructed unity" created by certain types of people who have applied certain philosophical theories to their lives.[119] The manner in which these people present themselves, and thus their beliefs (which they embody), is always highly idiosyncratic in style "because the readers must never forget

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[118] Axel Beelmann, <u>Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie</u>, ed. Joachim Ritter, Band 9 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971) 464-470, here 467.

[119] I follow here Alexander Nehamas' insightful work <u>The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault</u> (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) 2.

that the views they confront are the views of a particular type of person and of no one else."[120]

This production of personality results from the "investigation, the criticism, and the production of philosophical views."[121] These views are always formed in relationship to traditional philosophical practices and thereby attach themselves to established traditions; the important terms for this tradition are 'reflection' and '(self) critique.' That is, such thinkers are – no matter what new values might arise inside of this form – formally traditional. What is important is that self-creation and the articulation of that self in writing are inextricable: it is by "reflecting on the problems of constructing a philosophical life that they construct the life their work constitutes."[122] The self-reflective (Nehamas calls them "self-referential") nature of such thinkers requires them to exist as unified individuals inside of their writing, since only there can a coherent character be logically – or more precisely: grammatically – formed out of disparate and complex viewpoints. Especially in regards to the highly-volatile subject matter in *Kontrolliert*, one must consider the sociopolitical aspects of this type of philosophical "art of living." Such self-creations could be – without the insistent pressure often seen in the political sphere – taken as models for any individual who, born into a set of circumstances, wants to be true to this origin while taking on new characteristics and beliefs. That is, to create a self, to demand one's own and thereby other's subjectivities, is to perform an act of freedom from any perceived determinism that might otherwise act as a hindrance to such freedom.

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[120] Nehamas 3.
[121] Ibid. 6.
[122] Ibid.

The narrator of Goetz' novel shows himself to be a supporter of such autonomy as he constructs his own sense of self in his writing.

Originally, the narrator wanted his writing to act as a sort of trial of the State apparatus, but this undertaking was too demanding and caused "paralysis" or, more accurately, writer's block. As the narrator later explains, he is attempting to write a dissertation in history on Roman politics but finds the scope of this topic to be too much. What the narrator experiences is a lesson both for himself and the reader: the narrator realizes that he is an individual – "ein einer, wie ich hier" (15) – and as such is not able to write about the entirety of a political system. The narrator's difficulties do not just arise from his inclinations to write literature: his focus always returns to an internal orientation even after long passages explaining politics, violence, or punk music. The real problem is that an individual cannot master an object (the State), which is in fact a multiplicity of subjects. As will be discussed below, the belief that the State is inseparable from the many free individuals it both serves and protects (and sometimes oppresses) is a major sticking point in the novel.

It is important to understand the reasons for the narrator's inability to write about the massive State apparatus since such subject matter is the opposite of what he *can* write about. As the opening section of *Kontrolliert* continues, the narrator's thought process betrays the underlying, almost systematic causes of this inability. It is important to see how the movement in the following passage always spirals back to a self-conscious and self-oriented center:

> Schließlich schießt der Staat aus den Gewehren echte Menschen tot,
> nichttote Menschen werden staatsbefehlsgemäß in Staatskerkern gefoltert,

> Staatstheater spielen echte Stücke, siehe Stammheim, Stichwort Krieg, die Staatsorchester musizieren dazu musikalisch Symphonien, Bilderherrlichkeiten zeigen sich in Staatsmuseen her, das Staatsfernsehen ist wirklich Hochschule des Glücks der Unterhaltung, reich an Massen wissenswerter Sachen, den Staatsschulen verdanken viele vieles, ich zum Beispiel alles, Staatszeitungen, Staatsstrom, Staatsgeld, Staatslicht nachts in großen Städten, Staatsbibliotheken, ja, der Staat ist ein Mörder, ein Menschenvernichter, ein böser, ein Arbeitsknapphalter, die Machthaberfresse, der Staat ist Unrechtsstaat, Betrüger, Volksverächter, grundgesetzlich Lüge, Antidemokrat, der Staat ist Ausbeuter und Unterdrücker, das Kapital, und plötzlich ist der Staat Gefangener, ein einziger Gefangener der raf, der Staat ist nur noch Angst, die Drohung, die Kontaktsperre, der Staat ist machtlos, der Staat ist der im Volksgefängnis inhaftierte Altfaschist, […]. (15-16)

It is easy to see why critics could fixate on volatile elements of such passages if their purpose were to read *Kontrolliert* as a manifesto of some political ideology. But to stop there is to stop halfway; to focus on these political commonplaces and slogans of the '68 Generation is to miss a major point of the text: to show that the subjective experience of the narrator acts as ground and limit of experience, which, as this passage shows, is controlled and guided by the rules and economies of language. The long section of text does start out as a flooding stream of consciousness rant of typical (typical of the '68 student movement and APO members) negative associations with the word "Staat" – *Gewehre, tot, Kerker, foltern*. However, the power of language undermines the attempt at a simplified, political statement. The complete linguistic associations with the word "Staat" know no political boundaries, thus the flow of language brings forth other, in fact, more positive associations: *Musik, Bilder, Schule, Bibliotheken*. These facets, which are synonymous with culture or *Bildung,* make the State's character ambiguous: the State is obviously more than just its problematic political aspects.

At this point, something steps in to steer the course of thought back to the (political)

left and to more politically-loaded linguistic associations. Such a detour into relatively

conservative thoughts about the State would be considered blasphemy to the Left and the

narrator's thoughts evidence a sort of confused guilty conscience regarding this mild

praise of certain aspects of the State. This confusion is clear in the hesitating "ja" ("ja, der

Staat ist ein Mörder") that moves the narrator's thoughts back to the political. This "ja"

sounds like a daydreamer, called back to the topic at hand: "well yes, that is also true."

Not a loafing daydreamer, the narrator is a writer/ thinker/ artist who knowingly lives and

operates inside language, who sees the entirety of reality in the entirety of language.

Just as suddenly as the "ja" pulled the narrator's thoughts back to the political, the

next "plötzlich" marks a turn from abstract ranting to a hard physical reality: "und

plötzlich ist der Staat Gefangener, ein einziger Gefangener der raf, der Staat ist nur noch

Angst, die Drohung, die Kontaktsperre, der Staat ist machtlos, der Staat ist der im

Volksgefängnis inhaftierte Altfaschist" (16). The "Altfaschist" is Hanns Martin Schleyer,

whose kidnapping on September 5, 1977 and murder 44 days later roughly delineate the

beginning and end of the *Deutscher Herbst*. This "plötzlich" stands in for the shock and

surprise of the terrorist attack and the extreme nature of the terrorist attack forces a State

response equally as extreme. "Angst," "Drohung," and "Kontaktsperre" are all that is left

of what was a more balanced, ambiguous, or indeed contradictory State apparatus; the

terrorist attack strips away the positive elements of the State. This is a far cry from

Werber's understanding of Goetz and other authors who write in some form or fashion

about terrorism; Goetz' text critiques terrorism not because it does not offer a viable

political alternative to the State but because of its basic anti-State stance. This stands in complete opposition to portrayals of Goetz in secondary literature as radical leftist and political.

That the kidnapping and murder of Schleyer is simultaneously the kidnapping of culture is evident in the narrator's playful renaming of Schleyer to "Schiller" which he then corrects to "Schleier" (38). By making Schiller a veiled (= "Schleier") re-presentation of Schleyer (or vice versa), the narrator offers a more clear picture of what this terrorist act has brought about. One could of course read this as an equation of German culture (Schiller) with Fascism ("Altfaschist"), following a notorious post 1945 claim about the link between German Idealism and Nazism. The novel does not seem to take a definite stance but continually amplifies and muddles the narrator's ambivalence. On the one hand, the narrator, who himself is so deeply bound to the cultural elements of the State, is obviously against the terrorist act. On the other hand, the narrator seems to share certain political critiques with the Left and the Left's violent and warped extension, the RAF. The answer to this text's ambiguity lies in its own form. That is, its medium is the written, printed words of literature, which is necessarily tied to creation and negates a destructive use of physical violence. That the text so adamantly and incessantly demands its own status as text places it squarely against political action and those who use it as a basis for existence.

Goetz' work continues a typical trope of *Neue Innerlichkeit*, a literary movement of the 1970s which reacted against the political literature of the time: the protagonist's social alienation is precipitated by some personal catastrophe which invalidates the subjects

previous patterns of life and leaves him feeling external to the reality around him – this

new void is seen as the place in which freedom and rediscovery can occur. This passage

in *Kontrolliert* regarding the kidnapping of Schleyer functions in much the same way and

the narrator even calls it the "Ausgangspunkt" (96) for the whole work of the novel. This

sort of personal paradigm shift, when captured in written form, shows the power of

written language at work because one can see one's own transition between what one

thought and what one now thinks. Language and the logic that is bound to it portrays this

as a systematic movement and amelioration of opposites, not as a clash of contradictory

stances. The effects of this difficult experience are great and must still be found in this

opening section of the novel. The passage continues:

> .... der Staat ist die Geschichte, die plötzlich aufgestanden, hier steht, jetzt kontrolliert. Kann ich den Staat nicht fassen, hieß die Konsequenz Rekonstruktion der Konstruktion des staatlichen Gesamtgebäudebaus. Der Bau heißt Stammheim, ich bin Raspe. Ich saß im Raspe im Gefängnis, ich bin im Raspe in der Zelle, auf und ab, ich las mit seinen Augen Bücher, ich war der Baaderhaß. Da war die Grenze da. Ich war nicht Raspe. Was denkt der Raspe, unvorstellbar. Ich bin nicht berechtigt, mir was auszudenken. Habe ich den Raspe nicht in echt gesehen, und ich habe immer wieder nur die Raspefotos angeschaut, habe ich die Raspestimme nicht echt die Sprache sprechen hören, und ich habe Raspesprache nie wirklich gehört, weiß ich folglich über Raspe nichts, geschweige denn daß ich in Raspe Raspe wissen und ihn denken könnte. Raspe war Irrweg. War Irre, war Lähmung. Lähmung heißt mein Hirn ist tot. Ich bin nicht ich. Wer bin ich dann, dann bin ich nichts. Die Zeit ist fort, das dauert lange, leider noch nicht ewig, weil das Fleisch noch lebt. Von dort steht [17] irgendwann in irgendeiner Zelle irgendwo in mir die Zeit doch wieder von dem totsein auf. Ich bin nicht tot, ich bin nicht nichts, was aber dann. Ich bin jetzt plötzlich Unterschied zum nichts der Nichtzeit, die ich war. Ich bin was, was, gewesen, ich bin, der ich war. Wer war ich, fragt da schon die Antwort der Geschichte und beginnt sich zu erzählen. Folgendermaßen, die Sache war die, wir lagen auf offener See vor Anker, Windstille, Stille, Nacht, Firmament. Eh, Mann ich hab gerade was gehört,

das klingt echt gut, ein echtes Wort, das könnte man vielleicht zu was
benützen, vielleicht um raus zu kriegen wo man ist.... (16-17)

After the narrator's initial attempts to grasp the entirety of the State fail he takes on

a new task: "Rekonstruktion der Konstruktion des staatlichen Gesamtgebäudebaus." In

order to understand the current complexity of the State the narrator attempts to re-create

in writing the step by step formation of the State in order to get a better look at its

structure. Stammheim prison is, in keeping with the rhetoric of the 1970s, provocatively

used as a metaphor for the State; it is understood as a symbol of oppression and control.

The narrator's reconstruction takes the form of a sort of blueprint showing individual

parts and layers of the State-construct. This blueprint is still too difficult without one

element: a subject – an I – which acts as ground and relative position from which the

greater, exterior structures of the State can be perceived and comprehended. That is, the

narrator tries to move beyond the spacial and temporal bonds of individual perception

that make up subjectivity in order to write objectively and absolutely about the State.

Such a move proves to be too much and the narrator must then take the figure "Raspe" as

his proxy-subject in order to ground himself and his writing.

Raspe, the terrorist imprisoned in Stammheim, and how he relates to the narrator

will be discussed more in depth later in the chapter. For now it is important to understand

that "Raspe" is not the narrator. One could of course read this passage as an empathetic

detour into the life of an imprisoned terrorist as a tendentious statement about what is at

the core of the State – a terrorist. One could even read the line "Raspe war Irrweg" as a

realization that this terrorist was crazy and thus empathy for him was unfounded. More

plausible is the reading that the narrator realizes that any attempt to narrate as/inside of

Raspe was a mistake. Trying to write about anyone other than one's self results in artistic paralysis.

"Da war die Grenze," the narrator sees, "Ich war nicht Raspe." This border marks the new territory for the narrator: this territory is his own self, his *Ich*, the boundary of which is all that is *not* him, his relative *Nichtich*. In attempting to experience the world through the eyes of someone else (Raspe) the narrator is confronted with his own limitation. The resulting confusion is obvious in the grammar of the sentence, "Ich bin nicht ich." Having the Ich as both the subject and the predicate nominative in a negative sentence destroys the typical balance struck in opposing the *Ich* with its true negation, the *Nichtich*. The grammatical confusion extends into semantics – into the question, "Wer bin ich dann," in which the I is opposed to the empty interrogative "wer." This emptiness is confirmed in the second clause of the sentence, "dann bin ich nichts." The sentence rotates and mirrors itself from its central axis "dann" – "dann" being after Schleyer's kidnapping, after the narrator's sense of identity has been shaken.

This question of identity brings forth its own answer as a story: "Wer war ich, fragt da schon die Antwort der Geschichte und beginnt sich zu erzählen." Only as a story, aesthetically, can one answer this question. Literary works unify and ameliorate an individual's contradictions and conflicting thoughts, beliefs, and values. The starting point for the story is pointedly located out at sea, in biblical aether ("Firmament"), surrounded by an *Ur*-nothingness. In the silence of this place the narrator hears "ein echtes Wort." Language which has been removed from its normal sociopolitical context

and function, is finally seen for what it can and should do: help one find or even create one's Self.

6. Raspe war Irrweg: Narrating the Self and Others

Kontrolliert starts with a necessary restricting of the space in which it can exist; it starts with a turn inside the narrator's own subjectivity which is ruled solely by the linguistic underpinnings of his own thoughts: "Als ich dann jedoch den Staat, meiner Natur entsprechend, eher von der praktischen Seite her betrachten wollte, war ich sofort in noch viel kompliziertere Probleme der Konstruktion des Blickpunkts, staatsrealitätsentsprechend maximal vielzentrisch, rein verstrickt, bis diese Konstruktion natürlich kollabierte und mich mit sich begrub. So lag ich da. Das war der Ausgangspunkt" (96). This problematic *Blickpunkt* in-forms the entire novel. Each of the text's three parts is an experiment with how to portray a complex grouping of autonomous subjects without limiting and infringing upon these subjects' autonomy; the question is how to write *about* without trying to write *as* or *for* them. Before delving deeper into the complexities of viewpoint, the often-made conflation of the narrator with "Raspe" must be discussed and corrected, so that the complex relationship between the two can be made more clear.

Many critics identify the narrator as Raspe, while others see Raspe as the narrator's (or even Goetz'!) alter ego.[123] "Raspe" is to these critics not a character in a novel but the

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[123] Wittstock 76. None of the critics who mention this crossover between history and literary character point to the other obvious possible identity of "Raspe": the main figure of Goetz' novel <u>Hirn</u> (1986) is a psychiatrist named Raspe. The real Raspe, who joined the RAF, received a degree in sociology from the Freie Universtität Berlin.

RAF terrorist, Jan-Carl Raspe. The historical Raspe was a founding member of the RAF along with Andreas Baader, Ulrike Meinhof, and Gudrun Ensslin. They were all imprisoned in Stammheim prison until they committed suicide on October 18, 1977 after learning of the failed attempt to leverage their release by second generation members who had hijacked a Lufthansa jet.[124] Only four relatively short parts in the text even deal with the connection between Raspe and the narrator, two of which might seem like an identification of the narrator as Raspe. The first passage of the novel, discussed earlier in this chapter, and one other are both framed as realizations that "Identifikation mit einem Fremden war nicht möglich, das war der sogenannte Raspe Irrweg" (97). Twice, once in each of the first two sections of the novel, the narrator admittedly attempts to write as Raspe, but twice he rejects the possibility of writing as someone *else*. The development of how Raspe relates to the narrator parallels the development of narrative form in the novel.

The highly self-referential first section is the first step in the narrator's attempt to write the story of the year 1977. It is a grounding of that time inside of his own subjective experiences. The section is a thick and rather confusing cataloging of the narrator's every thought, emotion, fear, and paranoia. The whole section is an almost oppressively detailed and manic first-person account. It constantly evaluates exterior stimulus and the processing of that stimulus. The result is a partial self-creation: "Ich stand erschöpft am kalten Fenster. Ich war am Ende, aber noch nicht fertig.... Der Körper sank aufs alte Bett, zog Schlaf auf sich, der Schlaf die Bilder, Bilder Kraft. Die Lider flackerten. Leise,

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[124] Ulrike Meinhof had already committed suicide a year earlier.

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sagten die Wächter, er schläft" (106). The narrator has taken his creative act as far as possible and needs a sort of Faustian *Heilschlaf* to transition into the next level of action, the next mode of narration.

In this first section Raspe appears as quoted above: as a short-lived flight into another character that is quickly rejected. The first section's exhaustive self-surveillance allows for an expansion of the narrator's boundaries to encompass many diverse elements – many contradictory thoughts – but does finally find its limit, its *Nichtich*, in "Raspe," who is self-consciously denied entrance into the narrative space.

The second section of the novel, "Diktat," is made up of nine vignettes – one for each month of 1977 leading up to what is considered the "Deutscher Herbst." Radio reports of kidnappings blend into musings on the narrator's archive/*Zettelkasten* of information, which he uses for his dissertation. Whereas the first section was a focused, manic observation of the narrator's perceptions, the second section, which begins similarly, is accompanied by a more measured, traditional narrative voice. Each vignette offers insight into parts of the narrator's world – tainted by the terror and politics of the year 1977 – while it slowly shifts its intense self-reflexive position. The previously rigid border between external stimulus and internal processing of that stimulus becomes blurred; the narrator blends into his surroundings so that the dialectical process of self-creation – external stimulus is processed internally and then expressed outwardly – becomes less explicit.

In the eighth vignette something "violent" happens; the first person narrator is swapped for a third person omniscient narrator. At the same time, the place previously occupied by the narrator is taken over by Raspe:

> Und wirklich waren die beiden am ersten Abend derart übermütig und ausgelassen ins Reden geraten, daß ihre beiden Schädel die glänzenden stählernen Silberglocken hoch oben auf der Baustelle im Turm zu Babel waren, an deren Klang die Arbeiter sich stündlich freuten. Redend mit der Sprache erklärte sich buchstäblich sogar der Mensch. Man muß sich mal vorstellen, sagte einer, man ist ein Mensch. Jetzt geschieht etwas gewaltiges, man sieht selber als ein Mensch noch einen Mensch. Meine Güte, macht es da in einem, ein Mensch, das wird wohl noch ein Mensch sein wie man selbst, und man stutzt. (156)

"Die beiden" is clarified in the next paragraph as both "Raspe" and "Klar" who fall asleep after this long discussion. "Christian," the narrator's friend mentioned early in the text, here becomes "Klar" as the narrator becomes "Raspe." As "Christian" changes to "Klar" he invites comparison to Christian Klar, a second generation RAF terrorist, and he parallels the similar move taken by the narrator.[125] Both characters are, for a short time, transposed by their opposites, their *Nichtichs*. At the beginning of the vignette the discussion's momentum is intensified in the frictionless space of language. This momentum causes the course of the conversation to jump its track. What was originally a self-oriented, self-explanatory dialogue runs quickly into its own limit: the other. *Kontrolliert*, which was also originally a subjectively focused story, is confronted with the stories of others. The rest of the eighth vignette – two more pages – is rendered in this way. Raspe and Klar thus keep their positions at the center of the story.

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[125] The real-life terrorists Raspe and Klar could never have met in real life since Klar became involved with the RAF long after Raspe had been imprisoned.

This shift in narration is not a way to allow the narrator (or Goetz) to live out

certain fantasies as his alter ego, as has been claimed. Rather it is the narrator's first

attempt to let other voices appear in his text. After having focused much time and energy

on self-creation in the first section of the novel, the narrator makes the next formal move

possible: he creates a character that is a simple mirror of himself. "Raspe" the character is

not a terrorist or imprisoned RAF member. Raspe occupies the same space and has the

same experiences as the narrator but he is, of course, not exactly the narrator, he is the

narrator's artistic creation.

This is the first step towards self-detachment – that is, towards an ironic stance

regarding oneself. It is made possible by aesthetically distancing one's Self from oneself.

Doing this enhances one's ability for self-reflection by creating a better vantage point of

oneself. By filling a work of art – or as it is here, a character in a work of art – with parts

or all of one's thoughts, it is easier to look at these thoughts more critically. These new

critical insights return to help reform the original thoughts and close the loop of a process

that, continued eternally as Friedrich Schlegel envisioned *Progressive Universalpoesie*,

leads to a transcendence beyond one's limited ability to be self-critical.[126]

Giving Raspe a terrorist's name only separates the character further from his creator

who has already done nothing but distance himself from terrorism and violence. The

switch to a third person omniscient narrator pushes this creation even further away from

the narrator's self-absorption. In this first step to narrate about others, the narrator simply

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[126] Friedrich Schlegel, "Athenäums"-Fragmente und andere Schriften, Ed. Andreas Huyssen
(Stuttgart: Reclam, 2005) 53.

chooses an extreme step to gain the most distance from himself as possible: he chooses a violent terrorist as his proxy.

The third section, "Im Namen des Volkes," is a mixture of others' stories, each told from mixed narrative positions. From the wife of Schleyer's driver, shot dead during the kidnapping, to a BKA agent, forty-four voices fill the last third of the novel. Each story is a short snapshot of what certain characters are experiencing during the *Deutscher Herbst*. Each story is a fragment, visually separated from the others by a blank line. The last fragment of the novel pointedly changes voices from Raspe's back to the narrator's *Ich-Erzähler*, but Raspe is just one of many characters and not any more a part of the narrator than the others. The third section is the third step in creating a mode of narration that allows other voices to speak while not denying the subjective origin of the work. This self-confessed subjectivity is found in this section's form – collage. As will be discussed below, Goetz arrives at the same solution as many of his literary colleagues from the 1970s: collage is the best means of balancing the inherent subjectivity of literature with a desire to lend voice to those who might otherwise remain voiceless or to blatantly deny any claims to absolute truths. Collage allows for a simultaneous multiplicity of perspectives.

Kontrolliert has developed from "Ich erzähle hier die Geschichte des Jahres neunzehnhundert siebenundsiebzig" in the first section to "Systematisch erzählt sich hier die Geschichte des Jahres neunzehnhundert siebenundsiebzig," in the second to a complete lack of any such narrative guidance in the third section. This development is simultaneously artistic, personal, and political. On one level the novel takes on a collage

form that openly admits that it is constructed; it shows directly the cutting and pasting

action of the narrator. This is yet another element in which the narrator creates ironic

distance to his own work and to himself: he creates these other voices as other than

himself but never hides that they are his own creations. Indeed, each of the voices of the

third section are filled-out versions of concerns and thoughts that have been broached in

the first section; they are simply re-written in a way that distances them further from the

narrator. There is one more aspect of collage that is even more deeply rooted in

Kontrolliert: the aspect of language.

7. Die Sprache kontrolliert

> Das Gedächtnis, ein Sieb. 1968, eine Jahreszahl, in der sich das Imaginäre eingenistet hat. Ein Gewimmel von Reminiszenzen, Allegorien, Selbsttäuschungen, Verallgemeinerungen und Projektionen hat sich an die Stelle dessen gesetzt, was in diesem atemlosen Jahr passiert ist. Die Erfahrungen liegen begraben unter dem Misthaufen der Medien, des „Archivmaterials", der Podiumsdiskussion, der veteranenhaften Stilisierung einer Wirklichkeit, die unter der Hand unvorstellbar geworden ist. Es war nicht möglich, das alles zu "verstehen"[...] Die Widersprüche schrieen zum Himmel. Jeder Versuch, den Tumult intelligibel zu machen, endete notwendig im ideologischen Kauderwelsch. Die Erinnerung an das Jahr kann deshalb nur eine Form annehmen: die der Collage.[127]

In many ways 1968 is to Hans Magnus Enzensberger's generation what 1977 is to

Goetz' generation: a violent turning point in the current state of political and social affairs

which would mark the direction of the next decade. 1968 caused a loud uproar of social

and political protest – people such as Rudi Dutschke, one of the leaders of the German

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[127] Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Erinnerungen an einen Tumult. Zu einem Tagebuch aus dem Jahre 1968," Text + Kritik 49 (1985) 6-9, here 6. Quoted in: Ralf Bentz, ed., Protest!: Literatur um 1968 (Marbach am Neckar: Deutsche Schillergesellschaft, 2000).

student protest movement, or the APO – and politically-engaged artworks and texts – by artists such as Wolf Vostell and writers such as Heinrich Böll or Peter Rühmkorf. 1977, on the other hand, confirmed fears held by "Einzelgänger" such as Rolf Dieter Brinkmann and, indeed, Enzensberger who already in the 1970s expressed their own disappointments and even disgust regarding the student protest movement. 1977 marked the endpoint of the Red Decade of leftist/socialist activity and ushered in a more conservative era that avoided or was silent regarding the previous decade.

While Enzensberger only offers the "correct" artistic form necessary for portraying such politically and socially tumultuous times – collage – Goetz' narrator contrasts such a collage structure with other attempts to narrate history by using other narrative forms. He approaches the problem by first contrasting the effects of time on memory, on the one hand, and on more concrete objects, on the other hand:

> Wirkliche Bauten und wirkliche Orte geben aber einen Hinweis auf Verzerrungen der Arbeit der Erinnerung an dem Erinnerten. Folglich ist der Zugriff auf das wirkliche, das wirklich war, nicht fehlerfrei zu schaffen und deshalb abzuwehren, was heißt, Erinnerung heißt das erinnerte zerstören.… Wenn also Erinnerung nur schadhaft und defektuös die Bilder des erinnerten erinnert und dennoch willentlich unmöglich ganz zu unterdrücken und derart vergessen in sich ein geschlossen zu zu halten ist, so wäre umgekehrt totales Sehen einmal angeschauter Bilder zu jeder Zeit wünschenswert, um sich so nach vielen Jahren die mit schwarzer Schrift bedruckten weißen Seiten eines Buches vor die Augen hin zu stellen, um sie noch mal zu entziffern…. (29)

The case could be made that literature is a more stable medium than memory, that the unchangeable written word can better capture events and thus overcome memory's deterioration. But this is not at all what the narrator is promoting; this shows, in fact, that the nature of literature starts at a layer below the actual shapes of ink on paper. Dynamic

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and uncontrollable language always rules behind the facade of stable typography. By comparing memory to language, the narrator uncovers the unstable nature of history itself, which is made up of both artifacts (the physical medium) and the interpretation of those artifacts (the underlying reliance on language). But what does it mean exactly to place – as the novel does – both general history and subjectivity at the mercy of language?

The novel's narrator is, as Goetz demanded of literature in his review of children's books, *sprachbesessen.* He constantly examines the inner-workings of language and offers his every thought to scrutiny in language. Understanding the novel's insight into the power of language offers insight into the novel's function.

After the narrator's initial paralysis, he gives himself over to the flow of language which then guides him through the rest of the novel:

> Die Leere des Schreibtisches, die Ordnung der Kanten des handlichen Rechtecks des gottseidank ganz weißen noch nicht beschriebenen Papiers … hier doch noch einmal in der Sprache drin zu sitzen, und ganz und gar dem Vorgang zu gehören, in dem sie einem fest entgegen steht und sich als Führungsvorgang zeigt, hat mir natürlich auch den Übermut des Plans, rekonstruktiv den Staat der Zeit des Jahres hier zu konstruieren, als Unsinn vorgeführt. Ich bin hier weniger der Bauherr, mehr der Schreiber, der sich nur dem Material der Zeit in der Geschichte des von ihm erlebten unterwirft, aus der Erfahrung, daß das Leben klüger sich in wirklichkeit gelebt hat, als man als ein ich im nachhinein dann immer glaubt. (18)

It is the uncontrollable flow of language that controls the user and allows only certain actions inside its pre-given limitations. The narrator admits to his own subordinate role in language: his task is similar to a scribe who mostly re-works pre-given elements (both linguistic and historical circumstance); he is not all-powerful and his task is not to create from nothing. The novel often makes the difference however between written and spoken

language, with written language being better able to do what he asks of it: control. "Aber Gespräche entziehen sich," the narrator critiques, "anders als derartige Augentäuschungen, der *Kontrolle* eines zweiten Blicks. Unwiederbringlich verlaufen Gespräche gefesselt an die Zeit, die sie mit sich fort reißt und rasend schnell verschwinden läßt. Wenn man, was hast du gesagt, sagt, wiederholt der andere das eben gesagte meist schon mit anderen Worten, sicher aber mit der völlig neuen Melodie der Wiederholung" (57, emphasis mine).

The title of the novel, "Kontrolliert," is to be thought of like a bureaucratic rubber stamp, offering oversight approval. "Kontrolliert" first appears on the cover and title page as it might on a government file or on a crate of goods after passing under customs officials' inspecting eyes. Thoughts, emotions, potential actions are, when submitted to written language, examined and deemed acceptable. They become acceptable – even if their content is politically or socially egregious – because they submit themselves to examination and public inquiry. They are not acted upon in their own right, regardless of their general acceptability, and have, therefore, no violent and destructive results. Reasoned debate cannot act as a buffer between opposing parties if the sides do not submit themselves to the medium in which that debate can take place most completely: the written word.

It has already been established that the narrator chooses to write literature because he is the type of person who values thought over action and thus sees thinking as the means for controlling action: "Außerdem ist Umkehrung verkehrter Dinge ununterbrochen ohnehin die Tat des denkens, dem jegliche verkehrte Tatsache von

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Fleisch und Leben, wie alles sonst, ein zusätzlicher Reichtum ist von zusätzlichem

Material, das nur korrekt zu kontrollieren ist. Dazu ist sowas wie Kontaktsperre ganz

sicher ideal" (25). After the kidnapping of Schleyer, the RAF terrorists in Stammheim

prison were put under "Kontaktsperre," a practice that denied the prisoners contact with

each other, the outside world, or even their own lawyers. These measures were deemed

necessary because it was believed that the imprisoned terrorists were coordinating attacks

from inside the prison. "Kontaktsperre" is how the narrator renames the necessarily

silent, private work of writing: locked away in his windowless monad of a cell, the

narrator pours physical, "real world" experiences and action into the filter of language in

order to test and understand them.

8. Conclusion

The majority of existing critical examinations of Rainald Goetz' *Kontrolliert*

position it as a tendentious, even "terrorist" novel that seeks to use literature as a medium

for expressing political ideas or contemplate terrorism as an alternative to existing modes

of political action. Both the frenetic tone and pace of the narrative, when coupled with

quotations of aggressive and violent language typical of radicals from the 1960s and

1970s, make the text at least edgy and controversial – but this only inside the limits of

traditional literature. *Kontrolliert* is just one of many Goetzian novels, which are

concerned with "Das einfache wahre Abschreiben von Welt."[128] It is another example of

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[128] From Goetz' text *Hirn*, quoted in Kühn, 28.

what happens when one submits one's thoughts to the strictures and structures of language – when one commits to literature as the major medium of being in the world.

Kontrolliert is a self-reflexive novel; it examines how literature is created and how subjectivity is both the necessary precondition for and also result of literary production. As the narrator explains it, literature is always and only thinking and transcribing an individual's perceptions, thoughts, and desires. The novel defends the bourgeois concept of individual autonomy, the border of which must be continually controlled, protected, and reformed in the face of new experience. Transgression against the individual is what makes terrorism unacceptable for the narrator:

> Das Problem, an dem die ganze raf zerbricht, ist weder der Mercedes, noch der Buback, sondern sein Fahrer, Wolfgang Göbel, so ging die Rechnung hier ganz klar, da halfen keine Worte revolutionärer Herrlichkeit und Härte. […] Für jedes Versteck hieß es irgendwann, das Spiel ist aus, weil es irgendwann nicht weitergeht, und jedes Ende das extremste Nichtversteck ist. […] Das sicherste Versteck war immer noch ein ich. Ich war aufgestanden und ging im Zimmer hin und her, vorwärts und zurück. (139)

Terrorist actions, as described in *Kontrolliert,* are directly opposed to literary production and the values of current society, which formed with and against modern literature. The "safest hiding place" is in a created self, in a world that is not predicated on direct action in the world, but in a world that is guided by thought, language, and reason.

The narrator sees that the only limit of one's subjective experiencing of oneself is found in the lack of a built-in ability that allows one to look back over one's life and see that it was lived correctly. He fears that it might be impossible to know if something "krankhaft"(44) – sickly – might be guiding one's life and that there must be an external source of self-knowledge to monitor oneself. This solution is found in literature: by

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submitting one's life to the oversight of written language, one sublimates action into thought and makes it available to the public sphere while also making oneself visible to oneself and thus easier to engage critically.

In this regard, *Kontrolliert* is a text about the seriousness of literature as the best opposition to violence and terrorism, to sick or incomplete ways of thinking. It valorizes and explains the necessity of creating a subjective stance vis-a-vis the world. It reminds every reader that, "[s]olange die Patrone schreibt, nicht schießt, die Tinte nicht versiegt, bin ich nicht tot" (151).

CHAPTER IV

SELBSTGESPRÄCHE: TERRORISM AS AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE IN GEORG KLEIN'S *LIBIDISSI*

On the surface, Georg Klein's *Libidissi* is a spy novel set in a terror-ridden city of the same name somewhere in an unspecified East or South.[129] The narrative position alternates between the main character, the German undercover agent Spaik, who is being hunted by the other narrators, two killers from his own agency who have been sent to liquidate this once-prolific source of information. As Spaik is pursued, the city prepares itself for the impending terrorist act that will mark the ninth anniversary of the televised suicide of the Great Gahis, the revolutionary prophet who briefly took control of the city after the departure of the colonial forces.

When it was published in 1998, Klein's debut novel received much critical attention, earning him both the Brüder-Grimm-Preis in 1999 and the Ingeborg-Bachmann-Preis in 2000, two of Germany's most prestigious literature awards; Klein has since published three more novels as well as two collections of *Erzählungen*.[130]

The novel is marked by a strong contrast between its playful pop-like plot and its powerful, demanding language. This contrast caused reviewers to search for a post-modern mix of inspiration from high and low culture when attempting to capture the complexity of the book in sound-bite-sized descriptions: "Ein Roman zwischen Kafka

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[129] Georg Klein, <u>Libidissi</u> (Berlin: Alexander Fest Verlag, 1998). Further references to this edition are given in parenthetical citations.

[130] Georg Klein, <u>Barbar Rosa</u> (Berlin: Alexander Fest Verlag, 2001), <u>Die Sonne scheint uns</u> (Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 2004), <u>Sünde, Güte, Blitz</u> (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2007), <u>Anrufung des Blinden Fisches</u> (Berlin: Alexander Fest Verlag, 1999) and <u>Von den Deutschen</u> (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2002).

und Grisham: rätselhaft und spannend."[131] In fact, *Libidissi* uses elements of spy and crime genres, such as the withholding and revealing of truths or the search for identity, to explore the role of storytelling and literature in the late twentieth century. On the one hand, the writing of literature functions much as it has for over two hundred years: as the means with which one forms a coherent sense of self out of a chaotic totality. On the other hand, it is shown that by telling the right story that will fool an audience, the creator of literature can hide to others and even repress for oneself painful and ugly truths that one would rather forget.

1. Research on *Libidissi*

While little has been published on *Libidissi,* two of the three major articles examine what is seen as the artistic portrayal of post-colonial issues. The term "postcolonialism" is used in different ways: it is, on the one hand, meant to denote both the time period after the colonial era and the social, political, cultural, and economic practices that formed in response and opposition to colonialism and imperialism. On the other hand, "postcolonialism" refers to a constellation of theories in literature, film, and political science that focuses on the cultural legacy of colonial rule. The scope of post-colonial studies, "ranges from an emphasis on the discursive and material effects of the historical fact of imperialism to an incorporation of cultural difference and marginality into a form of synchronic post-modernism."[132] Edward Said's *Orientalism*, in which he analyzes

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[131] "Georg Klein's *Libidissi*," <u>Stern</u> (1998), 134.

[132] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, <u>Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies</u> (London and New York: Routledge, 1998) 2.

Western discourse and the misrepresentation of the non-western world ("the Orient"), is often considered the founding work of postcolonial theory.[133]

Libidissi offers complex fodder for the critic interested in Libidissi as a space of decolonization and the effects this has on concepts of identity. In this regard, Matthias Fiedler investigates hybridity, a term which "commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization. As used in horticulture, the term refers to the cross-breeding of two species by grafting or cross-pollination to form a third, 'hybrid' species."[134] His article focuses on the interrelationship of identity and violence in the novel, which, for him, seeks to "investigate and deconstruct the inherent problems and multiple layers of identity and violence in a postcolonial setting."[135] Fiedler sees the usefulness of the espionage genre which "is always centred on the question of concealing and revealing the identity of the protagonists"; for him the novel is a "representation of the challenging task of defining one's identity between the poles of the Self and the Other."[136]

There are important aspects of both identity and hybridity that will play a role in the following analysis of the text. For example, in Spaik's written German, he has picked-up a grammatical construct from the city's *lingua franca*, Piddi-Piddi, which is a sort of pidgin English. In Piddi-Piddi there is no difference between the first-person singular and plural, between 'I' and 'we.' This grammatically-reflected decline of the individual's

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[133] Edward Said, <u>Orientalism</u> (New York: Vintage, 1978).

[134] Ashcroft 118.

[135] Matthias Fiedler, "Identity and Violence in Georg Klein's novel *Libidissi*," <u>Violence, Culture and Identity: Essays on German and Austrian Literature, Politics and Society</u>, ed. Helen Chambers (New York: Peter Lang, 2006) 389-99, here 391.

[136] Ibid.

sense of self has infiltrated Spaik's German such that he now cannot say 'Ich' but must choose a hybrid form between German and Piddi-Piddi: "Ich=Spaik." This kind of 'linguistic' personality disorder or disruption will prove to be an important clue for understanding the real, hidden story of *Libidissi*.

Similarly, the eleven chapters told from the killers' point of view take the form of a narration by one partner to the other partner. The narrating killer always speaks directly to a "du" or includes that "du" in a "wir." It has been suggested by Stefan Willer that this grammatical peculiarity is a sign that the killers have also taken on the linguistic (and resulting ideological) rules of Piddi-Piddi. But the use of "wir" begins before the killers even land in the city and therefore should also be understood as an inclusion of the reader as accomplice in the hunt for Spaik and the investigation of Libidissi.

Spaik's first act of violence portrayed in the novel, killing an old bathroom attendant who insulted him, is for Fiedler the way in which Spaik frees himself from the unceasing "tension between hybridity and diffusion" of the post-colonial setting. For Fiedler, this one act allows Spaik to take control of the way the city damages his sense of self. Fiedler sees the violent political situation in Libidissi (specifically the Gahists' initial power grab) as a structural parallel to Spaik's own internal complexities: "It is precisely this narrative framework of the violent seizure of power of a 'silenced centre' that mirrors Spaik's personal development."[137] But the novel deals at least equally with the city as with the figure, Spaik, who, as the main narrator, is the main source (and filter) of information about the city. To push Libidissi into the background – as Fiedler does – is to

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[137] Fiedler 393.

miss the fact that Spaik's story drastically manipulates any "real" outside of itself, outside of Spaik's tale. Libidissi seems to be merely the backdrop because Spaik is repressing the extent of its infiltration into his life and mind. One of the many things Spaik never expresses directly is the fact that he has murdered several people in the boarded-up basement of the city's *Goethe Institut*; he has used this surrogate center of German culture as a secret base of operations for his spying and murdering. In Libidissi institutions of culture – the *Goethe Institut* or even the very writing act that forms the novel – are used to cover-up the results and causes of terror. These issues will be discussed in greater detail below.

Stuart Taberner also focuses on the novel's portrayal of the post-colonial concept of hybridity and argues that *Libidissi* only thematically explores the "culture clash between east and west" which he finds reminiscent of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.[138] The novel is, however, "about ideas rather than any particular region. Libidissi is set both nowhere and everywhere.… [It] has less to do with any cultural divide between west and east than with the contradictions within the western modes of thought."[139]

For Taberner, *Libidissi* shows a new path for German literature – a hybrid identity that offers new possibilities for post-unification authors. Taberner hopes to have found an alternative to the "ostensible choice between a revived modernism drawing on German Romanticism and nineteenth-century European aestheticism and an Anglo-American

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[138] Stuart Taberner, "A New Modernism or 'Neue Lesbarkeit'?: Hybridity in Georg Klein's *Libidissi*," <u>German Life and Letters</u> 55:2 (2002) 137-148, here 141.

[139] Ibid. 143.

'Neue Lesbarkeit.'"[140] While the novel is surely both very readable and a study of

German identity, Taberner unfortunately stops short of a deeper textual analysis because

of his primary focus on finding new solutions to old literary problems. The result would

be the realization that the work's readability and skillful storytelling are its enticing bait

that lure the reader into its narrative trap. In fact, to conclude that *Libidissi* is in any way

an easy or pleasant text is to admit that one has been duped by a wily narrator who is

hiding his connections to terrorism as well as his own acts of violence.

Stefan Willer summarizes Klein's literary pursuits as a self-reflexive occupation

with "Formen und Grenzen symbolischer Repräsentation"; his texts are marked by the

"Beschäftigung mit ihrer eigenen Medialität, also ihrer Gemachtheit aus sprachlichen

Zeichen."[141] Willer's analysis impressively discusses the role of media in the novel,

especially the *Rohrpostsystem*, which is central to both the story and the main character.

In regards to both the *Rohrpostsystem* and Spaik's reports to his agency, Willer believes

that Klein's writing self-reflexively emphasizes the idea that media are not used for

imparting information to others but for self-expression and self-examination. Spaik is

understood here as a "versteckter Poet" whose spy reports are "übersemiotisiert": Spaik's

reports are not just objectively factual but a medium for Spaik's own expression.[142] Such

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[140] Taberner positions these two extremes as the options available to the contemporary author. His concept of revived modernism originates with Ulrich Greiner and Frank Schirrmacher's *Ablehnung* of post-war fiction as – to quote Greiner – "Gesinnungsästhetik." The other extreme, the Americanized "Neue Lesbarkeit," stems from new demands by writers and critics (including Uwe Wittstock) who want German literature to stress readability and story-telling. See Taberner. 137-139. See also: Ulrich Greiner, "Mangel an Feingefühl," Die Zeit 01 June 1990; Ulrich Greiner, "Die deutsche Gesinnungästhetik," Die Zeit 09 Novemeber 1990; Frank Schirrmacher, "Abschied von der Literatur der Bundesrepublik," Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 02 October 1990: LI, 2.

[141] Stefan Willer, "Rohrpostsendungen: Zeichen und Medien in der Prosa Georg Kleins," Weimarer Beiträge 48 (2002) 113-26, here 115 and 113, respectively.

[142] Ibid. 122.

a use of his reports undermines the structure of the objective, communicative *Nachrichtendienst*, and this is the reason Willer gives for why Spaik is to be killed.

Willer is right to discuss both the novel's (self-)reflection on mediation as well as Spaik's problematic role as a medium, because Klein's work – like the other two novels discussed in this study – is a reflexive novel, a work of metafiction. But *Libidissi* is slightly different in that the greater meaning of the novel – its meta-level – is not found in such playful tips of the hat to close-reading critics who are searching for more traditional self-reflexive notions. The *higher* level of meaning – what will be discussed as the meta-level below – is found in what Spaik represses: the truth of the text is hidden by the surface "truth" of the narrative. Spaik's story is meant to unify and thereby cover-up the ugly, unbearable "reality" that is Spaik's life and work in Libidissi. The self-reflexive hints picked-up on by Willer are meant to fool even the best reader into believing that the story is completely honest and aware of its own status as a constructed text.

The important distinction not discussed in existing research on *Libidissi* is the fact that Spaik is a *Western* spy who has willingly immersed himself in Libidissi's complexities. He has undergone mental restructuring in order to study Libidissi's violent (not "silent") center – the Gahists. Spaik is not – as Willer and Taberner suggest – an example of a native who must reconfigure a sense of identity that has been unsettled in a decolonizing space. Rather, Spaik has had to reform his psychic world in order to infiltrate Libidissi and survive as a foreign spy. While Spaik and Libidissi are made up of similar constituent parts (a mixture of West and East), their configurations and the reasons for these configurations are very different. Spaik is then, generally, useful for

understanding how the *Western* mind adapts in a post-colonial world that is hostile to its very existence. However, his actual assignment and the exact object of his work is the Gahist terrorist group and their actions; this is what lies at the core of Spaik's story, not the interesting but artfully-distracting post-colonial issues.

To be clear, *Libidissi* has a definite use factor for those interested in post-colonial issues because of its portrayal thereof: as it explores Spaik's world, the novel deals in an almost textbook manner with the "historical phenomenon of colonialism with its range of material practices and effects" as Ashcroft defines the discipline; this is seen in the political, cultural, and linguistic experiences of both the indigenous peoples and the "settler/invader" (represented by Spaik).[143] But the novel and its narrator Spaik do not discuss post-colonial issues in order to offer insight into the difficulties of decolonized space. Rather, post-colonial theories are tools that Spaik uses to understand his native enemies so that he can better defeat them. Spaik is not a noble political scientist or anthropologist – as his narrative seems to want to suggest – but a ruthless killer who has so immersed himself in his investigation of terrorists that he has become one himself.

Before moving on to the novel, another possible interpretive approach must be discussed and then unveiled as another trap set by the text. This specific trap is meant for the scholar interested in terrorism in literary texts.

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[143] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, The Post-Colonial Studies Reader (London and New York: Routledge, 1995) 4. One must add that the effects are cultural and psychological as well.

Terrorism as Violent Communication

A generally agreed-upon definition of modern terrorism has yet been written; all attempts to define this complex phenomenon end in failure. Each definition put forth by scholars or politicians inevitably includes or excludes groups or acts that are contentious to their opponents. The simplified adage that "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter" points to the root of the problem in personal and political principles. The group that succeeds in attaching the pejorative term "terrorists" to its opponents, legitimates its own ideology as that which is accepted by a majority and effectively displaces the other group to the fringe. Because it is so problematic to define terrorism based on an evaluation of legitimacy, one can best define modern terrorism formally, beyond typical and irresolvable questions of political goals. The main formal element necessary for a "successful" terrorist act is the use of a medium.

Bruce Hoffman writes that, "Terrorism is as much about the threat of violence as the violent act itself and, accordingly, is deliberately conceived to have far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the actual target of the act among a wider, watching, 'target' audience."[144] The connection between the actual victim and the more important "target" audience is a medium. Passed-on and amplified in media, the terrorist violence succeeds in reaching the world stage. Such political science and media-critical studies of terrorism and the media are generally based upon the idea that without mass media there can be no terrorism. In other words, medial amplification is that which separates common acts of violence from modern acts of terrorism that seek to influence international public

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[144] Bruce Hoffman, Inside Terrorism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 38.

opinion. It follows that terrorism – as the "target audience" experiences it – is always already mediated; terrorism and its medium cannot be separated.

In *Libidissi,* this same sort of economy of violence can be mapped onto the Gahists; all of the major Gahist attacks have been orchestrated for media consumption. The end of the novel, which portrays an attack on the international airport of Libidissi, takes such an understanding of the role of media to an extreme:

> Schon unmittelbar vor Schlachtbeginn hatte die Führung der Gahisten eine Satellitenverbindung hergestellt, und mit den ersten Schüssen wurden die ersten Fernsehaufnahmen in die weltweiten Netzwerke eingespeist. Von den Angreifern waren Kameraleute in die vorderen Kampfreihen geschleust worden, die dort ohne Rücksicht auf Leib und Leben bestes Bildmaterial produzierten. Die Kassetten kamen über Botenstaffeln zu den getarnten Übertragungswagen, und wenig später sendete eine in einem erbeuteten Panzer installierte Funkkamera sogar absolut live. (191-2)

Journalists and their cameramen are usually praised for bringing to their audience images of their story without regard to life and limb. In a world of global communication that allows easier access for smaller groups to centralized media, the Gahists have bypassed large corporate news entities and formed an avant-garde group from their rank and file who have replaced cannons with cameras.

Alex Schmid and Janny de Graaf define terrorism more narrowly "as a violent communication strategy. There is a sender, the terrorist, a message generator, the victim, and a receiver, the enemy and/ or public."[145] For them modern terrorism "has to be explained in relation to the prevailing information order and the news values that are paramount within this order" and that the source of most terrorist acts "can be explained

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[145] Alex P. Schmid and Janny de Graaf, <u>Violence as Communication: Insurgent Terrorism and the Western News Media</u> (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1983) 15.

in terms of a felt lack of access to communication by ordinary means."[146] This viewpoint, which is widely-accepted for good reason, focuses on terrorists' attempts to gain access to media in order to express a demand or draw attention to their cause. There is also a more complex version that one can see with the example of Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda, who are fighting to remove the influence of Western powers (especially the USA) from their homeland. This influence is, however, not just material in nature (U.S. military and economic presence), but has to do with the influence of Western ideas and the dominance of Western media.[147] These media are notoriously unidirectional – allowing feedback mostly only in economic terms – and this perceived domination of the mental landscapes of an autonomous people is understandably problematic for many. Terrorist acts are thus an attempt to hijack the prevailing medium, to become senders and not just receivers in the communication process.

One possible interpretive approach to *Libidissi* would be to exam the several passages that directly portray terrorism and the connections between terrorism and media of various sorts. This would add an insightful media theory aspect to the tack taken by Houen, for example, who uses literature to understand terrorism.[148] But beyond these more traditional concerns about how terrorism is disseminated in media, the novel intensely examines two different aspects of the terror/medium/literature relationship, which will be examined in more depth below.

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[146] Ibid. pgs. 175 and 180.

[147] See Marc Sageman, Understanding Terror Networks (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

[148] Alex Houen, Terrorism and Modern Literature, from Joseph Conrad to Ciaran Carson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

First, as the novel examines how terrorist acts originate and are perceived, general aesthetic faculties are implicated – not just the medium that transports the experience of violence. This aspect can be seen in how Spaik learns to preempt the Gahists' attacks: Spaik is a 'good' spy because he is able to empathetically mimic how the Gahists analyze and interpret the Great Gahis' video-prayers so that he can evoke what their next terrorist act should be. Spaik's undercover work has helped him attain the correct horizon of expectation that enables him to read the Great Gahis' videos in the same way as the video-artist's terrorist followers.

The second important aspect discussed in the novel concerns the connection between the (cover-up) story told by *Libidissi* and the terrorism repressed by this story. That is to say that literature here acts as a means for hiding the damaging effects of terrorism; literature acts as both a therapeutic tool for trauma management and as a manipulative re-description of one's past crimes and transgression. Klein's work is different than the works of Goetz and Tellkamp because its direct thematization of terrorism in the novel's plot is a trap that hides the more important terrorism, which functions as a *sub*text, as the foundation of the whole story.

The next section will offer an overview of who this terrorist group is and why it formed around its leader, the Great Gahis.

2. Der Große Gahis und seine Jünger

The Great Gahis is the pseudo-religious "Volksdichter und Prophet der Revolution" who has completely changed Libidissi (91). While the Western colonizing forces still

ruled the surface of the city, the Gahists grew underground. Upon the departure of the Westerners, the Great Gahis took control of the city for three years, which is the generally-accepted length of Jesus Christ's active ministry. This allusion is strengthened by the name given to the Gahis' followers: "seine Jünger," which is the name also used for Jesus' apostles.

The Gahists use elements from the Great Gahis' life for symbols of devotion and commitment to the cause. For example the *Kuud*, the white wool traditional sheepherder and medieval pilgrim garb, is worn by Gahist fundamentalists who have made the pilgrimage to the northern salt seas where the imprisoned Great Gahis escaped to join his followers in order to start the revolution: "Erst als sich die kleine Schar vollständig um ihm versammelt hatte, soll er die ins Gesicht gezogene Kapuze zurückgeschlagen und sich mit der berühmten Sentenz über das Salz in der Wunde des Volkes zu erkennen gegeben haben" (175). During his third year of rule, the Great Gahis committed suicide on camera while giving a sermon on the meaning of life. Shortly after his suicide, almost all the Gahis-Jünger committed mass-suicide at an internationally-televised soccer match, which cast Libidissi into a political chaos made-up of smaller Gahist cells.

The Great Gahis' collected works are a series of nine video tapes – "Video-Gesänge" – in which he offers "seine visionären Erzählgedichte" (90).[149] These videos are always discussed in a way that they seem to be both prophetic/religious and artistic. The videos have acted as a sort of *Urtext* for his followers; they been returned to again and again when the group seeks to undertake another campaign and action.

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[149] Lorenz Jäger has already drawn a parallel between the Great Gahis and another "Videokünstler", Osama bin Laden. See: Lorenz Jäger, "Propheten auf Video: Bin Laden und Der Grosse Gahis," <u>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</u> 14 Dec. 2001: Feuilleton 54.

For example, the Gahists led a "Reinheitskampagne" during which the consumption

of *Suleika*, a native alcoholic beverage made of fermented mare's milk, was forbidden.

The open consumption of *Suleika* was punishable by the removal of the hand that touched

the bottle. During this time the pneumatic mail system left by the colonial powers was

converted for distributing bootleg *Suleika*, since the bottles fit perfectly in the tubes.

The Gahists carried out this purity campaign because of their interpretation of a

certain video-prayer, which contains "ein emphatisches Lob dieser ihm [dem Kuud, M.

L.] zweckfreie Reinheit bedeutenden Farbe. In der Blütezeit des Gahismus sei das weiße

Gewand nur für die beiden heiligen Handlungen, für die Andacht oder für den Kampf,

angelegt worden. So habe es einst auch das Fernsehen weltweit bekannt gemacht: als

blutbespritztes Kampfkleid der Stoßtrupps und Selbstmordkommandos oder als weißen

Fleck im weißen Feld der schweigend aneinandergereihten Beter" (143). This evaluation

of the white *Kuud* has both aesthetic ("zweckfrei") and racial ("Reinheit") undertones.

Indeed, Dr. Zinally, an American "Rassenkundler" and Spaik's doctor, is an admirer

of the prophet; like the Gahists, he also interprets the prophetic poems in relation to his

own beliefs, which are mostly concerned with the purity of races. He respects the

Volksdichter, "Da das Werk des Großen Gahis selbst, vor allem Das Blöken Des Widders,

der Dritte Gesang des Propheten, nicht weit von einer handfesten Rassenlehre in der

Nachfolge Darwins entfernt sei" (91). In many ways Zinally personifies a constellation of

issues – *Volksdichtung*, purity, and race – that makes it easy to connect him to the

National Socialists of Germany. As a logical extension of this one could make a

connection between the National Socialists and other fundamentalist movements such as

the Gahists. Indeed, the text encourages this when, on the final page of the novel, Zinally arrives at the apartment of a severely injured Spaik and seems to unveil himself as a Nazi:

> Zinally stellt seine Tasche auf den Boden. Er wirft sich in Positur und grüßt seinen Patienten, ohne ein Wort, nur mit erhobenem Arm. Die einfache Geste des Amerikaners im Exil rührt Spaik, und in einem Anflug weichen Humors hebt er selbst den rechten Arm, so hoch er kann. So gibt Spaik dem wackeren Mediziner, dem wohl letzten Rassisten reinsten Wassers, dem Verehrer des Gahis, den gleichen Gruß zurück und haucht jenes altertümelnde einsilbige deutsche Grußwort, das uns – wäre es der historischen Bosheit wieder entrissen – wie kein zweites mit dem Leben in Einklang zu setzen verstünde. (199)

Such enticing but inevitably misleading passages fill the pages of *Libidissi*. But to follow them too far is to get caught in the novel's playful ploys. It is surely important to note the connections between (post)colonial violence and fascist thought or to try and think about how the Gahists' ideology is merely a mirror of the same elitist ideology that enslaved them under German colonial rule. The interpretation of the unspoken "Heil!" could easily lead the reader down the current path that understands Spaik as a mentally-ill spy, who needs some sort of cure for the damage caused by his time the city.

The important aspect of the character of Zinally is that he offers a second example of how the Great Gahis' video-prayers are used for the interpreter's own goals. Like any open text, the Great Gahis' prayers are necessarily available for interpretation; the reader must construct the text's meaning by filling in its gaps with meaning or, as Wolfgang Iser writes: "Im Lesen erfolgt eine Verarbeitung des Textes, die sich durch bestimmte Inanspruchnahmen menschlicher Vermögen realisiert. Wirkung ist daher weder ausschließlich im Text noch ausschließlich im Leserverhalten zu fassen; der Text ist ein

Wirkungspotential, das im Lesevorgang aktualisiert wird."[150] Spaik is in Libidissi to

prevent future terrorist attacks. He is only able to do this by examining the Gahist videos.

That is, he prevents the acts by following the same process of interpretation undertaken

by the terrorists. The problem is that the German spy Spaik comes from a very different

place than the terrorists of Libidissi; this is a problem because they bring quite different

sets of experiences and prejudices to the act of "reading" the *Videogesänge* – Spaik and

the Libidissi natives have very different horizons of expectations. This term originates

with Hans-Robert Jauß to designate the set of expectations the reader brings to a text that

will or will not be met. This horizon is constantly in flux and dependent upon the readers

sociopolitical surroundings.[151] This is why the city and all its unique culture and history

are given such a large roll in Spaik's story. He must be immersed in the city's culture

because the ability to decode and understand signification comes from a proficiency with

both a sign system and with a larger cultural archive of codes. By adjusting his horizon of

expectations, Spaik is able to read these video-texts in the same way as the remaining

Gahists; this adjustment takes place with his experience of the city.

3. Libidissi: "die Stadt"

A typical aspect of the undercover agent genre has the reader receive privileged

access to the object of investigation through the knowing eyes of the agent. In *Libidissi*

the city is Spaik's second "target." His spy agency, but also the other readers of the novel,

are given a voyeuristic glimpse of the harsh realities of daily life in this foreign city.

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[150] Wolgang Iser, Der Akt des Lesens: Theorie ästhetischer Wirkung (München: Fink, 1976) 36.
[151] See: Hans-Robert Jauß, Literaturgeschichte als Provokation (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970).

Because Libidissi is so foreign to both the reader and to the novel's German killer-characters that extensive description is required to even move through the city in order to make any sense of it. The novel has little plot other than the killers' slow, almost coincidental hunt for Spaik while the bulk of the book is formed out of an obsessive descriptive impulse on the part of all the narrators.

In half of the novel's chapters Spaik acts as the reader's guide through these strange streets; he constantly offers long-winded descriptions of everything from *Suleika* to the *Kuud*. But the sheer volume of Spaik's descriptions, taken over the course of the novel, becomes increasingly suspicious as the reader becomes aware of Spaik's omissions. In the other half of the book, narrated by the pair of killers sent to "liquidate" Spaik, almost all encounters with the unknown elements of the city are explained away based on information received in reports from the killers' agency in Germany. Of course, these reports must have been written by Spaik, the German spy who has been in the city the longest. This is to say that Libidissi and its inhabitants are only knowable as Spaik has constructed them. He has lived here and woven his subjective experiences of the city's foreignness into a comprehensible (his)story.

The only new information offered by the pair of killers is about Spaik himself; they inform the reader about the very early stages of his stay in the city and, in the final scenes, literally pull back the curtain on the hidden structure of what is actually Spaik's split personality. Only this new and opposing information offered by the killers casts any doubt on Spaik's narrative construct.

The name "Libidissi" appears only once in the novel because, as a signifier, it is too vague, too totalizing to correctly identify the complex nature of the city's internal intricacies. The novel's focal length is always set a few steps deeper to emphasize the city's various sections, each reserved for a different subset of the city's society. The proximity of these racially and ideologically remote groups creates a tension that continues the strain that existed as the colonizing forces were in control of the natives' city. In order to understand Libidissi, one must understand the city's difficult colonial past and the attempts by the current mixed population to unify and clarify these opposing forces.

Libidissi lies at the border of the old and the new, the West and East (or South); it is positioned between the former colonial powers and the old colonies. Some critics see similarities in its name to Tbilisi, Georgia though it could just as easily be located in Northern Africa, or the Middle East, closer to more widely-known post-colonial tensions.[152] Just how the city has been shaped by its liminal position is unclear – literally. The two killers sent to kill Spaik inform the reader that there are no objective, global (satellite) images of Libidissi: "Die Auswertung von Satellitenaufnahmen befinde sich leider noch im Anfangsstadium. Die Dunstglocke über dem Stadtgebiet und extreme Wolkenbildung zwischen dem Meer und Gebirge minderten die Aufnahmequalität" (78). The city remains hidden to the searching, empirical eye and its configuration can only be patched together from subjective, eyewitness accounts.

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[152] Jochen Jung places it "irgendwo zwischen Tanger und Beirut, Tripolis und Bagdad." See: Jochen Jung, "Wonach Der Hahn Kräht," Die Zeit 14 Jan. 1999: Kultur 43.

Before leaving Europe the killers are offered a diagram of the city most likely

drawn by Spaik. The city's layout has grown organically as a result of its shifting

historical influences, each era leaving its mark on the city. The narrating killer tells his

partner:

> Dir hatte der seltsame Verlauf des Boulevards Der Meinungsfreiheit sofort
> wie etwas Naturgegebenes eingeleuchtet. Als offene Schlinge umfaßt sein
> südliches Ende das Ghetto Der Großen Prophezeiung, das in den
> städtischen Dialekten und auch auf Piddi-Piddi Goto genannt wird. Seit
> dem Abzug der Fremdmacht ist es ein für Ausländer verbotenes Viertel.
> Aber in verführerischer Paradoxie haben sich ausgerechnet in der einzigen
> Parallelstraße, die zwischen dem Boulevard und dem Goto verläuft, die
> Bordelle, die Tanz- und Sauna-Clubs angesiedelt. Dieser
> Vergnügungbezirk bildet eine dünne, aber kilometerlange Pufferzone
> zwischen der Hauptschlagader der Stadt und dem verbotenen Viertel. (78)

The city is split into two main and opposing sections, matching its fractured identity. The

Freedom of Opinion Boulevard runs through the area of the city which acted as the main

neighborhood for the former colonial attendants and which now is the last section in

which foreigners are able to live in relative safety from elements of the recently

radicalized city. This section is the remnant of the city's colonial past.

Geographically parallel – but ideologically opposed – to the Freedom of Opinion

Boulevard, lies a section, the Goto, which has become sacred to the new fundamentalist

force; it is the city's medieval, historical core. The Goto has been shrouded in

impenetrable darkness for the last few years since an interpretation of one of the Great

Gahis' sermon-songs showed that the prophet seems to forbid electric lights there: "Die

radikal Wortgläubigen unter den in viele Fraktionen zerfallenen Gahisten lesen aus

Andeutungen in der letzten Videopredigt des Propheten ein striktes Verbot nächtlichen

Lampenscheins im Umkreis heiliger Orte heraus" (132). This ancient area, which may

not be entered by foreigners, has been given new significance by the Gahists, who seek to

found their beliefs on a more removed era of the city's history. The Gahists can thus be

called fundamentalists because they base their new identity on a material reality (their

"fundament"), the Goto, which is a hold-over from pre-colonial times. Of course, the

novel's description of the Gahists simultaneously condemns the "radical believers of the

word," thus implicating the act of uncritical writing and reading in the creation of such a

fundamentalist worldview.

Between these two sections of the city – each representing a certain value system –

lies the "pleasure" or red-light district. This thin strip separates the other two sections,

keeping them safely apart. It is unclear whether the area is a buffer – made of a different

material that separates the two sections – or the connective tissue shared by both groups

of inhabitants, but either way pleasure is mapped to a position between extreme

viewpoints.

The pleasure district's centerpiece is the Naked Truth Club where Spaik spends

many of his sleepless nights. The club's name is an ironic allusion to the Great Gahis' last

television statement: "Der Prophet der Revolution habe sich darin, unmittelbar vor

seinem Tod, erstmals zum Wesen menschlicher Wahrheit geäußert und dieselbe, zum

Befremden nicht weniger seiner Anhänger, mit einer läufigen Hündin verglichen" (108).

A dog in heat is so overly-focused on the satisfaction of its own base drives that its

actions stem from nowhere else, from no greater truth beyond the body. The realization

and expression of this core human truth causes the Great Gahis to commit suicide at the

abrupt end of that same television appearance. The entire district has playfully

constructed itself around this final, ultimate truth offered by the prophet of the revolution:

the satisfaction of innate, base needs is the most universally common and true connection

between humans.

However, the Naked Truth Club is not like its neighboring establishments, which

are places for the satisfaction of bodily or sexual appetites. It is, rather, a club for art:

"Das Lokal, während der Revolutionszeit als Versammlungsort der bürgerlichen, westlich

orientierten Kräfte gegründet, sei im Lauf der Jahre zu einer Art Künstler-Cafe

mutiert" (93). In Libidissi this club, which is more like a cabaret, is the one place where

both Western and local cultures can coincide peacefully in an otherwise violent clash;

they come together in each artist's performance. Spaik sees that the mixed nature of this

area is opposed both to the separatist, purist status of the Goto and to the stigmatized

position of the former colonial area around the Freedom of Opinion Boulevard.

Spaik and the killers – unaware of each others' presence – are all at the Naked Truth

Club while two acts perform, both of which evidence a mixture of native and colonizing

cultures in a way that makes obvious the tension between the two. The first artist does so

in a rather obvious way:

> Er trug ein Kostüm, eine Art Kaftan aus roter Plastikfolie und einen
> gewaltigen, weit ausladenden Turban … Er reihte, das verstanden wir
> schnell, die Namen international bekannter Firmen aneinander, deren
> Silbenfolgen er allerdings unüblichen Betonungen und Rhythmisierungen
> unterwarf und damit das gewohnte Klangbild der ehrwürdigen Marken
> verballhornte. Wir staunten über die Vielzahl der Namen, die der Dichter
> dieser Prozedur unterzog. Es war, als stöhle er dem Publikum alle jemals
> gehörten Waren- und Firmenbezeichnungen aus dem Gedächtnis. (107)

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The enframing structure, the cabaret, is a modern, Western invention but the artist brings

onto its stage historical yet stylized elements in the form of traditional dress made of

modern material and a grotesquely-large head covering needed to hold the mass of

foreign elements – here in the form of corporations' names – with which he and the

audience have been inundated. The poet's way of reforming the corporation names with

varied pronunciation parallels the distorting appropriations of English into the city's

lingua franca, Piddi-Piddi. The artist's performance lays bare the fact that current realities

in Libidissi are the result of appropriation and modification of foreign elements, which

are merely swaddled in manufactured, native clothing. The logical extension – and the

provocative suspicion brought up by the performances – is that maybe all of current

society is the result of such collage-like work and that nowhere is Libidissi's society as

pure as that demanded by the Gahists.

This suspicion is developed further by the next performance during which twin

brothers sing pathetically on stage. The killers' waitress, Leila Calvin, reveals much about

the performance:

> Wir fragten Leila Calvin, um welche Sprache es sich handle, und erfuhren,
> daß es nichts weiter als ein lautmalender Singsang sei. Viele der neuen
> Poeten würden sich in nahezu archäologischem Eifer damit befassen,
> altertümliches Brauchtum, untergegangenes Liedgut und vergessene
> Erzählweisen wiederauszugraben. Ihr Cousin, der im Institut für die
> Erforschung und den Erhalt der mündlichen Dichtung der Wüsten- und
> Steppenvölker arbeite, könne allerlei Komisches über diesen neuen
> Ehrgeiz der neueren Dichter berichten. (119)

The inspiration for the brothers' ancient-sounding but content-less (sing-)song comes

from a show on the world-wide television network, American World Net, that shows a

choir of Egichäer men, an extinct Libidissi minority that had emigrated to Toronto,

Canada. "Die uralte Kultsprache […] sei den jungen Dichtern völlig unverständlich und habe sie gerade deshalb, nur durch ihre klangliche Schönheit zu eigenen Lautmalereien und Wortschöpfungen angeregt" (120).

The performance *seems* to base itself on deeply-rooted aspects of Libidissi's identity. The language chosen is that of a group of people who existed before Libidissi was colonized. That is, the Egichäers' entire history would seem to be free of Western dilution of its values and their language could – in the nostalgic eyes of those stuck in the post-colonial identity chaos – act as a more direct and pure connection to the city's pre-colonial identity. But these initial impressions change – as does the very nature of the performance – with the knowledge that the artists do not understand the language they are using. This language has *not* been chosen because the artists want to follow in the fundamental footsteps of the Egichäer; they do not intend to utilize this language for direct communication. The artists have chosen the language for its beauty and impressiveness as sound fragments. The Egichäer and all the potential sociopolitical cache that could be derived from the connection to this group are neglected in a performance that places importance on more superficial elements. The performance is thus a meaningless – though impressive and moving – appropriation of ancient language for the purposes of appearing to be connected to ancient, pre-colonial culture. The twin brothers' song is simultaneously a nostalgic lament for a lost past and a biting criticism of Libidissi and the Gahists, the revolutionary/terrorist group that has forever changed the city's identity.

In the same way that the twin brothers wear a mass-produced costume that is both native in cut but modern in material, the Gahists literally wear a cloak of external signifiers referring to the city's ancient pre-colonial identity, the white wool *Kuud*, to hide core elements of the colonial culture, which they would like to banish. That is to say that the city and its inhabitants suffer from a split personality because of the various opposing demands: they must shed any colonial ties or influences even though their very identity is a hybrid outgrowth of Libidissi's entire history – native and colonial.

With the novel's difficult setting thus defined, the main figure, Spaik, demands a closer look. The story of the novel is in many ways the story of Spaik: who he is and how his mind functions. The complexity of this foreign city is mirrored in the mind of its main character, who is similarly split into many antagonistic parts. The city's complexity is reflected in Spaik's mental make-up because it is this complexity that has had such damaging effect on the spy. The novel that emerges from this mind – which is partly what forms *Libidissi* – is therefore equally complex. Elsewhere Klein has made a similar comment in regards to the constructedness of both novels and cities:

> Eine Stadt und ein Roman sind erst wirklich, wenn sie uns verleiten, in ihnen verloren zu gehen. Beide Verführer, die wahre Metropole und ein Prosatext, der die Bezeichnung Roman verdient, appellieren mit Erfolg an das Verlangen unseres Bewusstseins, von einem größeren System vereinnahmt zu werden. Dabei weiß unser Begehren sehr wohl, dass das Labyrinth, das uns verschlingt, gebaut ist. Die Künstlichkeit des Systems ist sogar ein notwendiges Ingredienz der Faszination, die es ausstrahlt.[153]

Both the story Spaik tells and the city in which he works are dangerously seductive; in both identity is constructed out of a sampling of sources – both native and colonial. As

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[153] Georg Klein, "Die göttliche Gewalt des Gemachten: Von Verlogenheit an einen anderen Raum; die Wirklichkeit des Spiels 'GTA 4' zu verstehen," <u>Süddeutsche Zeitung</u> 17./18. May 2008: 14.

will be shown below, Spaik was lured into and taken over by the city. His story – the novel – has a similar effect upon its reader: both city and story make one want to "lose oneself" in it. The possibility of losing oneself in either city or story proves to be quite dangerous because these labyrinths, like in King Minos' mythological labyrinth, are beautiful means of concealing real violence.

4. Spaik

The plot of *Libidissi* is organized around what would seem to be the end of Spaik's career as a German spy in this foreign, sand-choked city. The opening scene shows Spaik at the airport spying on passengers arriving from the West, hoping to spot the person coming to replace him, to kill him. Spaik had been a rather prolific writer of reports during his many years in Libidissi; only recently did the steady flow of his reports slow, degenerate, and, finally, halt completely. His first months in the city were spent in the Hotel Esperanza:

> Das Hotel, seine Veranda, seine riesige Kellerbar und die mit Abhöranlagen gespickten Zimmer [war] eine große Nachrichtenbörse gewesen, der Informationsengpaß der Stadt und damit der ganzen Region. Hier hatte sich das Erfahrbare gestaut, hier wurde es mit alten und neuen Tricks bearbeitet und so mit Bedeutung vollgepumpt, daß die in aller Herren Länder abfließenden Botschaften von der sagenhaften Ergiebigkeit ihres Quellorts zeugten" (63).

The Hotel Esperanza, where the killers will later stay, would seem to be the most practical location for a foreign spy to live, situated as it is in the center of all that can be experienced or perceived. However, the hotel is the gathering point for all foreigners in the city; here foreign business men – from Swiss weapons dealers to Lebanese

construction machinery importers – make deals that manipulate the political unrest in Libidissi for their own financial gain. That which can be experienced at the Hotel Esperanza stands in total opposition to the realities of the city on which Spaik must report. This major hotel in the center of the city's former colonial section is not the place for a man searching for information on a secretive, anti-colonial terrorist organization.

This is why, only weeks after his arrival, Spaik moves into a new apartment in the *Lumpensiederviertel*. "Lumpen" originally signified rags or clothing in poor repair; this name was then transferred from the clothes to the people who wore them. "Lumpen" are the rabble, societal flotsam; they are victims of modern society or criminal elements – the refuse of all classes. This area of the city is filled with a hodgepodge of settlers from many classes, races, and other groups of society, making it an ideal place for Spaik to balance the demands of his work. Spaik's attempts to more intensely penetrate the city's sociopolitical structures will be less noticed here. Spaik moves into the top floor of a two-story building at the center of this area; large tubs in the inner courtyard, once used to make paper from the collected "Lumpen", now allow a thicket of thorny thistle bushes to grow wildly. Spaik, the new thorn in Libidissi's side, has found a place to thrive and he keeps its location secret – even from his own intelligence agency. Since "Lumpen" also refers to the pulp out of which paper is made, Spaik's new neighborhood self-reflexively refers back to his own writerly activities.

Shortly after moving into his new home, Spaik expands his personal world by taking in a girl off the street whom he later names "Lieschen." Stefan Willer sees in the

center of the name, "lies," a subconscious demand by the text: "read!"[154] But it is also

important to note that 'Lieschen' is a diminutive form of 'Luise,' which means

"renowned fighter." This girl's slowly-emergent warrior spirit has a profound impact on

Spaik's existence in Libidissi, because without her help he was too weak to demand and

fight for the things he wants and needs. Surprisingly, critics have not taken issue with this

strange figure in the novel;[155] her role is generally accepted as just another strange

character in a strange book. However, by the end of the work, it becomes clear that this

little girl does not exist outside of Spaik's own mind. The creation of Lieschen is, in fact,

the first step he takes in developing a mental means of survival in Libidissi. It is

important to focus on how Spaik narrates the story of Lieschen becoming a part of his life

as it shows how he masks the slow decay of his sense of self by creating concrete figures

that shore-up his slide into a seemingly necessary madness.

5. Lieschen

"Das Mädchen ist mir von der Stadt aufgenötigt worden. Als namenloses Kind war

es mir schon bald nach meinem Umzug in das Lumpensiederviertel vor Augen

gekommen" (52). Spaik first meets Lieschen, the only female figure in the novel and

Spaik's "Adoptivtochter,"[156] while dealing with a junkman who patrolled the streets of

Spaik's new neighborhood:

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[154] Willer 126.

[155] Willer mentions only in passing – as if it were unimportant – that the girl might be a figment of Spaik's imagination.

[156] The paperback's *Klappentext* asserts this often made simplification for Lieschen's identity. Leila Calvin, the "waitress" at the Naked Truth Club, is in fact a transvestite, as all the servers at the club are.

> Er fuhr ein schweres Motorrad, eine russische Militärmaschine. Das Fahrzeug war zu einer Dreiradlieferkarre umgebaut, auf deren Pritsche, in einem großen Drahtkorb, der verwertbare Müll, Schrott, Flaschen, Papier und abgelegte Kleidung, transportiert wurde. … Das Kind, ein dünngliedriges Mädchen, das durch den Innenraum des Drahtkorbs turnte, war für mich, den damals noch neugierigen Fremden, der eigentliche Augenfang. Mit affenartiger Geschicklichkeit kletterte es im Korb auf und ab, hielt sich mit Fingern und Zehen am Draht fest und schichtete das Gesammelte nach irgendeinem System über- und untereinander. (52-3)

Lieschen is not interesting for Spaik because of the obvious spectacle she offers. What Spaik finds interesting is the girl's ability to bring order out of inner chaos – he is interested because she has a system to make sense of what the city expels, because she can so spryly move through the "Innenraum" of her world. A few months later, as Spaik is bringing out some used *Suleika* bottles for trade, the junkman falls dead at Spaik's feet. Because of the place of death, Spaik's neighbors believe that the man has chosen Spaik as his "Nachfolger" (53):

> Sie starrten mich in einer Weise an, die mir unmißverständlich mitteilte, daß mein Handlungsspielraum auf eine einzige mögliche Tat verengt war. Aber ich=Spaik wußte nicht, was zu tun anstand, und hätte mir unweigerlich den Fluch meiner Nachbarschaft zugezogen, wenn nicht Sukkum, der Süßbäcker, an meiner Statt entschieden hätte. Sukkum, der mir schon damals täglich, grußlos und mit feindseliger Miene, sein nuß- und rosinendurchsetztes Weißbrot verkaufte, warf mir das Kind zu. Meinen Armen blieb keine Zeit, das Mädchen aufzufangen, aber seine dünnen Gliedmaßen schnappten mit automatenhafter Sicherheit um meinen Rumpf, und ein paar kräftige Fäuste, die mir in den Rücken gestoßen wurden, verhinderten, daß mein Taumeln in ein Stürzen überging. (53-54)

Spaik's situation and surroundings force him to take on the girl and give her a place in his life. Specifically, he has suffered much abuse because he is a foreigner and for this to stop

Spaik needs the girl's organizing skills. But these are not the only practical elements

Lieschen brings to his life.

Spaik offers Lieschen a place to live – the attic space above his apartment – and

with time the two become a good team. They stay out of each other's way so much that

their paths only cross when necessary. In the present of the story, Spaik hears Lieschen

descend the ladder from her place and thinks back on her first day with him:

> Lieschen kommt vom Dachboden. In der Stadt ist es üblich, Hühner auf
> den Dächern zu halten. Die kleinwüchsige extrem federarme, für westliche
> Augen abstoßend häßliche Vogelrasse vertilgt das Ungeziefer, und ihre
> Anwesenheit soll, nach einem alten, sich gegen alle Religionen
> behauptenden Aberglauben, den Wohlstand der Hausgemeinschaft fördern.
> Bei meinem Einzug war dieses Dachgelaß über meinen Räumen leer. …
> Als Lieschen zu mir stieß, bot es sich an, daß sie dort oben einzog. (48)

The geography of this passage plays on a German saying used to call someone crazy:

"Du hast einen Vogel im Kopf."[157] The once literal meaning of this expression stems

from a time when 'unclear thinking' was thought to have been caused by a bird having

nested in one's brain; in contemporary German it is no longer meant as literally as it turns

out to be in Klein's novel. Lieschen brings a sort of necessary madness with her by

coming to roost in an unused portion of Spaik's mental topography (the Dachboden/ -

gelass is a metaphor for Spaik's mind) that could be equated to the *Über-Ich,* which

makes the German spy Spaik the *Ich.*[158] Klein thus borrows loosely from Freudian

psychoanalytic topography as he depicts Spaik's mental landscape. According to Freud,

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[157] Dudenredaktion, "Vogel im Kopf," Duden: Das große Buch der Zitate und Redewendungen (Mannheim et al.: Dudenverlag, 2002) 729.

[158] Willer reads Lieschen's name as a mix of "es" (id) and "ich" (ego), which mixed with the implication of the "libido" in the novel's title offer associations with Freud's theories. His focus on the "Problem des Benennens and Bezeichnens" (114) does not allow him to analyze Klein's playful appropriation of other aspects of Freud's thought.

personality consists of a conscious 'I' as well as a subconscious 'super-ego' and an 'id.'

The super-ego represents the internalized law of parental authority while the id stands for

basic instinctual drives.[159] Spaik's self-reference as "Ich=Spaik" would initially seem to

be just a linguistic issue that stems from Spaik's long stay in Libidissi and his subsequent

appropriation of certain linguistic elements. But as Spaik's troubled sense of self becomes

more and more apparent it becomes clear that the source of confusion is not linguistic in

nature but psychological.

The *Über-Ich* is understood to be an inner representation of cultural norms and the

"parents' standards regarding what is good and virtuous and what is bad and sinful."[160] A

child internalizes norms about which actions will be rewarded and which will be

punished; this creates a guide for how to get along in the world. Lieschen is the child of

Libidissi, she is a (by)product of the city. As such, she is attuned to the demands of the

city and its inhabitants and a good guide for surviving there.

Lieschen takes over during situations in which Spaik fails to assert himself. His

pathetic knowledge and application of the city's language, Piddi-Piddi, causes him to be

mocked and discouraged from his tasks, but with Lieschen it is different: "Wenn wir

gemeinsam außer Haus waren, auf dem Gemüsemarkt des Viertels, im Videobasar oder in

Axoms Werkstatt, sprach sie ein äußerst sparsames, aber scharf herausbellendes Piddi-

Piddi. Zu Hause kam kaum ein Wort über ihre Lippen…" (57). Good Piddi-Piddi is

spoken "schnatternd schell und in möglichst hoher Tonlage" (17), and Lieschen's ability

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[159] Sigmund Freud, <u>Das Ich und das Es: Metapsychologische Schriften</u>, ed. Anna Freud (Leipzig: Internationaler psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1924-8).

[160] Calvin S. Hall, <u>A Primer of Freudian Psychology</u> (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1954).

to speak in this manner enables her to be accepted in the city. The relationship between the two is balanced out: Lieschen takes care of situations that require interaction in the city, while Spaik pays for the apartment and for Lieschen's "orthopädische Schuhe mit genagelten Sohlen" which she needs to straighten the overly-flexible toes she used to climb around her old cage (48). She needs her new shoes so that she (and the skills she represents) can be applied in her new setting.

But slowly something becomes quite confusing about this character: she can not be seen by any characters other than Spaik. During a final scene in which an injured Spaik leans on Lieschen in order to walk towards their home, the killers, who have just searched Spaik's apartment, look down and see only an "einsame[n] Kerl" who has "genagelt[e] Stiefel" (185). Indeed, as the killers try to climb the ladder that leads to Lieschen's attic room, it breaks easily under their weight, as if it had never been used; in the attic space they find nothing but bird feces where Spaik sees Lieschen's little pieces of furniture. Under the gaze of anyone other than Spaik, Lieschen disappears.

With the new perspective provided by the killers, the reader must reassess earlier scenes of the novel in which Lieschen played an important role. When Spaik returns home, scared and exhausted after not spotting his replacement/killer, he grabs his "Kulturbeutel" in order to pack his belongings and run away to escape his immanent death. Lieschen reacts by destroying the contents of the bag: "Die genagelten Ledersohlen von Lieschens Schuhwerk stampfen auf den Scherben, auch das Rasierzeug zerbricht unter ihren gezielten Tritten. Meinen schmutzigen Kulturbeutel wirft sie mir ins Gesicht. Und sie beschimpft mich mit einem einzigen Wort, einem Schimpfwort, das mir

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lange nicht zu Ohren gekommen ist" (54). If Lieschen does not exist then who, or what, is opposing and criticizing Spaik? Indeed, he has so externalized and objectified his *Über-Ich* – a foreign *Über-Ich* that had to be formed for him to survive in Libidissi – that Spaik perceives it as another person.

Lieschen plays an important role in one of the last scenes of the novel in which Spaik has escaped near capture by the killers and fled onto a sight-seeing boat running on the river that runs between the Goto and the *Vergnügungsbezirk*. The boat is attacked and starts sinking; as injured passengers scream in pain, Spaik remains calm and does the one thing that he, Spaik, knows to do in situations that require action: he calls Lieschen. To call for help the boat's captain tries unsuccessfully to use his satellite phone, since the city's telephone system rarely, if ever, works. But Spaik, who apparently knows some other tricks, is successfully connected with Lieschen: "Bevor mir einfällt, mich mit meinem Namen zu melden, hat Lieschen schon erraten, wer am anderen Ende in den Hörer atmet. Knapp und hart stellt sie die Fragen, auf die es jetzt ankommt. … Aber die Verbindung ist gekappt, und alle weiteren Bemühungen, den eigenen Anschluß zu erreichen, scheitern" (152).

Initially, it would *not* seem strange that Spaik would call his friend Lieschen for assistance since she knows what to do in such moments of danger. However, *after* it is clear that Lieschen is Spaik's mental projection, then it must be asked: why would he need an external medium to communicate with a different part of himself – "den eigenen Anschluß"? In order to answer this question more thoroughly, Spaik's other, more important medium of communication must be examined: the *Rohrpost*. It will become

clear that Spaik uses large scale media, redirected to other segments of his fractured

personality, in order to express thoughts and ideas, which the other parts of his self

cannot bear to know directly.

6. Spaik & Media: Selbstgespräche

Throughout the novel there is not a single scene in which Spaik works on his

assignment – gathering information on Libidissi's most violent element, the Gahists. No

work is portrayed though Spaik, later in the book, sends a report that warns his handlers

of the attack on the international airport. Spaik's sole source of information is the

Rohrpost-messages he infrequently receives:

> Ich=Spaik weiß, was meine Wenigkeit den Einflüsterungen des großen
> Rohrpostsenders verdankt. Schon die erste Benachrichtigung, die mir
> nichts weiter als die Aufnahme des regelmäßigen Versanddienstes
> ankündigte, war ein Wink, den mein ganz anders geschultes Hirn
> instinktiv verstand. Seitdem war jede Mitteilung von Belang für mein
> Bleiben in der Stadt, und nur zu Beginn berührte mich manchmal ein
> Anflug von Scham, von Verlegenheit vor mir selbst, wenn mir dämmerte,
> wie orakelgläubig ich=Spaik über den kargen Sätzen brütete. (39)

Spaik's shame about confronting a text as one might oracular utterances is surely a self-

reflexive moment, meant to tease the serious reader and critic.[161] Nonetheless, it is clear

that Spaik's successful career as a spy in Libidissi is based on the information that comes

out of the pneumatic tube that terminates in his apartment. On an *instinctual* but not

conscious level Spaik understands what the messages mean and where they come from.

His "ganz anders geschultes Hirn" would expect messages to be communicated more

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[161] Fiedler writes that, "Georg Klein seems to be well acquainted with literary scholars. He is thus
not just playing with representation, signs and meaning, he is also playing with a certain type of
reader" (37).

directly in a more typical medium or with more clear, unequivocal language as one might

find in a spy report. Though Spaik uses professional terminology – "Benachrichtigung,"

"Versanddienst," etc. – it is clear that the *Rohrpostsendungen* are more personal in nature.

The pneumatic mail system, a creation of the former colonial forces, is a closed

system of communication. Unlike a typical paper-based mail system in which each user

determines his or her connectivity with the purchase of postage, a *Rohrpostsystem* is

hierarchical: each terminal and junction must be pre-designed into the system, thus only

users matching certain criteria would have direct access. This structure lends the

messages a certain amount of legitimacy that they would otherwise not have.

Like a good spy, Spaik tries to discover the originator of these messages:

> Die folgenden Wochen wurden von mir in rührendem Anfängereifer
> darauf verwendet, Informationen über dieses System
> zusammenzutragen…. Mehrmals habe ich=Spaik in den Anfangsjahren
> des Rohrpostempfangs versucht, Kontakt zu den Betreibern des Systems
> im Lumpensiederviertel aufzunehmen. Gauner haben mein redliches und
> entsprechend tolpatschiges Bemühen um Erkenntnis ausgenutzt und mich
> wiederholt um kleinere Summen betrogen. (34)

> Dreimal haben mich Betrüger ähnlichen Kalibers an Orte gebracht, die die
> Luftdruckversandstation des Lumpensiederviertels beherbergen sollten.
> Zweimal fand ich=Spaik mich allein gelassen in ruinenhaften
> Hinterhofgebäuden, die keinerlei Hinweis auf ihre angebliche Nutzung
> enthielten. Einmal führte mich ein halbwüchsiger Junge in ein Ognum,
> eine ehemalige Gebetshalle der Gahis-Sekte. Bis in die Decke hinein war
> das Innere des einfachen Rundbaus mit den Reinigungssymbolen bemalt,
> der Fußboden aber unter einer knöchelhohen Schicht schimmelnden
> Ziegenmists verschwunden. (39-40)

It is a beginner's mistake to search for the center of such a deceptive and complex system

of transport and Spaik continually finds the *Rohrpostsystem* either abandoned or in

shambles. This passage is another warning regarding what lies at the end of a

zweckbedingtes search for a text's meaning – especially when searching for its true

originator. At the end lies a sacred pile of shit.

Because Spaik's attempts to gain access to the center of the system are thwarted, he

is forced to accept the messages in the form that he receives them – in the medium with

which they are sent. He cannot see behind or beyond the medium itself, so Spaik turns his

focus to detailed analysis of each cryptic message, giving attention to minutia of form

and symbol in order to sooth his hermeneutic drives:

> Alle Schriftstücke, die ich aus den Untiefen des Rohrpostsystems erhalten habe, zeigen dasselbe: eine kaum verschliffene Schulschreibschrift, genau so, wie ich sie selbst vor Jahrzehnten, am Füller kauend, erlernt habe. Der Schreiber hat sich die Deutlichkeit und Regelmäßigkeit seiner Kinderhandschrift bewahrt; nur minimale Abweichungen von der kalligraphischen Norm verraten die lange handschriftliche Praxis.
>   Die allererste Botschaft, die ich auf der Rückseite des Flaschenetiketts vorfand, war genauso lakonisch wie alle folgenden. Und auch die heutige Nachricht macht in Länge und Stil keine Ausnahme. Stets verzichten die Briefchen auf Anrede und Schlußfloskel, stets erweckt der höchstens drei Sätze umfassende Text den Eindruck einer dienstlichen Mitteilung. Im Lauf der Sendung ist mir nur eine einzige Entwicklung aufgefallen: Die Rechtschreibfehler nehmen zu. (38).

The texts are not friendly notes from a neighbor but official or organizational in tone and

form, one could say that they are like court orders or demands from a deep, hidden, and

important source. Spaik's recognition of his own handwriting foreshadows the novel's

ending, while the increasing structural (grammatical) flaws point to either the sender's

mental decline or, more provocatively, to a playfulness with language that would not

belong in the bureaucratic, utilitarian language of typical spy work.

Spaik's own account of the mystery of the *Rohrpostsendungen* offers only one

major clue to the origin of the messages. During the first night portrayed in the book

Spaik arrives home earlier than he would like:

> Mir widerstrebt, so früh nach Hause zu kommen. Nur der erste Stock des
> kleinen Gebäudes wird von mir bewohnt, das Erdgeschoß steht leer.
> Ich=Spaik verharre, wie es mir im Lauf der Jahre zur Gewohnheit
> geworden ist, in einem sinnlos verstockten Dösen am Fuß der Treppe. Mir
> ist unklar, was mich immer aufs neue an einem zügigen Aufstieg hindert.
> […] Auch heute scheint mich, trotz meiner frühen Heimkehr, der Schlaf zu
> überwältigen. Mir fallen die Augen zu, der Verwirrung meiner Gedanken
> setzt sich kein Widerstand entgegen. Dann aber reißt mich ein
> schwellendes Klackern, gefolgt von einem metallischen Aufschlag, aus
> meinem Dösen. Sofort ist alle Müdigkeit verflogen. Selten, schmerzlich
> selten erhalte ich=Spaik eine Rohrpostsendung. (31)

The bottom step in Spaik's building elicits a strange response from him. He must

compulsively stop there and then fall into a state of unconsciousness that only ends with

the sound of a new message rattling through the pneumatic mail tube. The first time one

reads this passage it seems no more strange than the preceding passages that describe

Libidissi's strange characteristics. The way Spaik narrates the event (and what is

important here is how he tells *himself* the story), there are only seconds between his fall

into unconsciousness and his awakening to the noise of transmission. Only in the last

chapters does the killers' investigation uncover the true source of Spaik's information

when they find the other, sender end of the *Rohrpostsystem* in the ground floor apartment.

Upon arriving at the two-story (plus an attic) building inhabited by Spaik, the

killers search that space in the depths of Spaik's home:

> Alle Fenster sind sorgfältig mit schwarzer Folie und Klebeband
> abgedichtet. Offensichtlich dienen die Räume nur einem einzigen Zweck:

> In der Mitte des größeren Zimmers steht ein Holztisch, auf dem ein
> Fernseher, ein Videorecorder und ein CD-Player aufgebaut sind. Vor den
> Tisch ist, dem Bildschirm gegenüber, ein alter Bürostuhl plaziert. Dieses
> Ensemble und die helle Kargheit des Raumes machen uns unwillkürlich an
> eine regelmäßige Arbeit denken. […] Wir untersuchen die Kassetten, die
> den Tisch bedecken. Zu unserer Überraschung sind es nur die neun
> Videobänder des Gahis, jene in Piddi-Piddi untertitelte Version der
> Predigten, die uns Doktor Zinally so warm ans Herz gelegt hat. […] Das
> Bild des Gahis ist ohnehin im Raum gegenwärtig – auf eine einfachere,
> technisch ältere Weise. An der Wand hängt ein Poster, ein
> Schwarzweißfoto, auf Leinwandimitat gedruckt. […] Du streichst dem
> Propheten über die muskulöse Brust, und das Poster dellt sich unter dem
> Druck deiner Zeigefingerkuppe auffällig nach innen. (165-166)

This is the big moment of any thriller or spy novel when the secret connections are unveiled. Behind the poster is, strangely, the other end of Spaik's *Rohrpost*. For the casual reader, Spaik's tale ends as he guns down his would-be killers and thus survives the ninth anniversary night of the Great Gahis' suicide. That is, the plot ends as one expects when the questions and action driving the plot are resolved and the "good" guy survives. But this is the point where pop-literature is left behind, because the novel's biggest secret, which was not even a concern until this final moment of the plot, has been divulged. In this second to last scene Klein's *Libidissi* is revealed to be a work of art which had been disguised (for 200 pages) as a simple tale of espionage.

At this point in the novel, questions are raised that will not be explicitly answered in the story and the text becomes cyclical as the reader is forced back into the work in order to make sense of it. The text thus follows the schematic of Spaik's mini-*Rohrpostsystem*, with which Spaik sends himself messages. While "unconscious" he sends cryptic fragments of messages from the ground floor viewing room to his "conscious" self in his first-floor apartment.

In the same way, the novel *Libidissi*, is a self-reflexive, self-sustaining system of expression that does not provide answers but rather cryptic opportunities for contemplation and examination. But this medium of self-communication, Spaik's pneumatic system, requires a more thorough blueprint; therefore, its creation and re-routing should be investigated.

Rohrpost

Bernhard Siegert's study of the postal system, *Relais: Geschicke der Literatur as Epoche der Post, 1751-1913*,[162] will provide a general understanding for this type of medium, the character of which is amplified by the pneumatic postal system. Siegert sees his work as an attempt at describing "diese Geschichte der Kommunikation als Menschenverkehr von der Seite der postalischen Strategien" as well as a reflection on the "beiden grundlegenden Funktionen, die Medien erfüllen: Speichern und Übertragen."[163] His goal is to determine how and why the private letter, which he calls a compromising of oneself in writing, became one of the most important replacements for religious confession.

He begins by describing language metaphorically as a "Rohrpost, die ständig verstopft ist durch die Zweideutigkeiten der Rhetorik. Die Philosophen sind die Kanalreiniger."[164] Siegert sees the origination of this idea that "Was ist, ist postiert" in

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[162] Bernhard Siegert, <u>Relais: Geschicke der Literatur as Epoche der Post, 1751-1913</u>, (Berlin: Brinkmann & Bose, 1993). Siegert uses "Epoche" not to mean a time span but refers to the Greek and Heideggarian sense of the term: "Epoche meint hier nicht einen Zeitabschnitt im Geschehen, sondern den Grundzug des Schickens, das jeweilige An-sich-halten seiner selbst zugunsten der Vernehmbarkeit der Gabe […]" (15 in Siegert).

[163] Siegert. 5 and 16.

[164] Ibid. 5.

Leibniz's statement that "'[d]er Grund ist solches, was dem vorstellenden, denkenden Menschen zugestellt werden muß.' Seit Leibniz gibt es keine Vorstellung ohne Zustellung."[165] Siegert tracks the history of the postal system to focus on the time during which communication by letter developed "aus dem polizeylichen Diskurs in einen Diskurs des ewigen und unverbrüchlichen Naturrechts" which produced literature as an epoch of the postal system.[166]

Important to this context is Siegert's insight into the inherent difficulty of the use of media: "Solange eine Verarbeitung in Echtzeit nicht zur Verfügung stand, mußten Daten, um übertragen oder sonstwie verarbeitet werden zu können, immer irgendwo zwischengespeichert werden: auf Haut, Wachs, Ton, Stein, Payrus, Leinwand, Papier, Holz oder Hirnrinde. Eben dadurch wurden sie für Menschen handgreiflich, gaben sie das Feld der Kunst frei."[167] The down side to this is that ideas put into some medial form (letters sent) always take temporal and spacial detours that make room for the possibility of deceit: "Insofern Aufzeichnung eine Form der Überlieferung ist, die mit einem Halt oder Relais rechnet, eine *poste resante* also, ist es ein Phänomen der Interzeption. Daß eine Letter immer auch nicht ankommen kann – abgefangen, entwendet werden kann – ist geradezu Bedingung dafür, daß sie immer ihren Bestimmungsort erreicht."[168] This site of reception – indeed *inter*ception – is the human mind and senses – *any* mind. Aesthetics is for Siegert, another relay or site of interception, which is equally susceptible to the contingency of transmission and interruption.

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[165] Ibid. 10.
[166] Ibid. 19.
[167] Ibid. 18.
[168] Ibid. 17.

The history of the use of the *Rohrpost* in Libidissi closely mirrors the history of the postal system as presented by Siegert. It was initially constructed for purposes of internal communications by the "Fremdmacht," the colonizing forces that 'policed' Libidissi. Hidden beneath the surface of the city, the pneumatic tubes distribute official letters or packages from one authorized junction to another. The very form of the medium is already emblematic of such a dominating force: it is an inherently closed system as each access point must be pre-configured to ensure that the appropriate amount of pressure is available for successful transport; this makes any attempt to use the medium by outsiders difficult if not impossible. Marshall McLuhan's claim that "the content of any medium is always another medium" is also true of this medium, the *Rohrpost*.[169] Initially, it served to convey the colonizer's written documents and acted as a support of colonial ideology and power. Once the documents are removed from the tubes, they become media themselves and not just signifiers available by way of the medial support.

After the departure of the colonizing forces and the rise of the Gahists to power, the *Rohrpostsystem* was used to smuggle *Suleika* during the time of "Prohibition." The Agoman family that converted the *Rohrpost* for personal use and gain was able to do so because of a son, who had studied engineering in Berlin: "Findigerweise habe sich der Agoman-Sohn dazu ausschließlich bereits vorhandener Rohrpostsysteme bedient, in die die Luftdruckleitungen eingebettet worden seien. Vor allem die unverwüstlichen und verschwenderisch großzügig dimensionierten Keramikröhren des allerersten Abwassersystems aus dem vorigen Jahrhundert seien für den nun heimlichen Postversand

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[169] Marshall McLuhan, <u>Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man</u> (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994) 8.

verwendet worden" (36). The son has re-appropriated the medium for his own application by using its built-in (formal) power sources, essentially tapping into the pre-existing structure.

The private ("heimlich" here means both 'home' or '*einheimisch*' and secretive) use of this once official and closed medium is taken to a more idiosyncratic level by Spaik. The sender of Spaik's "Rohrpostbriefe" piggy-backs the transitional use of the medium by writing the first message on the back of a *Suleika*-Brandy label so that Spaik first has to empty the bottle before he sees the real message sent through the *Rohrpost*. As is clear by the end of the novel, Spaik takes this process to the next level and re-routes the system so that – on a figurative level – the only distance it spans is that between his unconscious and conscious self or – on a material level – between his basement and upstairs apartment.

Spaik uses a medium to deliver messages from a subconscious part of himself to another "representing, thinking" part of himself; he submits it to the double relay – *Rohrpost* and the written text he places inside of it – in order to conceal the traces of the text's source. In this way Spaik confesses his knowledge without having to do so immediately, consciously. Whatever he sees in the videos can apparently only be submitted to his mind (that is, admitted to his conscience and consciousness) with the help of a written text.

7. Spy(k) Work

Spaik's move to the *Lumpensiederviertel* was thus not necessary and productive because it allowed him to move about the city more freely. His neighborhood does not better hide his spying tracks or offer him a safer home. Rather, the move gave Spaik the space he needed to separate, perform, and repress the three layers of tasks necessary for him to survive and thrive in Libidissi. Each of these layers has been given a different level of his new home. On the main floor lives Spaik, who deals with the daily tasks much as anyone might. Spaik is still the German foreigner and spy that he was before he came to the city and this Spaik is the narrator of this story. Lieschen took her lookout position in the attic out of a necessity: Spaik was forced to incorporate her into his life in order to function effectively and efficiently in Libidissi. But the deepest part of Spaik's mental and physical structure is reserved for his real work, his spy work. This place is central to Spaik and his story because his career and – since the agency wants Spaik killed because he has not sent reports lately – his life have depended on his providing information about the city and its most important group, the Gahists.

As the killers' search of Spaik's home makes clear, Spaik's spy work consists of continually watching (and then repressing his having watched) the Great Gahis' nine prophetic video prayers. Sealed-off from the everyday world (and his everyday self) in the darkened room in the bottom floor of his house, he studies these videos while his conscious self is lying "unconscious" on the bottom stair of his building. Spaik watches and re-watches only the nine videos that act as the new *Urtext* for the Gahist religion. In anticipation of each anniversary of the Great Gahis' suicide, Gahists derive their next

terrorist target from interpretations of various aspects of these videos. Spaik matches the

Gahists' hermeneutic pursuits in order to trump their attacks by reporting on them before

they are carried out. In essence, Spaik has become a closet (basement) Gahist in order to

defeat the Gahists. He has become a terrorist to catch a terrorist. Most surprisingly, the

novel shows that the basic, initial work of the terrorist is aesthetic in nature –

perception, empathy, and interpretation/meaning-making are all indicted here.

The repression of his work – this empathetic melding of parts of his self with the

fundamentalist teachings of his enemy – is obviously a necessary step for Spaik to

maintain a unifiable sense of self. The *Rohrpost* is the indispensable link in this system.

With this medium, the borders of which cannot be found, Spaik is able to present the

findings of his basement work to his conscious self without having to "know" the things

he knows. Such mediated *Selbstgespräche* allow the main-floor, German spy Spaik to

maintain a level of (conscious) aesthetic disinterest, which is, since Kant, a necessary

precondition for aesthetic judgement.[170] Spaik has created a space – hermetically sealed

with tape and plastic – in which he can freely investigate his object of study, without

concerning his conscious, purpose-driven self. The all but unrecognizable hand-scrawled

notes in aluminum boxes are the most effective means for Spaik to communicate with his

deeper self, with a part of his self that must remain unattached to his constant and

continuous sense of self lest he suffer from this deep-seated knowledge.

Libidissi offers a model of how viewers and victims of terrorism perceive and

process these violent acts: because these acts must be engaged and interrogated with

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[170] Immanuel Kant, Kritik der praktischen Vernunft. Kritik der Urteilskraft, ed. Preussische
Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1913).

aesthetic faculties, these faculties become implicated as an important part in terrorist violence. The effect on the viewer of this continual perception of terrorist violence is quite negative. Indeed, in Libidissi many foreigners have contracted "Mau," which is said to be a fatal sexual disease that only effects Westerners – though Spaik does discover a native who has died from Mau. Western medicine believes that: "die Stadtbevölkerung sei gegen den uralten lokalen Virus immun, gebe ihn aber an ungeschützte Reisende weiter. In der Stadt hingegen gelte Mau als eine neue, aus dem degenerierten Westen eingeschleppte Geschlechtskrankheit. Man rühme sich gerade im Gespräch mit Fremden gern damit, daß die einheimischen Stämme mit der Kraft ihrer unverdorbenen Leiber den bösen Säften der Krankheit widerstünden" (76).

Dr. Zinally, who has been treating Spaik for the symptoms of Mau for sometime, tells the killer-narrators that Mau causes numbness in the extremities and "gleichzeitig träten leichte Störungen in der Beweglichkeit des linken Augapfels auf, ein spontanes, kaum merkliches Schielen, ein Zucken oder ein gelegentliches, dann dauerhaftes Herabhängen des Lides. Defekte, die jedoch als Gesamtbild bereits auf eine ernste Irritation des Nervensystems verweisen" (88). Zinally in fact believes that the source of Mau is mental: "viel spreche dafür, daß erst ein gewisses Maß an konstitutioneller Zerrüttung den Ausbruch von Mau ermögliche" and that one must be "mental geschwächt" in order for Mau to manifest.

Of course, these symptoms are a perfect description of what is called "conversion symptoms": "A loss or change of sensory or voluntary motor functioning, such as blindness, deafness, numbness, or paralysis, not fully explained by any neurological or

general medical condition or drug, and not intentionally produced, but judged to be of psychological origin" which result from repression of memories or feelings that would cause too much damage to the "patient."[171] Though Spaik has been suffering from Mau for quite a while he has remained alive and, for the most part, functional.

Spaik has been able to maintain his mental and physical health because he has been able to keep at bay all the experiences he has had in his basement room. He does this with a two-step process. First, he organizes out of his consciousness the realities of his work as a fundamentalist terrorist and the knowledge he has gained from that work. He does this with his narrative, which unifies his multi-faceted world, he does this by telling himself (and his reader) that his spy work and the actions necessary for surviving in Libidissi are done by others – other characters in his story. Lieschen is the fictional character in his mind that takes care of the difficult but pragmatic problems in this foreign city; at the same time, the origin of the results of watching the Great Gahis' videos is obscured in Spaik's narrative such that the *Rohrpost* messages seem to come from an unnamed source. Spaik's story reorganizes his perception so completely that he can project parts of himself onto other, fictional figures. The writing of texts is what allows him to style his world in the most beneficial manner; Spaik has created such an elaborate system in order to avoid the psychological stress that his work and environment cause.

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[171] Andrew M. Colman, "conversion symptom," A Dictionary of Psychology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Spaik's reports

As discussed in the chapter on Rainald Goetz' novel *Kontrolliert*, terrorism appropriates cultural symbols in a destructive manner to create "new signifieds without signifiers – objects whose meaning [is] incomprehensible. This aesthetics of terror has striking similarities with the notion of the sublime."[172] As stated above, *Libidissi* goes behind this level of dissemination of terrorism to engage the origin of the terrorist act, before the physical violence is added.

Both the Gahists and Spaik contemplate the Great Gahis videos in order to discern what the next Gahist terrorist act should (or, in Spaik's case, "would") be. That is, they take the symbols offered in the videos and interpret them. While very little of the videos' content is portrayed directly in *Libidissi*, it seems that the Great Gahis never comes close to ordering the violent attacks, which are carried out in his name. It is rather the desire of the Gahists (and, of course, Spaik's own desire) that allows them to form such an interpretation. The novel thus implicates, to use Kantian terms, confronting texts with anything but *Zweckmäßigkeit ohne Zweck*.[173] That is, Spaik and the Gahists dangerously derive meaning from an open text out of a desire to use the video for their own political and personal ends.

But it is not enough to accuse the video viewers of poor reading skills. Indeed, it is the very form of an open text, which "stimulat[es] reactions, rather than communicat[es] contents"; open texts are opposed to closed texts which "elicit almost a predetermined

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[172] Bernhard Debatin, "Terrorism and Media Attention: The Semiotics of Terrorism" 12. Oct. 2007 < http://oak.cats.ohiou.edu/~debatin/AEJMC/2.html >.

[173] See Alan Goldman, "The Aesthetic," The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics (New York: Routledge, 2001) 185-189, here 185.

response from the reader" who must merely consume it.[174] What the novel shows is that the videos *and* the resulting text of the terrorist attack (for the response to any text must always be another text that attempts to weave connections) are *open* texts.

The implications of thinking of terrorism as an open text are wide-ranging. First, the source of terrorism is found in the instance of aesthetic perception and the resulting interpretation thereof. It is not the terrorist act itself but a combination of the act (the physical or material object – the attack – offered up for the observer) and its perception that makes up the whole of a terrorist act. The target audience is thus equally responsible for the resulting terror.

Second, the novel is never explicit about how the sensual experience of the Great Gahis' videos leads directly to a terrorist act or, in the case of Spaik, to an understanding of what a fitting terrorist act would be. That is, the novel never portrays the interpretive process. However, it can be inferred from other examples in the text, that a shared reservoir of cultural experiences is the one element required for different people to come to the same interpretation of an object. This is why Spaik must be in Libidissi: so that he can approach the object of study with the same sociopolitical and cultural background as the Gahists. Spaik must spend time in Libidissi to learn the city's very specific system of signification since the relationship between signifier and signified is conventional – dependent on social and cultural conventions. This highly problematic interpretation of terrorist acts implicates not only the medium through which the act is transported and amplified but also the "innocent" receiver/ perceiver, who carries inside herself the same

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[174] Umberto Eco quoted in Jeffrey R. DiLeo, "Text," <u>Encyclopedia of Aesthetics</u>, ed. Michael Kelley (New York: Oxford, 1998) 371-374, here 372.

shared symbols. This final thought gets to the last layer of responsibility that the novel uncovers.

If Schmid and de Graaf's above-proposed definition of terrorism as communicative act is read with Umberto Eco's *A Theory of Semiotics*, then the process of communication is greatly problematized.[175] Eco defines a communicative process as "the passage of a signal (not necessarily a sign) from the source (through a transmitter, along a channel) to a destination. In a machine-to-machine process the signal has no power to signify in so far as it may determine the destination *sub specie stimuli*. In this case we have no signification, but we do have the passage of some information."[176] Eco then opposes the process of communication with a process of signification, which occurs when the destination of this signal is a human being "provided that this same signal is not merely a stimulus but arouses an interpretive response in the addressee. A code is a system of signification, insofar as it couples present entities with absent units. When – on the basis of an underlying rule – something actually presented to the perception of the addressee *stands for* something else, there is *signification*."[177] What *Libidissi* shows then, is that terrorism is – from beginning to violent end – bound-up with processes of signification – *not* communication. This means that terrorist acts are necessarily open to interpretation by the "target audience" and thus not "signifiers without signifieds," which would be sublimely terror-inducing, as Bernhard Debatin has suggested. Rather, terrorist acts are signifiers that demand the creation of signifieds, symbols that demand reflection,

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[175] Umberto Eco, <u>A Theory of Semiotics</u>, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (Bloomington, IL: Indiana University Press, 1976).

[176] Ibid 8.

[177] Ibid. Emphasis in original.

empathy, and observation in order to *make* sense of them. Letting terror so close is damaging to the sense of self because the terror cannot or should not be integrated into the greater whole.

Because of the nature of his work, Spaik is an extreme example of an individual in a (post)modern world; he is constantly inundated with images and information that he cannot easily or wholly integrate into his understanding. Communication and signification become questionable and the individuals suffer from mental distortion and sickness, unable to find traction in the flow of information. Spaik discovers one way out of this situation: (re)writing the self in the logical, differentiated manner demanded by language and literature. The writing of texts has at least kept him alive and trying to cope with his world even if his new, created reality is severely skewed in its demarcation of responsibility and guilt. In Libidissi (both the novel and the city) literature serves as an old remedy to a new disease; in Libidissi literature helps Spaik lie to himself and others so that he can survive another day.

8. Conclusion

In the city of Libidissi cultural institutions and cultural practices cover up a history of violence. The offices of the *Goethe Institut* are little more than a massive mausoleum for the people Spaik has used and then murdered because of his work as a spy. This once great venue of learning and cultural exchange now holds and hides the rotting corpses of post-colonial counterterrorism. In this foreign city culture disguises death.

The revolutionary poet-prophet, the Great Gahis, has become the patron saint and ideological guide for the city's violent terrorist group, the Gahists. The Great Gahis' poetic *Nachlass* – nine *Video-Gesänge* – guide the group's every action; in the search for their next terrorizing action, members of the group examine the prayer-poems in minute detail and then formulate an interpretation from their analysis. This interpretation and the performance thereof become the next, more violent terrorist attack unleashed upon Libidissi. For the Gahisten aesthetic practices guide and determine terrorism.

These connections between both writing and violence as well as aesthetics and terrorism are mirrored in the text of *Libidissi*, which is, by the end of the novel, revealed to be a 200-page lie undertaken by its major narrator, the German spy Spaik. The stress of Spaik's many years as an outsider in this decolonized city is compounded by his spy work, which has him preempt the Gahists' attacks. The source of these attacks is derived from the interpretive reaction of the Gahists, who are Libidissi natives, when watching the Great Gahis' video prayers. Spaik must therefore become as 'native' as possible by immersing himself into the city's physical setting, language, history, and artistic practices. Spaik has to then use his newly-gained cultural knowledge in watching and interpreting the video prayer-poems; he must do exactly as the terrorists do.

Spaik's work would seem to be no different than that of a travel guide author who must learn about a foreign culture and report back. Unfortunately, Spaik loses himself or, rather, his self. Somewhere along the way through Libidissi's underworld Spaik becomes unable to integrate the various demands placed upon him and the many, conflicting roles

he must play. He cannot be both an outsider German spy, a completely native local, and a Great-Gahis-worshipping terrorist.

As a self-defense mechanism, Spaik's psyche has followed Libidissi's own fractured identity. Much as the city is segmented into distinct and even antagonistic parts as is Spaik's sense of self a ruptured chaos. He first creates an imagined roommate, the practical-minded native girl named Lieschen, who knows how to deal with the city's various peculiarities and who suffers no abuse from other inhabitants as Spaik has had to do. The girl is his mind's externalized image of the new skills and actions Spaik has had to incorporate for survival in Libidissi, but these new parts of himself are too ugly and rude for him to fit into his identity. The second self-defense mechanism relieves the stress of his work-related need to immerse himself into the minds of terrorists. For this he builds a closed-off, video viewing room in his basement. When he needs to watch the Great Gahis' videos, his conscious self shuts off, allowing another un- or subconscious part of his self to examine the filmed prayer-poems. In this way he can repress his work as a terrorist; the only problem with this defensive set-up is that his conscious self must be somehow apprised of the knowledge gained in this dark basement.

When the plot of the novel begins, Spaik has been living in this fractured state for an unspecified period of time, but it is implied that it is several years. Accordingly, it can be said that he has been repressing the effects and changes brought on from his work for some time. This repression manifests itself physically – as it has with most foreigners living in Libidissi – as what is called "Mau," which is wrongly thought to be a sexual

disease; in fact Mau is an easy name to put on the complex symptoms resulting from a life fraught with contradiction – both psychological and ethical.

At this point literature appears as the solution for both of Spaik's problems as he begins writing texts that hold thoughts and insights that he cannot confront directly. In order to deal with his spy work, Spaik's 'unconscious' self writes down the results of the time spent at his (counter)terrorism work in the basement and then sends them to his 'conscious' self in the room above using the *Rohrpost*. In this way the conscious Spaik gathers information for his work without having to knowingly construct that knowledge. The *Rohrpost*-texts both mediate and cover-up the traces of Spaik's work, in which he must become a terrorist by aesthetically empathizing with the Gahists – the texts help him distance himself from his own reality

As a means of rectifying his split-personality, Spaik tells the story that makes up the plot of the novel *Libidissi*. His story makes logical and cohesive what is in fact highly-fractured and chaotic. His narration artfully weaves together his projections onto the imagined Lieschen with episodes of exhaustion that belie his terrorizing work. By submitting his neuroses and delusions to the logic of language, Spaik makes the unreasonable reasonable and bearable.

On a narrative level *Libidissi* is not much different than any other novel or work of literature that has come before – it is a *Lügengeschichte* par excellence. It is not unconventional or unfitting that the story told by Spaik is historically inaccurate since this is the freedom of all authors to posit what is other than the current sociopolitical realities he or she confronts daily. Rather, what *Libidissi* shows is that the unmediated

experience of one's world has damaging effects and that literature offers a way to defer

this damage by unifying disparate elements and acknowledging indirectly what cannot be

done so directly. For Spaik, then, the writing of the story is a therapeutic process because

it effectively does away with his deeper connections to terrorism. He uses his narrative to

filter out unwanted elements of his reality; in so doing he covers up aspects that are too

painful, too shameful or otherwise unbearable. In this way the story of his existence in

Libidissi is more tolerable for himself – because he can latch on to this new version of

things – and to others – because they do not see the highly-chaotic reality beyond Spaik's

story. However, in the negative spaces between its narrative strands, which can only be

accessed with aesthetic processes, *Libidissi* (the final written object) indirectly signifies

that which lies behind the "story."

CHAPTER V

STILL-LIFE WITH TERRORIST: PATHOS IN UWE TELLKAMP'S *DER EISVOGEL*

Pathos has been banished from Germany's literary and political scene since its abuse by National Socialism over seventy years ago. In his recent novel *Der Eisvogel*[178] (2005) Uwe Tellkamp reconnects politics, pathos, and literature by allowing characters – right-wing, anti-democratic terrorists (and would-be terrorists) – to profess their extremist beliefs with a strong pathos, which provides a rhetorical weight that has long been absent from German literature. The critical backlash against the novel brings up questions about the function and acceptability of pathos in today's literature and politics.

The novel circles around the main character, Wiggo Ritter, an unemployed philosophy Ph.D. lying in Berlin's Charité hospital recovering from burn wounds received during a failed terrorist action. Wiggo has ended up here after becoming entangled with Mauritz Kaltmeister, the leader of the terrorist arm of a decidedly elitist, right-wing revolutionary group called *Wiedergeburt* or "Rebirth." The text slowly recounts Wiggo's past by combining fragments of legal testimony given by Wiggo, his friends, family, and professors into a collaged account of the events leading up to the

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[178] Uwe Tellkamp, <u>Der Eisvogel</u> (Berlin: Rowohlt-Berlin Verlag, 2005). Further references to this edition are given in parenthetical citations. The novel's form is highly-fractured and typical rules of orthography – specifically punctuation and capitalization – are disregarded. I have left block quotes in their original format; this will be most obvious in their lack of final punctuation (at times) and a heavy use of dashes (the German "Gedankenstriche" – literally "thought line" – says much about their use to loosely connect thoughts). Any omissions of quoted text will be indicated by ellipses in brackets.

terrorist action. The testimony is directed at Wiggo's absent lawyer – that is, at the reader, who must take over the role of judge and jury.

Tellkamp's *Der Eisvogel* has received varied and, at times, highly contentious critical reception that revolves around one major issue: the role of pathos in the text. In a political and aesthetic environment that is dominated by irony – pathos' structural and philosophical opposite – the accusation of textual or authorial pathos riles up century-old fears of another conservative revolution and proto-fascist art. Following this line of thought, some critics have called *Der Eisvogel* the first revolutionary novel from the new Right. This chapter will show that these claims are unfounded because the novel's *form* deconstructs the pathos of its *content* by making Wiggo and Mauritz' story highly ambiguous and necessarily incomplete such that the reader (not its pathos-heavy characters) must complete the text and draw any final conclusions or truths about the novel and the events, ideas and characters it portrays. The following reading of the novel will show that pathos supports a strong and more balanced portrayal of certain characters' conservative terrorist ideology, even though the text – through its form – finally positions itself at a remove from these thoughts.

Uwe Tellkamp has taken his place in a long line of German doctor-writers such as Georg Büchner, Gottfried Benn, Alfred Döblin, and Rainald Goetz, who have brought their clinical *Seziermesser* to the corpus of literary texts. Out of his entire life's history critics and journalists continually retell an apparently revealing anecdote from Tellkamp's twenty-first year. Born in 1968 in East Germany, Tellkamp spent his compulsory military service in the *Nationale Volksarmee* as a tank commander. Shortly before the Berlin Wall

fell – and, in turn, the GDR – Tellkamp's unit was sent to respond to a group of demonstrators. Knowing his brother was among the group, Tellkamp disobeyed the order and was put in jail until the official *Wende* two weeks later. This story is retold because it can function in one of two ways, depending on the re-teller's intentions. It either, first, substantiates an attempt to position Tellkamp as heroically a- or anti-political because he did not take part in the mission. Such an interpretation attempts to undermine critics who have read Tellkamp's work as an expression of some conservative ideology. Second, the story is told and then unmasked as marketing spin meant to temper the author's tendentious textual undertones. Either way, as was seen in the case of Rainald Goetz, the biographies of authors who allow characters into their novels, who have strong political voices, will inevitably receive much critical attention in an attempt to connect the author's own thoughts and opinions to those of his (problematic) characters.

Tellkamp's debut novel, *Der Hecht, die Träume und das Portugiesische Café*, appeared in 2000. Other than his poetry, which has received unequivocal critical praise, he has created a radio play entitled *Aschestadt, Tauchsprache* (2003), this is a modified version of his epic poem, *Nautilus*. Tellkamp has received both the Dresdner Lyrikpreis (2004), the Ingeborg-Bachmann-Preis (2004), and for his most recent novel, *Der Turm* (2008), he received the Uwe-Johnson-Preis as well as the Deutscher Buchpreis in 2008. With *Der Eisvogel* Tellkamp has offered a bold text that has earned him the moniker: "Geist der neuen Ernsthaftigkeit."[179]

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[179] Volker Weidermann, "Neues Deutschland," <u>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</u> 11 April 2005: Feuilleton 23.

1. Critical Reception

Gregor Dotzauer claims that "*Der Eisvogel* ist das erste ernst zu nehmende rechte Buch der jüngeren deutschen Literatur, das in einer ursprünglichen Abscheu vor dem 'Morbus 68' wurzelt."[180] Dotzauer's term "Morbus 68" is a direct quote from Tellkamp's text – it is a term used by the ultra-conservative terrorist Mauritz Kaltmeister. However it does not follow – as Dotzauer asserts – that the whole text or especially the author's own beliefs are necessarily critical of "68." By calling the leftist student protest movement around 1968 a "Morbus," which is Latin for "disease," Mauritz makes it clear that he and his elitist conservative anti-democratic group of revolutionary-terrorists are against the principles of the student movement and the liberalizing changes it brought about in its forty year wake. The group is responding to what they see as a post-68 era of static, dead democracy in Germany.

Especially in Europe and the United States the year 1968 has become a mythical year of political and social upheaval and transformation. It was, in the eyes of many, a foundational moment for the positive aspects of the *Bundesrepublik's* direction throughout the rest of the century including an increase in civil and women's rights as well as a complete transformation of the higher education system. But 1968 is not the only important year in the novel. After Helmut Böttiger notes that Tellkamp is "ein zutiefst deutscher Schriftsteller" (which is "kein Wunder" since Tellkamp is from East Germany) he writes: "Ein Leitmotiv in seinem Roman *Der Eisvogel* ist das, was 1989

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[180] Gregor Dotzauer, "Töte, was du liebst – Sehnsucht nach einer konservativen Revolution – Uwe Tellkamps Roman *Der Eisvogel*," Tagesspiegel 16 March 2005: 30.

geschah: 'Die Dämonen kehrten zurück.'"[181] Böttiger situates this quote from the novel

as if it were the East German Tellkamp's own summation of the fall of communism in

1989. But the speaker here is Wiggo, who is recalling his childhood in *Western* Germany

while in conversation with his sister, Dorothea. Looking back on his pre-1989 youth,

Wiggo remembers a time of "Leichtigkeit" (248):

> Es war die Zeit der lichten Erzählungen. Wie fern schien Shakespeare mit seinen klaustrophobischen Stoffen, düster, dämonisch, bevölkert von wüsten, alttestamentarischen Figuren. Wir dagegen waren nicht pathetisch. Wir hatten Aldi und Kaba, den VW Käfer, den Sarotti-Mohr, die Citroën-Ente, Mittsommernächte in Schweden, wir hatten Zivildienst und Beziehungskisten. War es so? Wir erinnern uns, Dorothea. Die Wende kam und veränderte nichts für uns. Und doch war etwas geschehen. Nicht nur die DDR war versunken, auch die alte Bundesrepublik und ihre seltsam zeitenthobene Zeit. Die Dämonen kehrten zurück. Pathos kehrte zurück. (248)

In this conversation Wiggo offers a compact version of an opinion shared by Mauritz and

Wiedergeburt regarding the effects of 1989, which in their eyes awoke the country from

its affluently-apathetic, irony-heavy state and brought the realization that energy and

action were again required to thrive in a world that has once again become marked by

conflict and opposition.

In regards to the politics it portrays, *Der Eisvogel* seems to be the polar opposite of

Goetz' *Kontrolliert*, which dealt with the political events of the decade beginning with

1968 and was criticized for giving voice to the politics and people of the communist *Rote*

Armee Fraktion (RAF). As one of the most recent German texts dealing with terrorism,

Der Eisvogel brings the topic full circle by portraying a group that is politically opposed

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[181] Helmut Böttiger, "Deutsche Wut und rechter Terror: Uwe Tellkamps zwiespältiger Elite-Thriller Der Eisvogel," <u>Die Zeit</u> 17 March 2005: Kultur 28.

to this first modern German terrorist group, the RAF. However, as will be discussed

below, Mauritz and his group follow the same methods as the RAF but with the opposite

goal in mind: the creation of a caste system in German society, a system ruled by a

powerful elite class. That is to say that the *Wiedergeburt* terrorists are a contemporary

RAF in that they are fighting against the current problems of their political world in the

early twenty-first century: in form they mimic the RAF but contradict them in content.[182]

Tellkamp's novel thus offers a reappraisal of not only the political movements of the

1960s and 1970s but also of the violence of that time. It presents the RAF's methods of

political violence as a means for sociopolitical change but these methods are *verfremdet*

by the different political goals and values supported by the right-wing group.

In the same way that critics read *Kontrolliert* as either a RAF sympathizer's attempt

to enact terrorism in text or, conversely, a highly self-reflexive examination and defense

of the Romantic, bourgeois foundational elements of literature, *Der Eisvogel* has fallen

prey to a criticism marked by a stark either/or, black/white thinking. Some see it as an

"enorm plastische[r] Gesellschaftsroman"[183] while others, such as Böttiger, remark that in

Tellkamp's text there is "keine Ironie mehr, sondern vor allem Pathos."[184] This lack of

irony, the fact that the text does not offer something to balance the serious pathos, is for

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[182] There are several early studies of the RAF that seek to portray the group's beliefs and actions as an extension of Germany's longer fascist history. The group of course claimed to continue (with violence) the Student Movement's fight against what they perceived to be a persistent Nazi-presence in West Germany's government and other important areas of society. The issue seems to surround the question of whether the RAF's means were fascist even if their stated goal was "anti-fascist." Jillian Becker's Hitler's Children: The Story of the Baader-Meinhof Terrorist Gang (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1977) is the most cited example though its argumentation is highly problematic in its equation of anti-Zionism with fascism.

[183] Ijoma Mangold, "Nie wieder Kaltakquise!," Süddeutsche Zeitung 17 March 2005, Kultur 12.

[184] Böttiger 28.

many critics the work's major flaw. For Böttiger, the novel "liest sich zum Teil wie

Kolportage und endet in einem grellen Showdown."[185] He supports his assertion by

referring to the characters, plot, and dialogue as "plakativ" – obvious, blatant,

uncomplicated; he is referring to the pathos-heavy characters who do not, at times, offer

clever or intricate argumentation. But Böttiger continues in a manner typical of reviewers

of *Der Eisvogel*: after criticizing the pathos and its difficult, thin characters, he turns to

the novel's form, which earns much praise: "Das Verblüffende an diesem Roman ist aber:

Man merkt, dass es sich um einen guten Autor handelt. So grob zubehauen die Inhalte

sind, so raffiniert ist die Form."[186]

Reviewers critical of Tellkamp's novel feel compelled to contrast the problematic

aspects of the novel – the portrayal of rehashed right-wing, conservative

Stammtischphilosophie in its *content* – with its impressive, refined *form*. These two

elements are found to be incompatible: "Der zuweilen unbändigen Sprache, dem

Visionären der Sätze und ihrem Rhythmus steht auf merkwürdige Weise das Triviale der

Handlung gegenüber."[187] But it is too easy to disregard the dissonance between form and

content as the bad judgement of a promising but simply still-too-young author. By

accepting this stark contrast of structure and material as intended by the author and useful

in understanding the work as a whole, the following analysis will attempt to examine

more closely what this formal intention is.

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[185] Böttiger 28.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid.

Emphatiker und Gnostiker

Before moving on to an analysis of the novel's form there is another type of critical response that requires attention: other than the critics thrown off by the form/content divide in *Der Eisvogel* (such as Böttiger) are those critics who seem to disregard the form completely. Volker Weidermann writes: "[E]s gibt niemanden in diesem Roman, der all diesen Terrorschaumschwadroneuren mal etwas entgegenzusetzen hätte" and later: "Es ist ein Revolutionsroman von rechts. Ein Buch voller Pathos. Und Ernsthaftigkeit. Und ohne Ironie. […] Tellkamps Roman dient nicht der Wahrheit. […] Viel Wille zum Pathos und sehr wenig zu sagen. Viele Ressentiments gegen die Gesellschaft und nichts entgegenzusetzen als Klischees und scheinwertvolle Worthülsen."[188] As if by default Weidermann approaches the novel on an authorial/biographical level; he summarizes the novel by connecting opinions in its content to the work's author (and not, say, just to the narrators). By calling it a "Revolutionsroman von rechts" and not a novel *about* right-wing revolution and terrorism, he turns *Der Eisvogel* into a product of a right-leaning mind from conservative circles and marks the text as an expression of Tellkamp's own political agenda. But this methodological anachronism is not the core of Weidermann's critical work; in the end he is focused on analyzing the text's seemingly-problematic content *without* regard to its form; such an approach is incompatible with a work like *Der Eisvogel*, which is so intricately constructed and which builds its critical voice into its form. Weidermann's type of approach to texts – a general disregard for formal concerns –

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[188] Ibid.

has proven to be especially problematic in regards to works that deal with terrorism (as has been discussed extensively in an earlier chapter on Rainald Goetz).

In an article entitled "Emphatiker und Gnostiker: Über eine Spaltung im deutschen Literaturbetrieb – und wozu sie gut ist" Hubert Winkels develops a slightly polemical discussion of what he sees as the two prevailing types of readers in the *Literaturbetrieb*, whose approaches to reading literature are decidedly opposed: *Emphatiker* and *Gnostiker*.[189] Winkels article was prompted by a debate that formed around Weidermann's 2006 *Literaturgeschichte* entitled *Lichtjahre*.[190] Winkels attempts to pin down the origins of the strong reactions to Weidermann's literary history and finally categorizes Weidermann as an *Emphatiker*. In a section, entitled "Die einen suchen das wahre Leben, die anderen die wahre Literatur," Winkels describes this type of reader:

> Die Emphatiker des Literaturbetriebs, die Leidenschaftssimulanten und Lebensbeschwörer ertragen es nicht länger, dass immer noch einige [that is, Gnostiker – M. L.] darauf bestehen, dass Literatur zuallererst das sprachliche Kunstwerk meint, ein klug gedachtes, bewusst gemachtes, ein formal hoch organisiertes Gebilde, dessen Wirkung, und sei sie rauschhaft, von sprachökonomischen und dramaturgischen Prinzipien abhängt. Und dass sich der Lustgewinn in spätmodern abgeklärten Zeiten der Erkenntnis dieser Prinzipien verdankt. Dass wir im Wissen genießen, durch die Erkenntnis und mit analytischen Mitteln.[191]

Gnostiker look for self-reflexive form and formal tradition while *Emphatiker* look for expressive content and pathos of experience. *Gnostiker* see literary texts as formal play

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[189] Hubert Winkels, "Emphatiker und Gnostiker: Über eine Spaltung im deutschen Literaturbetrieb – und wozu sie gut ist," Die Zeit 30 March 2006: Kultur 59. *Literaturbetrieb* is a German term for the literary sphere, which is made-up of authors, publishers, and media.

[190] Cf. Volker Weidermann, Lichtjahre: Eine kurze Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von 1945 bis heute (Köln: Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 2006).

[191] Winkels 27.

that busies itself with itself, not concerned with its effect outside of the rarified air of art. *Emphatiker*, on the other hand, see literature as a record of some sort of participation or action undertaken by a real person. Winkels continues: "Die Emphatiker haben den Autor im Blick, sie bewerten Haltungen, Zugehörigkeiten, organisieren sie geschickt und genießen im Übrigen die Lebenskämpfe in Alltag und Politik; die Gnostiker sehen erst einmal Texte und dann frühere Texte und diese auch noch in größeren Kontexten."[192] The *Emphatiker's* focus on the author forces the literary work to be evaluated in the world of the political and not the aesthetic. The *Gnostiker*, on the other hand, focuses on the textuality of a work. He sees how the work is interwoven with a longer history of art; texts are not solely the product of authorial intent but formed in response to and in unison with older works.

If Weidermann is truly an *Emphatiker*, then it is clear why he claims in his review of Tellkamp's *Der Eisvogel* that there is no response *in* the novel to the characters who express right-wing terrorist ideology. This is because Weidermann is only reading for clues and conversations *inside* the text – in the content. In a similar vein, Julia Encke includes Tellkamp in a recent wave of authors who speak for an "abgestandenen Konservatismus, der vor allem eines will: die Distanz zum Pöbel und den Nutzern des öffentlichen Nahverkehrs. Also zu uns."[193] The crux of her argument against Tellkamp – which would seem to be a concern for content – is grounded on what is, in fact, formal in nature: "Man hat Tellkamp gefeiert, weil er eine 'schonungslose Gesellschaftanalyse'

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[192] Ibid.

[193] Julia Encke, "Neo-Kons in der Literatur: Macht euch mal wieder locker, Jungs!" <u>Süddeutsche Zeitung</u> 2005: Kultur 42.

vorgelegt habe. Was ihn aber von den großen Gesellschaftsromanen, etwa denen des 19.

Jahrhunderts, unterscheidet, ist, dass diesen ein ganzes Arsenal an Techniken zur

Verfügung stand, die erzählerische Distanz einzogen."[194] These techniques, these formal

devices, are, in Encke's opinion, completely lacking in *Der Eisvogel*.

It is correct that the text offers little in the way of explicit rebuttal of the elitist, anti-

democratic statements made by the characters Mauritz and Wiggo. The strength of these

characters' statements is not necessarily found in their logical or ethical soundness;

indeed, there are surely serious flaws in their argumentation. Their statements come

across as powerful, with weight, because they are rhetorically well-formed. Both

characters deliver their sporadic harangues with a pathos that lends them a focus in the

text which is absent in regards to the utterances of other characters – the other characters

against whom Mauritz and Wiggo fight. These characters – especially Wiggo's father and

sisters – are given equally banal, incomplete, and, at times, hollow arguments but their

philosophical and ethical stances are not shored-up by a powerful pathos; these

characters, who are symbols of the prevailing reality of German society (bankers,

established politicians who were oppositional 68ers, television producers), are not, as

figures, vibrant, vital, or deeply-drawn. That is, on the level of the plot and characters

there is indeed "niemanden in diesem Roman, der all diesen

Terrorschaumschwadroneuren mal etwas entgegenzusetzen hätte. Und keinen Autor, der

mal ein kleines Ironiezeichen setzt." First, there is no *character* (no one), who presents a

valid, alternative voice to the two terrorists and, second, there is no clear narrative voice

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[194] Ibid.

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that takes a clear stance towards the politically conservative characters. What

Weidermann does *not* consider is that the true opposition to this pathos is found in the

novel's complex collage form. One could thus find substantiation for Winkels'

classification of Weidermann by seeing that he has been duped by the text's pathos

because he and other *Emphatiker* are blind to or disregard the artwork's form. But even if

the readers of this novel are *Gnostiker*, aware of the function of form, it is still unclear

how and why *Der Eisvogel* creates the critical tension between its pathos-filled content

and progressive form. These two elements – the pathos expressed and the novel's form –

require closer examination.

2. Pathos

"Pathos" in the original Greek means "pain" or "suffering"; the enduring sense of

the term relegates pathos to a rhetorical or aesthetic characteristic of a speaker's words, a

writer's text, or an actor's lines that arouses emotion; this type of pathos usually takes the

shape of an exalted or sublime manner of speaking. Pathos was originally one of three

traditional rhetorical means of persuasion along with *logos* (appeal to logic) and *ethos*

(appeal to character). The emotion aroused in a jury or the audience of a senate meeting,

which usually takes the form of pity or sorrow – but can also appear as anger or pride – is

meant to affect judgement; pathos should make the audience assess differently than they

would in a more sober condition.[195] A speaker can use pathos to appeal to emotion by

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[195] Martin Gessmann, "pathos/pathetisch," <u>Ästhetische Grundbegriffe (ÄGB): Historisches
Wörterbuch in sieben Bänden</u>, Vol. 4, ed. Karlheinz Barck (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2000) 724-739,
here 725.

using metaphor (comparing a defendant to an audience member's own grandmother), amplification (exaggeration), or storytelling (giving a first-person account of a horrific act). Political rhetoric and art thus intersect formally on the plane of pathos.

Indeed, Aristotle looked to rhetoric for a way to arouse "Mitleid, Furcht und Zorn" in a theater audience because: "Hier wie dort geht es darum, mit Hilfe des Pathos eine handlungsrelevante Wirkung beim Rezipienten der Rede oder des Schauspiels zu erzielen."[196] Aristotle defined tragedy – the main stylistic element of which is pathos – by its ability to bring forth emotion and catharsis. Since it works on an emotional and not logical level, pathos moves the audience to (re)action as opposed to thought or contemplation – pathos aims to unsettle purely logical reactions to the artwork. Seemingly weary of this fact, Aristotle believed that pathos should only be used as a means of persuasion when recounting an event that really happened and should not be employed in conjunction with invented stories. Rather, pathos should be used rhetorically to create an atmosphere in the audience, which allows the speaker's strong ethos to be recognized. Ethos relates to both moral competence as well as expertise and knowledge; one's character, or ethos, is thus directly related to his or her experience. Pathos supports ethos because pathos is a style of expression, which – for Aristotle at least – is a natural part of communicating real experience. That is, pathos relates or seems to relate to or be indicative of real, authentic experiences.

When discussing pathos in the context of German art and literature, Friedrich Schiller's essay "Ueber das Pathetische" is an important theoretical starting point. He

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[196] Gessmann 725.

defines pathos as "Leiden"[197] and thus reverts to the original Greek definition of the term

as this specific emotional state. Nonetheless, Schiller also considers pathos to be a formal

element of artworks and his study is helpful in regards to the current reassessment of the

use and acceptability of pathos in art, though Schiller is writing specifically on theater.

The first line of Schiller's text reads: "Darstellung des Leidens – als bloßen Leidens

– ist niemals Zweck der Kunst, aber als Mittel zu ihrem Zweck ist sie derselben äußerst

wichtig. Der letzte Zweck der Kunst ist die Darstellung des Uebersinnlichen […]" and

further that, "Das erste Gesetz der tragischen Kunst war Darstellung der leidenden Natur.

Das zweite ist Darstellung des moralischen Widerstandes gegen das Leiden."[198] Schiller

sees that pathos is a useful and indeed necessary part of any artwork, but it must be

tempered by its constant, balancing force: reason. Pathos makes a character believably

authentic and, in sync with Schiller's Enlightenment roots, the use of reason acts as the

means of overcoming this suffering. The following quote offers an initial hint at the

dynamic in *Der Eisvogel* between the pathos-content and the form used to portray it:

> Der Kampf mit dem Affekt hingegen ist ein Kampf mit der Sinnlichkeit
> und setzt also etwas voraus, was von der Sinnlichkeit unterschieden ist.
> Gegen das Objekt, das ihn leiden macht, kann sich der Mensch mit Hilfe
> seines Verstandes und seiner Muskelkräfte wehren; gegen das Leiden
> selbst hat er keine andre Waffen, als Ideen der Vernunft. Diese müssen
> also in der Darstellung vorkommen, oder durch sie erweckt werden, wo
> Pathos stattfinden soll. Nun sind aber Ideen im eigentlichen Sinn und
> positiv nicht darzustellen, weil ihnen nichts in der Anschauung
> entsprechen kann. Aber negativ und indirekt sind sie allerdings
> darzustellen, wenn in der Anschauung etwas gegeben wird, wozu wir die
> Bedingungen in der Natur vergebens aufsuchen. Jede Erscheinung, deren

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[197] Friedrich Schiller, "Ueber das Pathetische," Theoretische Schriften, Ed. Rolf-Peter Janz
(Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1992) 423-451, here 423.

[198] Schiller 423 and 426.

letzter Grund aus der Sinnenwelt nicht kann abgeleitet werden, ist eine indirekte Darstellung des Uebersinnlichen.[199]

Schiller thus looks to balance two major elements. The first element is pathos of suffering, which is common to all humans despite their rank or status. Pathos is the constant content of life and, therefore, the binding principle of lives portrayed on stage. The second element is the power of reason, which is understood as the weapon that can be used to combat this suffering. Reason, because it is "transcendental," cannot be offered to the audience's senses directly and must thus be made perceptible indirectly, in aspects of portrayal "the conditions for which are not to be found in nature" ("wozu wir die Bedingungen in der Natur vergebens aufsuchen"). This aspect of portrayal is, as will be argued in more depth regarding *Der Eisvogel*, form. Form is always placed upon content by an individual as a means of structuring given elements, which one could call nature (as Schiller does) or content, depending on context. The ordering character of form need not, however, limit the dynamic energy of that which is portrayed.

Though pathos has had a long history of acceptability in artistic and political realms, its rejection in the twentieth century is due to a gradually-strengthening connection to certain ideologies that proved to be catastrophically violent.

The Problem of Pathos: Pathos and the Political

Pathos' decline began approximately two hundred years ago when it received something of an original baptism of contrast or, in the words of Norbert Bolz: "[D]ie weitsichtigste Bestimmung, die Hegel diesem Begriff von Pathos gegeben hat, ist wohl

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[199] Schiller 430.

die, daß er das 'Gegenteil der heutigen Ironie' bezeichne – gemeint ist die romantische

Ironie."[200]

Bolz quotes here from a section of the *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*[201] in which

Hegel discusses the varying structures of tragedy, comedy, and drama. In a classic

tragedy the ethical content of action – that is, the reasons given because of which a

character acts a certain way – is offered in two different types of modes, which Hegel

explains with his interpretation of two different types of characters. The first is

understood by Hegel to be a character that has a set of ideals and values but these values

exist strongly only when they remain internal – such a character cannot bear to act upon

these values lest they lose their solidity in active, material realization. This mode of

presenting ethical content is purely formal (not substantive or realizable in human

interaction) and always at a contemplative remove from the action of a play; Hegel in fact

calls it godlike. Nonetheless, this type of character venerates those who can act upon their

internal guiding forces.

The second mode of presenting ethical content is individual pathos, which acts as a

driving force inside of tragic characters:

> Die zweite Seite bildet das individuelle Pathos, das die handelnden
> Charaktere mit sittlicher Berechtigung zu ihrem Gegensatz gegen andere
> antreibt und sie dadurch in Konflikt bringt. Die Individuen dieses Pathos
> sind weder das, was wir im modernen Sinne des Wortes Charaktere
> nennen, noch aber bloße Abstraktionen, sondern stehen in der lebendigen
> Mitte zwischen beiden als feste Figuren, die nur das sind, was sie sind,
> ohne Kollision in sich selbst. Ohne schwankendes Anerkennen eines

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[200] Norbert Bolz, "Das Pathos der Deutschen," Das Pathos der Deutschen, ed. Norbert Bolz
(München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1996) 13-25, here 14.

[201] G. W. F. Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik II, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus
Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986).

anderen Pathos und insofern – als Gegenteil der heutigen Ironie – hohe, absolut bestimmte Charaktere, deren Bestimmtheit jedoch in einer besonderen sittlichen Macht ihren Inhalt und Grund findet.[202]

The essence of classical tragedy is then found in the collisions of two such pathos-driven characters, both who act in accordance with their values and, therefore in accordance with their own individual sense of necessity.

Hegel's distinction between these pathos-motivated characters and the godlike consciousness is seen in classic tragedy as the distinction between heroic figures and the chorus, which provides an alternate viewpoint to the values and situations that force the "heroes" to act as they do, as they must. These two elements – the pathos-driven hero and the more removed chorus – balance each other to form a unity of character and setting, individual and society.

In German Romanticism irony earns an important role in artistic and philosophical contexts as a means of creating distance to one's own thoughts and creations. For the Romantics, irony was the correct mentality or attitude of the artist and the underlying structure of art: art is necessarily an externalization and objectification of one's thoughts and experiences and in this process of externalization one gains a new perspective on oneself. For Hegel irony allowed space for reason to do its work because an ironic stance towards oneself enabled the "Aussöhnung von Gegensätzen in Affirmation der Vernunft."[203] Pathos, because it functions on the level of emotion and not reason, thus denies the sort of self-reflexivity demanded of the modern thinker and artist.

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[202] Hegel 539-40.

[203] Ingrid Strohschneider–Kohrs, <u>Die romantische Ironie in Theorie und Gestaltung</u> (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1977) 10.

In the political realm, pathos has had a problematic history in the twentieth century.

Dieter Hoffman-Axthelm has examined the acceptability of pathos in twentieth century

politics; for him, the problem of pathos is its reliance upon emotionalization of issues in

order to circumvent the need to argue logically: "Bürgerlich genommen ist Pathos die

Überwältigung der Tatsachen durch die Größe der Gefühle."[204] While this might not be

necessarily negative in and of itself, there is a problematic side of political pathos that has

forever changed how it is understood in Germany. Pathos was a major component of

National Socialist rhetoric and propaganda; this is best seen in Adolf Hitler's charismatic

personality and the influential power of his fervid harangues, which became emblematic

of the combination of pathos and politics. Albrecht von Lücke writes in regards to post-

war Germany that:

> Pathos ist immer etwas für schlechte Zeiten […] Die 'deutsche
> Katastrophe' lag noch nicht weit zurück, und den soeben beendeten totalen
> Krieg hätte es ohne das erforderliche Pathos schwerlich gegeben.
>   Zudem liegt Pathos stets bei Patriotismus. Bekanntlich galt es lange Zeit
> als süß und ehrenvoll, fürs Vaterland zu sterben – wie es die Alten noch
> kurz zuvor gesungen hatten. […] Pathos stand für verlogene und
> betrogene Vaterlandsliebe. Das Mißtrauen gegenüber dem pathetischen
> Sentiment schien also angebracht. Schon deshalb war die postnationale
> Bundesrepublik von Beginn an auch postpathetisch. In klarer Abkehr vom
> Vergangenen lautete die Devise des gebrannten Landes "Nie wieder
> Pathos."[205]

It is no wonder that Tellkamp and his novel would become suspect in such an

environment since two of his characters express themselves with powerful pathos and

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[204] Dieter Hoffman-Axthelm, "Pathos und PR," <u>Pathos: Verdacht und Versprechen</u>, ed. Elisabeth von Haebler et al, *Ästhetik und Kommunikation* 124 (2004) 11-17, here 11.

[205] Albrecht von Lucke, "Auszug aus der postpathetischen Republik." <u>Pathos: Verdacht und Versprechen</u>, ed. Elisabeth von Haebler et al, *Ästhetik und Kommunikation* 124, (2004) 21-27, here 21.

hope to bring about a revival of a state structure last seen when such pathos was

considered an acceptable aspect of German politics. But *Der Eisvogel* does not present

these characters and their pathos naively and is, in fact, engaged in the reappraisal of its

use in art.

While the novel does connect pathos to *Wiedegeburt's* conservative, nationalistic

thought – and thus connects 2003 and 1933 – it does not reject pathos from art. Politically

speaking, pathos is rejected but it is reintegrated into the work of art as a means of

making characters appear intensely vital and fully-formed, not two-dimensional and

lifeless ironic symbols.

The Reclamation of Formal Pathos

Bolz identifies four types of pathos, but finds "das hohle Pathos" to be, historically-

speaking, the most problematic and enduring form: "Seit die Kritische Theorie der

Frankfurter Schule den Nachkriegs-Jargon der Eigentlichkeit seiner verdienten

Lächerlichkeit preisgegeben hat, scheint das Pathetische in Deutschland tabu zu sein, und

ist nur als Antike-Zitat erlaubt. Wir kennen Pathos heute nur mit negativem Vorzeichen –

entweder als hohl oder als unheimlich."[206] Bolz is engaged in reclaiming pathos for the

present and begins by, first, re-situating pathos' existential connotations and, second,

wrangling in these connotations as the effects of a certain form and style of expression.

Early in his work Bolz situates the pathos he is aiming for against its necessary

opposite; he uses a quote by Kierkegaard as a guide: "Genau soviel Pathos, genau soviel

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[206] Bolz 17. The other forms of pathos Bolz touches upon are technical pathos, Nietzsche's
aesthetic "Pathos der Distanz", and existential pathos in the vein of Kierkegaard.

Komik. Sie sichern sich gegenseitig." Bolz explains that "Komik ist das unverzichtbare

Darstellungsmittel für ein unvermeidliches Mißverhältnis – nämlich für das

Mißverhältnis zwischen Empirischem und Intelligiblem, Endlichem und Unendlichem,

oder eben: Leiden und Freiheit."[207] Valid (not *hohles*) Pathos is balanced by *Komik* or

what the Romantics interchangeably called "Witz" and "Ironie." Pathos is the initiating

force of any action; it sets the creative process into motion. Pathos acts as motivation and

inspiration for action: the force of pathos provides a confidence that works on a purely

emotional level. The force of pathos is a force of necessity earned by the individual's

having experienced something so demanding or traumatic that pathos is the only means

of expressing the event: "Pathos muß bezahlt werden. Hinter allem gelingendem Pathos

stand bisher der Schatten des Todes, stand die denkwürdige gefährdende Entfernung

zwischen der großen Höhe von Wort und Gestus einerseits und der Verletzbarkeit des

Leibes andererseits."[208]

But pathos must be kept in check by irony, which demarcates pathos' createdness and

inherent contingency; irony limits pathos' effect. Pathos is acceptable when balanced by

Komik. This balance is what Encke was referring to when she claimed that Tellkamp did

not have the techniques of a great nineteenth century *Gesellschaftsroman* which offer a

sense of narrative distance.

    Bolz' main argumentative thrust in reevaluating pathos follows Walter Benjamin's

actualization of pathos in his *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*,[209] which, for Bolz

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[207] Ibid. 16.

[208] Hoffman-Axthelm 16.

[209] Walter Benjamin, <u>Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels</u> (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969).

draws a parallel between a similar attempt in both baroque and Expressionist art to revive pathos:

> Benjamin betont "Forcierung" und "gewaltsame Manier" und unterstreicht mit Alois Riegls Begriff des Kunstwollens die Ausrichtung auf "Form schlechtweg". Dem Barock wie dem Expressionismus ist gemeinsam das Suchen nach einem Stil, der "der Wucht des Weltgeschehens gewachsen" wäre. Gemeint sind natürlich konfessioneller Bürger- und Weltkrieg. Uns interessiert hier nur der Zusammenhang zwischen dem Pathos-Wollen und der Forcierung des rein Formalen. Man sucht eine Ausdrucksform, um einer bedrohlichen Wirklichkeit gewachsen zu sein; um sie gleichsam parieren zu können."[210]

Bolz uses Aby Warburg's term "Pathosformel" to further support his understanding of pathos as a *form* chosen by an artist when confronted with three constellations of context and content. First, pathos forms are needed "um die Welt zu bewältigen, wenn katastrophisches Geschehen mit übergroßer Wucht andrängt" (as was the case in Baroque and Expressionist literature).[211] Second, pathos forms are useful as a "Muster des Umgangs mit menschlicher Aggressivität" – following Freud's concept of civilization but also Henry James' concept of "the moral equivalent of war" or "new outlets of heroic energy."[212] Thirdly, pathos form can be used "um eine posthistorisch erstarrte Welt in Bewegung zu bringen und ihr die verlorenen Lebensspannungen rein formal zu injizieren."[213] In a similar vein Jochen Hörisch notes that: "Pathologie ist die Logik des Leidens. Und darauf reagiert man mit Pathos. Also ist es gut, wenn man kein Pathos braucht, weil kein Leiden vorhanden ist. Wenn dann das Leiden da ist, dann ist es extrem

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[210] Bolz 17.
[211] Bolz 18.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid.

wichtig, die richtigen Worte zum richtigen Zeitpunkt zu finden, damit die Gefühle ein

Format bekommen."[214]

In making his case for the present applicability of pathos, Bolz must battle a 200

year-old prejudice that sees pathos as the rough *content* of a mind that is not self-

reflexive; such a mind is, politically-speaking, a potentially dangerous mind. Bolz

emphasizes that pathos is initially a *form* of expression that functions well in regards to

certain types of material that are to be aesthetically processed. For the new scholar of

reformed formal pathos the difficulty now arises in attempting to determine whether a

text's pathos is purely (and safely) formal in nature or whether and how this pathos might

be connected to the text's content. In attempting to measure this acceptability one might

use *aptum* as a guide:

> Das *Aptum* (griech. *prepón*, das "Passende", "Schickliche" oder
> "Angemessene") erscheint als Tugend der *elocutio* in den Lehrbüchern ist
> aber eigentlich das regulative Prinzip der ganzen Rhetorik, die man ja
> auch als System sprachlicher Verhaltensregeln begreifen kann. […] Die
> Forderung des Aptum beruht auf der Annahme, dass es für jedes Thema in
> jeder Situation eine angemessene Auswahl der Argumente, eine
> angemessene Gliederung, eine angemessene Ausdrucksweise und einen
> angemessenen Vortragsstil gibt.[215]

Aptum is similar to *convention* in that both are based on a balance of what has come

before (tradition) as well as what is currently praised and accepted (trend or

contemporary values).

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[214] Jochen Hörisch in a transcribed round-table discussion entitled "Sire – geben Sie
Gedankenfreiheit," <u>Pathos: Verdacht und Versprechen</u>, ed. Elisabeth von Haebler et al., *Ästhetik
und Kommunikation* 124 (2004) 18-20, here 18.

[215] Rainer Dachselt, <u>Pathos. Tradition und Aktualität einer vergessenen Kategorie der Poetik</u>
(Heidelberg: Winter, 2003) 105.

The following reading of *Der Eisvogel* will attempt to gauge the text's own understanding of aptum vis-a-vis pathos. That is, how does this novel apply pathos in regards to the conventional and current understanding of pathos? When is it acceptable and in regards to what type of expressions? Before considering how the work's form interacts with the content of pathos, the latter shall be examined in depth.

Pathos in Der Eisvogel

Understanding how pathos functions in *Der Eisvogel* requires constant contrast to its counterbalance: irony. While the following sections will attempt to separate these two elements, they must – as Kierkegaard expressed it in his evaluation of *Pathos* and *Komik* – coexist in a work that would not be susceptible to the criticism that it contains *empty* pathos. While the entire text does strike such a balance, the individual characters do not; discovering why this is and what this says about the individual characters and, in turn, the whole work, will be the goal of this section.

One of the characters in the novel, Professor of entomology Hans Kaltmeister, is one of the founding members of *Wiedergeburt* and Mauritz' uncle. The elder intellectual Kaltmeister represents the older generation of the group, which seeks to bring about a political change by more conventional means such as asserting political and economic influence on society; this generation is more skeptical of the terrorist means promoted by Mauritz. His understanding of pathos is, therefore, very different than his nephew's because, as will be discussed below, exaggerated, untempered pathos and terrorism fit together. Professor Kaltmeister has a generally reserved manner but finds pathos to be

"angebracht" – fitting – in one context: thoughts about death. Pathos is a suitable response to and means of expressing the looming threat of life's end. "Tod … Daß es die Zeit gibt und damit den Tod. Der Tod ist das schwarze, gleichmäßig und grausam schlagende Herz der Natur, und die geringe Wärme, die sein Pulsschlag sendet, nennt man Liebe … Verzeihen Sie mein Pathos, es ist ganz und gar angebracht" (98, ellipses in the original). Such a use of pathos matches Bolz' categorization of pathos as a means of dealing with dangers and catastrophes – though here it is a reaction to an all-pervasive fact (death) and not a unique and unanticipated historically-specific event (World War I, to use the example experienced by the Expressionists). Of course, "Kaltmeister's pathos" is an ironic phrase: the "cold master" stands in stark contrast to the emotional heat of his outburst of pathos and this ironic contrast is what balances the emotion and heaviness of his statement. The professor is a man of science and reason who after expressing himself with pathos is able to self-reflexively comment on the aptness of his small moments of emotion. While this does not make his politics any less problematic it does make his pathetic expression more bearable. It is more bearable because it is balanced by sobriety of reason.

But for the two characters most connected to pathos, Wiggo and Mauritz, its role is quite different. Other than the above quote by the elder Kaltmeister, only these two specifically use the term "Pathos" (or, for that matter, "Ironie") to refer to a strength of resolution and they are the only two that speak with pathos, or lofty and enthusiastic speech. That they are also the only terrorists in the work who speak is important and this will receive extra attention later in this chapter. For Wiggo and Mauritz pathos is not just

a reactionary measure – as it is for Professor Kaltmeister – but the driving force behind

all acts of creation. Pathos is the power, energy, and excitement that lies behind the

generation of life, political action, and artworks. Wiggo states this quite clearly in one of

his rants:

> ich haßte Ironie, konnte sie nicht ausstehen, die Ironiker glauben an nichts, haben nichts, bezweifeln alles, tunken alles in die saure Soße ihrer scheinbar mit einem Lächeln versüßten Skepsis, geben alles der Lächerlichkeit preis, sind aber im Grund nur zynisch, Zyniker, […] zu kopfig, unfähig zur Empfindung, wie alle diese superintellektuellen, in Dekonstruktivismus-Seminaren eisgekühlten Kaltschnauzen, die heute den Ton angeben und alles ironisch gebrochen sehen wollen, ohne Pathos, vor allem, sie hassen Pathos, weil sie es fürchten, sie hassen Pathos, weil sie Gefühle dahinter fürchten, ihre Brennkraft, die sie außerstande sind zu ertragen, sie hassen Pathos, weil sie glauben, daß alle Pathetiker Faschisten sind, mindestes aber werden, Idioten, alles muß gebrochen sein, ironisch gebrochen sein, dabei: Wo wären Sie, wenn die Liebe im entscheidenden Moment ironisch gebrochen werden würde, Koitus interruptus, […] (28-9)

"Koitus interruptus" is the rather heavy-handed metaphor for incomplete creation and the

contrast to the fruitful actions of those who live and act with the guiding force of pathos.

Wiggo's assessment of the prevailing, anti-pathos philosophical environment is, in fact, a

recreation of the historical development of the term. He moves from the rhetorical, art-

oriented area of "Gefühle" to the political dimensions of pathos in its connection to

Fascism (pathos is either the companion of or precursor to dangerous ideologies) to the

current project that both he and the novel are undertaking: the reassessment of pathos in a

world seemingly overflowing with irony.

    This history of pathos' rejection ends with irony, which, as Wiggo describes it,

forces a view of the world that is "ironisch gebrochen." Though not explicitly stated,

"pathos" is by contrast equated with wholeness and unity. Such criticism is typical of

thinkers of the so-called "conservative revolution" during the Weimar Republic which can be seen as a precursor of Nazi ideology. Both groups were critics of the modernist world-views of the time around the turn of the century which valued a concept of reality as made-up of highly-subjective perspectives without a positivist, objective reality or totality beyond.

In 1927 the poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal gave a speech entitled "Das Schriftum als geistiger Raum der Nation" in which he claimed to have found a new direction for German writers away from the path taken by modern writers, who "can only grasp the world as chaos, fragment and transcendence."[216] Hofmannsthal believed that the modern German writer had finally realized "'that it is impossible to live without faith in a society as a totality' ('Ganzheit') that no life is possible with a half-hearted faith, that to flee the world, as the Romantics had tried to do, is impossible; that, finally, 'life is only livable when one has binding commitments.'"[217] This decidedly un-ironic world-view is often considered to be the first expression of the literary conservative revolution – indeed, the term comes from this very speech. Dotzauer has already made the connection here to Tellkamp's text, however, he connects Hofmannsthal and Tellkamp *not* Hoffmansthal's *ideology* with that of two characters in Tellkamp's *novel*.[218] Nonetheless, there are indeed similarities in the belief systems of the conservative revolution of the inter-war period Weimar Republic and Wiggo's and Mauritz' in the post-*Wende Bundesrepublik*.

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[216] Martin Travers, <u>Critics of Modernity: The Literature of the Conservative Revolution in Germany</u> (New York: Peter Lang, 2001) 1.

[217] Ibid.

[218] Dotzauer 30.

The group's name, "Wiedergeburt," calls forth the term "Palingenesis" which refers to a rebirth and a cyclical concept of time. In the context of Germany, the term is used to describe an aspect of Nazi ideology, which sought a return to a former state or state structure – specifically to the Holy Roman Empire and Bismarck's German Empire and to do away with the decadent culture of the time.[219]

Like the conservative revolution, Mauritz and Wiggo see one of Germany's current problems in its democratic political system:

> – alle fühlen, daß es so, wie es ist, nicht gut ist, sagte Mauritz,[…] – aber keiner unterbreitet Vorschläge, die an die Wurzel des Übels gehen, die also untersuchen, ob diese Gesellschaft nicht vielleicht deshalb nicht funktioniert, weil der ihr zugrundeliegende Gedanke, das sie bestimmende System: die Demokratie, nicht funktioniert ... Die Demokratie ist die Gesellschaftsordnung des Mittelmaßes, des Geschwätzes und der Unfähigkeit, aus dem Geschwätz fruchtbares Handeln werden zu lassen ... Nichts bewegt sich mehr![…] Wie soll das enden? Nirgendwo Aufbruch, Hoffnung und damit: Zukunft … Statt dessen Lethargie, Menschen, die Schatten ihrer selbst sind, an nichts mehr glauben, die keine Vision mehr haben, keine Ursprünglichkeit, zerfressen von Skepsis und Zynismus … Sie sind krank von Demokratie! Die Menschen wollen nicht mehr tausend Angebote, sondern Einfachheit, was sie wollen, ist Führung, Ordnung, Sicherheit, sie sind krank von Unsicherheit, […] sie sind zerstört von Demokratie! (150-151)

In the eyes of *Wiedergeburt* members the cure for such an ailing, mediocre society is the return of a leading elite, who can instill a long-lost sense of stability and purpose or vision in the world. This lack of vision – and its attendant sense of hope and purpose – are what Wiggo and Mauritz think are missing in a world that feels "ironisch gebrochen." The parallels to national socialist rhetoric lie close at hand.

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[219] See: Roger Griffin, The Nature of Fascism (London: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

In response to Mauritz' pathos-filled societal diagnosis, which he gives at a meeting

of *Wiedergeburt*, another member asks what the fitting therapy is. Mauritz has a reply:

"Terror, sagte Mauritz kühl und schnitt dem Industriellen das Wort ab. Die einzige

Möglichkeit, die ich sehe, wirklich und nachhaltig etwas zu verändern, ist der organisierte

Terror" (151).

3. Terror

> Mauritz hat gesagt: wer schießt, hat die Demokratie mit ihren Querelen,
> ihrem Grau in Grau, ihren Kompromissen, ihrer *Legierungshaftigkeit*,
> hinter sich gelassen. Er denkt nur noch in Schwarz und Weiß. On and off.
> Du oder ich. Freund oder Feind. Für mich oder gegen mich. Er ist
> Aristokrat im Moment des Handelns, er wirft seine Existenz in die
> Waagschale gegen die eines anderen. Der Kriegszustand, Kameraden, ist
> die konsequente Verkörperung des aristokratischen Gedankens, doch ist
> nicht mehr der Heldentod die konsequente Verkörperung, sondern das
> heldenhafte Leben. Heute ein König zu sein, gibt es nur noch einen Weg:
> am Leben zu bleiben für eine große Aufgabe (288)

Violence breaks down the mediocre stalemate of democratic compromises; the man who

acts raises himself above the masses to the only role left available to the would-be kings

of the twenty-first century – as a terrorist, as a destroyer of the old and ossified. Behind

such a terrorist act lies a pathos of conviction, which is needed to transgress the ironic

hurdles of current politics, which blends individuals and differences into a flat gray;

pathos is both needed by and indicative of an individual who is convinced of one path of

action and acts to bring that about without doubt or hesitation. In the novel pathos

demarcates the divide between thinking and action and is the main difference between the

pathos-driven *Tatmensch* (embodied by Mauritz) and the ironic *Intellektuelle* (embodied

by Wiggo). This is, in fact, the criticism that the terrorist Mauritz brings against the

philosopher Wiggo:

> – Du bist von der Krankheit der Intellektuellen zerfressen: dem Zweifel, du bist ein Skeptiker, und Skepsis ist die Vorstufe des Zynismus; indem man an allem zweifelt, kommt nichts zustande, dem Skeptiker fehlt nur die Enttäuschung des Zynikers, seine Bitterkeit, die im Grunde gekränkte Liebe ist, der Zyniker ist enttäuscht darüber, daß er nicht glauben darf, hörte ich Mauritz' Stimme in meinem Versteck, der Zweifel, der Zweifel (272)

In this section there is also a similarity to Goetz' *Kontrolliert* in which the narrator

persistently treads the border between the doer and the thinker; Goetz' narrative voice

constantly examines the idea of violent action but then always returns to a highly self-

reflexive discussion of the nature and role of writing and literature as the opposite of

direct action. Wiggo, whose narrative fragments fill the majority of the novel, exists as a

teller of stories, as a survivor of a dangerous association with a violent terrorist, who

asked him: "Du bist ein Philosoph. Einer der die Wahrheit sucht. Das tue ich auch, aber

im Unterschied zu dir versuche ich, das, was ich als Wahrheit erkannt habe, in die Tat

umzusetzen. Du bist der Philosoph, ich bin der Tatmensch. Genügt das nicht?" (281).

This question could be reformulated to ask: what are the similarities and differences

between thinkers and doers, writers and terrorists?

Mauritz' question is even more interesting because the pathos in *Der Eisvogel* has

less to do with politics and terrorism than it does with the ability to create in general.

Therefore, on a meta-level, the question of pathos has to do with art as well: both require

the power of pathos to create and realize one's vision. The following argument between

Mauritz and Wiggo makes the art/terror connection explicit as terrorist acts are explained

by using artwork as a metaphor (each speaker's voice is split by a dash):

> – wir müssen zerstören, Wiggo, um dem Neuen den Weg zu ebnen, alles
> ist verstopft, dicht, ermattet, ermüdet, die Gesellschaft verkalkt, sieh es dir
> doch an, was haben wir denn hier, eine Sozietät reformunfähiger Rentner,
> Vergreisung überall, es müssen die Museen niedergebrannt werden,
> Wiggo, damit die nachfolgenden Generationen Platz haben und Luft zum
> Atmen, es muß wieder Unschuld geben und Neubeginn, wir müssen
> zerstören, um aufbauen zu können, – So ein Schwachsinn, es gibt nichts
> neues mehr, – Eben, – Und da wollt ihr das Alte verbrennen, ihr seid doch
> komplett verrückt, – Sind wir ganz und gar nicht. Mauritz sprach jetzt sehr
> klar und mit eisiger Ruhe. Das eben ist das Neue und wirklich Radikale an
> unserem Ansatz: daß wir das Alte, das nur noch hemmt, das Leben in
> Erstarrung hat geraten lassen, vernichten wollen, um dem Neuen Licht und
> Luft zu schaffen, – Ihr wollt Rembrandt verbrennen, um irgendeinen
> neumodischen Pfuscher an seine Stelle zu hängen? (108)

There are traces here of Nietzsche's *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das*

Leben[220] or Goethe's Mephistopheles, "der Geist, der stets verneint"[221] or most any

twentieth century avant-garde movement's anti-museum, anti-tradition discourse. But the

lament is much more current – indeed, it is *post*modern, not modern in nature. In a

postmodern world in which the artist no longer creates but collects and sets together

quotations and illusions from works already made, the desire to create something "new"

is anachronistic, dangerously out of place. In *Der Eisvogel* the desire to create something

new is moved forward by and equal to the force of pathos.

Even the group's terrorist methods are not new but rehashed from the RAF's own

activities in the 1970s as is criticized by another member of *Wiedergeburt*, a high-ranking

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[220] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben," Unzeitgemäßen
Betrachtung III (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994).

[221] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Faust. Gesamtausgabe Anton Kippenberg, ed. (Wiesbaden:
Insel, 1959) lines 1009-1016.

government official. To this criticism Mauritz replies: "– Ich bin mir dieser Tatsache durchaus bewußt, Herr Staatssekretär, aber Sie übersehen den Umstand, daß die Ziele der von mir geplanten Aktionen denjenigen der genannten Gruppierungen genau entgegengesetzt sind, will sagen, die Mittel mögen die gleichen sein, aber nicht das Ziel, die Errichtung eines Ordens- und Kastenstaats […]." (157). Later Mauritz says in regards to the RAF: " Ich hasse sie, nicht ihre Methoden" (40). The means are old and known as is even the goal Mauritz desires – a *return* to a *former* state. Indeed, in the whole novel none of the content seems too new or too unique – more a distant quote or a long-forgotten phase of history.

Mauritz and his terrorist comrades embody a typical contradiction faced by anyone with the desire to create something entirely new and separate from what has come before. How does one make something new when the methods one uses are the same methods with the same limitations used by all those who came before? The best possible option is a new combination of method and goal, or one could say: form and content. Mauritz, for example, uses leftist terrorist methods in order to reach a right-wing goal.

This contradiction is reflected in the fissure between the level of the novel's content and its form. On the level of content the novel is full of pathos-driven characters who express a demand to create something new. The novel's form, however, undermines the characters' desires by fragmenting them into new, ironically-broken contexts that limit the effectiveness of their pathos with critical focus. How the novel's form functions will be discussed in the following section.

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4. Form

Der Eisvogel is made up of eight narrative voices converging between its covers to offer an unstable portrayal of Wiggo and his life leading up to the failed terrorist attack as well as his resulting hospitalization. The fragments of stories are presented as legal testimony directed towards Wiggo's *Verteidiger*, who himself never appears in the novel. The German title of this absent figure, which translates as "defender," emphasizes the *defensive* (apologia) aspect of the lawyer figure, who is supposed to refute any charges made against the defendant. But since the *Verteidiger* never appears the reader is forced into the role of defense attorney. The reader is asked to sift through the temporally-, spatially-, and authorially-mixed artifacts of Wiggo's "case file" and order them into a good defense. The openness of the text's resulting meaning is thus self-reflexively thematized. This aspect of the reader's role is explicit in the few text fragments that present themselves as written texts and not audio recordings. The testimony of Patrick G., the boyfriend of Wiggo's sister, Dorothea, appears as a written letter or, more fittingly: as an affidavit:

> Sie haben mich gebeten, das alles hier aufzuschreiben, mein *Verhältnis zu ihm undsoweiter*, wie Sie es ausgedrückt haben; [...] – was taugt Ihnen mein Brief dann, müssen Sie dann nicht den Eindruck gewinnen, daß hier einer nur von Vermutungen und Spekulation ausgeht? Können Sie das gebrauchen? […] Womöglich wollen Sie dann mein Schriftstück dazu benutzen, es in einem sogenannten *Fall* zu verwursten (läuft nicht Wiggos Angelegenheit darauf hinaus?) […] (33-4, emphasis in original)

Patrick is self-conscious and weary about presenting his written word for the examination of others because he knows how texts work. He knows that language's slipperiness always leads to instability and openness of interpretation and that a text often shows that

the author himself is unsure about some final truth – "daß hier einer nur von Vermutungen und Spekulation ausgeht." Indeed, the text, through Patrick's voice, accuses the reader of what he or she will surely do with its words: the reader will surely mix it up and turn it into a "case" in both the legal and medical/psychological sense of the word. In the legal sense of the word "case" is "a set of facts or arguments supporting one side in such a legal action: the case for the defense" or "a legal action that has been decided and may be cited as a precedent."[222] That is, the novel will be used to argue for or against a certain position in the public sphere or the text will be referenced as an example or illustration of some aspect of reality. In the medical or psychological sense of the word, "case" refers to an instance of a disease; one could thus read Wiggo as more than just a patient in a burn center but also as a case study of what type of person becomes a terrorist. Not surprisingly, *Der Eisvogel* has been handled in both these ways, as seen in the overview of criticism earlier in this chapter.

But what is important in Patrick's accusation to the lawyer is the verb "verwursten": "Womöglich wollen Sie dann mein Schriftstück dazu benutzen, es in einem sogenannten Fall zu verwursten." *Wurst*, sausage, is made by taking scraps and leftovers of animal parts and grinding them with spices, and then squeezing this mash into a casing (often made of animal intestines). In this way one takes pieces and fragments and turns them into a neat, consumable package. In the same way the reader will take the words and text fragments of the novel and, through the interpretive process, turn them into a neat, concise "case"(ing). The next level of meaning in this self-reflexive

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[222] "Case," New Oxford American Dictionary (New York: Oxford Press, 2005).

metaphor is found at the level of the butcher/author: that the published novel only makes leftover parts available for use implies that the intact carcass has long since been taken apart, used, and manipulated beforehand. In the same way *Der Eisvogel* is given to the reader in a fragmentary, pre-cut manner; the author remains evident only in the seemingly-imprecise traces left by his butcher's cleaver (the surgeon's precise *Seziermesser* is nowhere to be found). The novel has *not* been re-formed into a tight, seamless case. Rather, it is clearly still a grouping of fragments that have been repositioned in such a way that the pieces interact without losing their individual voice. That is to say, the sausage-making process has been mostly completed before the reader even sees it; the reader must simply focus on the elements he or she prefers in order to see the "complete" image he or she wants to see, which is but one of many possible images picked out of the swirl of interwoven images.

Only a few of the fragments present themselves as written texts, while most bits of testimony seem to be the written transcript of audio recordings. Wiggo's account is most self-reflexively a recording; his narrative voice, which appears most often in the novel, is intermittently interrupted by a meta-level recognition of his listener (reader), his lawyer "Herr Verteidiger" (7). Wiggo is also the most aware and reflective regarding his choice of medium:

> – neue Kassette, neues Diktiergerät. Sprechprobe. Eins, zwei, drei. Und was man des Humbugs mehr sagt, wenn man wissen will, ob ein Mikrophon funktioniert oder dieses Dings hier, das Diktaphon. Merkwürdig, seine eigene Stimme von außen zu hören, ungewohnt, unvertraut, sogar schockierend; sie klingt für andere Menschen nicht so wie für mich. (30)

Though the plot revolves around Wiggo and slowly creates an image of his history and personality, the narrative stems from a wide range of figures: eight voices are combined in 442 fragments. The voices belong to Wiggo's family members, his one (and seemingly only) friend, his *Doktorvater*, and a police report. Though most of the fragments are not given a source (others have the source's first name in cursive capital letters inside of square brackets), it is quite clear that these come from Wiggo's testimony. Wiggo's voice is privileged mostly by frequency of repetition, but like any piece in a mosaic or collage, his subjective view is bordered and given form by contrasting pieces/viewpoints.

Reconstituting the whole story from the shards of plot is a very difficult, almost impossible task. The nonlinear narrative technique, the lack of source naming, and the lack of quotation marks force the reader to constantly reassess who is speaking. Almut Cieschinger sees the difficulty put upon the reader of Tellkamp's novel who "liest ganze Passagen zwei Mal, um sie im Wortwust endlich zu verstehen. Schnell wird klar, dass der Roman als ein Mosaik daher kommen soll, das die aus den Fugen geratene Welt nur bruchstückhaft wieder zusammensetzen kann. Die Wirklichkeit zerfällt, zurück bleibt der Zweifel an der Sinnhaftigkeit des Lebens."[223] The form denies a totalized reality and forces the reader into a questioning, gathering stance.

Mosaic, collage, montage – these three terms are often used interchangeably but are more often used to distinguish between subtle differences in modern arts. The term "collage" comes from the French *coller,* to glue, while "montage" comes from the French *monter*, to mount. The former implies work with more fragmentary, deconstructed

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[223] Almut Cieschinger, "Litanei des Leidens an der Welt," <u>Stuttgarter Zeitung</u> 22 May 2005: Kultur, 18.

elements while the latter denotes assemblage of pre-produced parts. Both collage and

montage are "Techniken der Konzentration und Reduktion, der verkürzenden

Verdichtung, der Assoziation und des 'Schnitts.'"[224] Volker Klotz defines montage as a

method or process that could lead to the creation of an *artwork*, which he calls a

collage.[225] Others have made a distinction between the two terms by saying that collage is

formed by elements that are identifiable individually but are seen *simultaneously*;

montage, on the other hand, is understood as a combination of individual elements that

are identifiable individually but also seen *individually* – the difference between the two is

that of spatial versus temporal juxtaposition. Viktor Žmegač sees collage as an extreme

form of montage:

> Montage sollte man das Verfahren nennen, fremde Textsegmente in einen
> eigenen Text aufzunehmen, sie mit eigenem zu verbinden bzw. zu
> konfrontieren. Collage wäre dagegen insofern ein Extremfall von
> Montage, als der Text (in Analogie zu den Klebeobjekten mit
> verschiedenen Gebrauchsmaterialen in der bildenden Kunst)
> *ausschließlich* entlehnte, aus verschiedenen Quellen stammende Elemente
> enthielte.[226]

In this chapter, "collage" is used to define a hybrid of the above definitions: a collage is a

text body made up of fragments of other sources, which have been removed from their

former origins and placed together in order to form a new text. The former text was not

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[224] Markus Weber "Prosa, der schnellste Film" <u>Deutschsprachige Literatur der 70er und 80er Jahre: Autoren, Tendenzen, Gattungen</u>, ed. Walter Delabar und Erhard Schütz (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997) 105-129, here 125.

[225] Volker Klotz, "Zitat und Montage in neuerer Literatur und Kunst" <u>Sprache im technischen Zeitalter</u> 60 (1976) 259-77, here 260. Helmut Rosenfeld also makes this distinction: Helmut Rosenfeld, „Plagiat" <u>Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte</u>, ed. Paul Merker & Wolfgang Stammler (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1977) 123.

[226] Viktor Žmegač, "Montage/Collage" <u>Moderne Literatur in Grundbegriffen</u>, ed. Dieter Borchmeyer and Viktor Žmegač (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994) 286-291, here 288. Emphasis in the original.

delivered in neat discrete parts but in roughly-torn bits that must be stuck together with some authorial glue. This new text does not hide its mixed roots but makes blatant the breaks and seams between its parts.

Of course, in some ways it is somewhat inaccurate to call *Der Eisvogel* a collage because, on a meta-level, there are no actual "original" texts out of which the novel was constructed. Tellkamp did not take a work from another author and appropriate it for his own creation: the "fragments" of the novel are all his own work. At most one could say the novel has a collage *style* but without any of the intertextuality that results from typical collage texts.

Only in a few instances is there anything reminiscent of the way Alfred Döblin attempted to portray modern urban perception by quoting medicine advertisements and weather reports in his *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.[227] For example, the following quote is the tail end of the previously quoted argument about creating space for "the new" between Wiggo and Mauritz; the two fragments are connected by the word "experiments" – a self-reflexive comment on the novel's own form that wonders whether the collage as formal experiment is passé. The adjoining text fragment is a mix of quotes from television; it is a transcription of what one might hear if one were searching through channels and pausing momentarily at each new station. The pieces from the television shows are made up of stock exchange statistics, banal social interactions, song texts, and news headlines:

> […] und überhaupt, das gab es doch schon mal, so haben die
> Kommunisten auch geredet, und was ist dabei herausgekommen? Glaubst

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[227] Alfred Döblin, Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte vom Franz Biberkopf (Zürich/ Düsseldorf: Walter-Verlag, 1996).

du nicht, daß die Menschen die Nase voll haben von solchen
Experimenten?
+++AOL Time Warner 116,34 +++ 12 Technologies 53, 21 +++ Yahoo
56,40 +++ Du, ich hab 'nen Freund. – Ja, sicher. Klar. Deshalb können wir
doch trotzdem. – Nee, du. Ficken is nich. CNN: It's the news. Soldaten
und Nomaden. Pu:pushLetItGroove. EU legt Norm für Trillerpfeifenkugel
fest. (110)

But such quotations of sources other than the "testimony" offered by Wiggo's

acquaintances are rare in the novel even though they add a sense of authenticity to the

work while also portraying the current cultural crisis bemoaned by Wiggo and Mauritz.

Der Eisvogel, as it is offered to the reader, is like a collage of a former version of

itself; one could imagine a more straightforward variant of the novel written in a more

linear fashion with a more guiding narrative. Its current make-up is the result of a formal

choice to present the content in a manner very different than would result from this more

traditional form. The only aspect reminiscent of an authorial voice in the novel is found

in this formal choice. So the question remains: why would Tellkamp disrupt his own

work by choosing to present the content of the novel in such a broken, collage-like style?

Authors choose collage as form for multiple reasons that are similar to the reasons

visual artists had, who first turned to it. Clement Greenberg sees the early collage pieces

by Cubist artists Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque – and later most all avant-garde

movements – as expressions of the tension between the modernist emphasis on the

surface of the painting and the inherited tradition of three-dimensional representation.

Picasso's *Compotier avec fruits, violon et verre* (1912), which has strips of newspaper

and faux-woodgrain wallpaper pasted to its surface next to other pasted drawings and

scribbles, forces the viewer to constantly reevaluate what they are seeing: are these strips

of paper independent objects placed together with the painting or are they a part of the painted scene?

For Greenberg this emphasis on surface is one of the major hallmarks of modernist art. It was meant to go against the illusionist, totalizing art of the Realists before them by making their work highly self-critical and aware of itself as a medium used for art and, thankfully, nothing more. In his essay "Modernist Painting" (1960) Greenberg compares nineteenth-century Realism to twentieth-century Modernism:

> Realistic, illusionist art had dissembled the medium, using art to conceal art; Modernism used art to call attention to art. The limitations that constitute the medium of painting – the flat surface, the shape of the support, the properties of pigment – were treated by the Old Masters as negative factors that could be acknowledged only implicitly or indirectly. Under Modernism these same limitations came to be regarded as positive factors, and were acknowledged openly.[228]

Modernist art, which initially embraced collage form, also embraced the limitations of the medium they chose. The new ideal was to search the limits of art, and not, as the artists who came before, to find realities about the world and express these through art. Art became the realm of subjective expression and not objective truths and thus lost much of its direct relationship to the political realm.

Postmodernism is often considered to be the gleeful extension of such a world-view. Regarding postmodernism's embrace of the collage process Douglas Crimp notes that: "The fiction of the creating subject gives way to the frank confiscation, quotation, excerptation, accumulation and repetition of already existing images. Notions of originality, authenticity and presence, essential to the ordered discourse of the museum,

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[228] Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," Modernism with a Vengeance: 1957-1969, ed. Gregory Battock (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966) 85-93, here 86.

are undermined."[229] This quote accurately describes both the form of *Der Eisvogel* and the *Ironiker* that Wiggo and Mauritz so passionately hate. That is to say, these two characters, whose pathos-driven actions spur the plot along, would hate the form with which their story is told.

So, where does *Der Eisvogel* get situated in all this? Tellkamp allows terrorists in his novel to express their revolutionary ideologies with unbounded pathos but portrays this pathos with a form that has been equated to a broken anti-realist mode of portrayal. This form is thus representative of creating something new by using only old, pre-fabricated material. If Tellkamp's novel may be called a collage of its former, non-existing self then this points to a desire to create a significant tension between representation and subject. That is, he seeks to work ironically so that he may in fact make something new – the characters and plot – while also positioning his creation as one of many possibilities in a long history of literature. In this way the novel overcomes its own paradox – the one already presented in the plot.

That paradox in the plot is seen in Mauritz and his terrorist group who want to create something new and think, therefore, that all that has come before must be destroyed lest these former truths stand in the way of the new. That is, all other claims to what is good, right, and true are problematic for these creatively-destructive terrorists because they contradict their own claims. Accepting any contradiction seems to be outside of their realm of possibility. The problematic aspects of the desire for the new arise when it becomes clear that the new is being hunted with old methods and that the

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[229] Douglas Crimp, "On the Museum's Ruins," The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983) 43-56, here 47.

'new' that they seek is merely a return to a former state. The novel's own form suggests that the best possibility for overcoming this paradox lies with irony. Irony has gone unnoticed in all critical reviews of *Der Eisvogel* to date. The focus has been on either solely the novel's pathos-heavy content *or* on its fragmentary form. As will be argued below, irony is the concept that allows these two aspects of the work to be combined and coherently coexist. Indeed, the essence of the novel lies in the tension that is created between form and content, between irony and pathos.

Irony

As stated earlier, irony is often considered to be the structural opposite of pathos. Pathos implies and informs a strength of commitment to action that is both unwavering and firmly grounded. Pathos is used when someone wants to persuade an audience that he or she has *the* single, correct answer. Irony is, at its core, a mode of portraying the fact that there is no single answer, that one's perception of reality is relative – made up by contrast and comparison. This more philosophical understanding of irony has been formulated relatively recently even though it underlies all older definitions of the term.

The oldest and most wide-spread type of irony is called "verbal irony" or sometimes "stable irony." Verbal irony is when someone intentionally and obviously says one thing and means another or when the literal meaning of a statement means something completely different than what is meant. For example, if a friend says "What beautiful weather!" in the middle of a downpour, then the contrast between the statement and its context makes it clear that the statement is meant ironically.

What is often called literary or unstable irony is traced back to Socrates' "capacity to conceal what he really means. It was this practice of concealment that opened the Western political/philosophical tradition, for it is through the art of playing with meaning that the interlocutors of a dialogue are compelled to question the fundamental concepts of our language" such as how "terms were less self-evident and definitive than everyday meaning would seem to suggest."[230] This irony takes to an extreme verbal irony's insight into and manipulation of the instability of expression and meaning. For literary irony to function, the speaker and his or her listeners must share an inside knowledge; this knowledge helps negotiate the border between the ironic and the non-ironic. Literary irony is in fact a very modern capacity that makes it possible for history to be viewed as a series of realities and truths: "The idea of past concepts that are meaningful in themselves but which are no longer 'ours' requires the ironic viewpoint of detachment."[231] The core of such irony is the "capacity *not* to accept everyday values and concepts but live in a state of perpetual question."[232]

Richard Rorty sees this ironic awareness of the contingency of one's values and beliefs as the foundation of what he calls an "ironist's" worldview (as opposed to a metaphysician's). An ironist is "a person who faces up to the contingency of his or her own central beliefs and desires – someone sufficiently historicist and nominalist enough to have abandoned the idea that those central beliefs refer back to something beyond the

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[230] Claire Colebrook, <u>Irony</u> (London/New York: Routledge, 2004) 2.
[231] Ibid. 3.
[232] Ibid. 7.

reach of time and chance."[233] For Rorty such a worldview allows for two things. First, an ironist can still *privately* live by and be convinced of the values and truths that he or she has chosen. This is important because one's belief system is that which guides and motivates action; it is that which gives meaning to life. In the context of *Der Eisvogel* one could say that in Rorty's view pathos is both necessary and still acceptable inside the strictures of the private sphere. Secondly, an ironist always sees his or her own beliefs as embedded in a greater political context made up of other individuals; here each individual has, of course, the right to believe what he or she wants. Therefore, each individual's private beliefs and private sphere are both formed and kept in check by the private sphere of another individual. For Rorty, such a system allows the individual to maintain private beliefs without causing the political conflicts that arise when the expectations are there that others should do and think the same way. That is to say that – again in the context of *Der Eisvogel* – pathos is a valid and necessary force when governed by ironic limitation.

A major difficulty of dealing with irony has often been in determining whether it is intended by an author or not. Claire Colebrook notes that the critic is forced to refer back to the author as a unifying reference from which a text's irony can be deduced; by identifying a stark contrast or conflict between the ideas expressed in a work and the "actual" beliefs of the person who wrote it. Colebrook points out that "it is because we assume that a recognised great writer *is great* that clumsy, unpalatable or inhuman expressions are assumed to be ironic."[234] Much of what Colebrook means with her

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[233] Richard Rorty, <u>Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity</u> (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) xv.

[234] Ibid. 17. Emphasis in original.

adjective "great" is what Rorty refers to as an ironist. A "great" writer is not a purveyor of ideologies but an examiner of ideas; a "great" author understands that realities and arguments are created and portrays them as such. Seen in this way irony is always an extra-textual element that apparently only exists on a meta-level between author and text.

It is argued here that Tellkamp *does* intend to be ironic: to use and explore the worlds and values of right-wing terrorists, in order to accurately and fairly portray them in his novel so that they can be questioned and examined. Such a claim can be made without recourse to the author, Tellkamp, because irony is engrained in the text both deeply and obviously in its form. That is, irony does not exist in the novel's *content* because this would require a narrator or authorial voice. Rather, irony receives a structural-level position in *Der Eisvogel.*

The novel's form can be called ironic because as a demonstrative collage it is painfully, obviously transparent regarding its own means of portraying the world: as broken, uncertain, never total. The text situates fragments of various characters' statements and testimonies such that they come into dialogue: each fragment is allowed free reign and boundless tenor of expression inside of its own segment but is then ordered, indeed *sub*ordinated, as the form forces each fragment to respond to other fragments or be nullified by yet other pieces. Because of this collaging process Wiggo and Mauritz's statements and thoughts exist independently as individual fragments for themselves while – in their use in the greater textual collage – still being controlled and used to form a new, greater meaning promulgated by the text as a whole.

But the question remains: why would Tellkamp try to strike such a difficult (and often misunderstood) balance between form and content? Why would he allow such strong characters into his work – why not just portray them in a more toned-down fashion? Such a simplified mode of portrayal is not in keeping with the goal of Tellkamp's novel, which is to portray one's object of study fairly and accurately but still maintain control over that object. Stated in terms of the novel's plot one could say that novel is attempting to fully portray terrorists and their ideology without the result being read as a "terrorist novel."

The model for this type of tension-filled portrayal also sheds light on the mystery of the novel's title. The text offers no other reason why it should be called *Der Eisvogel*. An *Eisvogel*, a kingfisher, only appears once in the text – in a still-life at the home of Professor Kaltmeister. This picture is a self-reflexive self-portrait of the text itself.

Stillleben

The first time he visits Professor Kaltmeister's home Wiggo is asked by his host:

> – Sie betrachten den Eisvogel? … Das Bild ist schon mehrere Generationen im Besitz der Familie. Es hing über dem Durchgang zum Nachbarraum, ein quadratisches Gemälde von etwa fünfzig Zentimeter Kantenlänge; erst als ich näher trat, erkannte ich, daß das Bild eigentlich aus zwei Bildern bestand: Der Maler hatte in die dunkelbraune Grundierung, der hauchfein gemalte Goldwirkereien Tapetencharakter verliehen, mit satt lasurierendem Pinsel ein blaßgrünes, gerahmtes Quadrat gehängt, in dem das gedrungene Tier, der kräftige Schnabel ein schwarzer Keil im Dunkel, auf einem Ast saß. Es ist etwas größer als in natura, sagte Kaltmeister, der neben mich getreten war, ich betrachtete den stahlblau leuchtenden Vogel, der mit besessener Akribie und zartester, beinah träumerischer Klarheit der Farben gemalt war, Stillleben, sagte der

Professor, einen Zug an seiner Zigarre nehmend, das ist eines unserer Steckenpferde, nicht wahr, Mauritz? (78-9)

The Kaltmeisters are enamored of what they take to be the subject, the content of the painting: the bird. For them the bird is "ein Wappentier. … Das Wappentier einer stolzen und stillen, im Hintergrund wirkenden Gilde miteinander verbundener Menschen" (83). The form is, however a mystery: "Bild im Bild, der alte Kaltmeister warf mir einen verschmitzten Blick zu. Was mag er sich wohl dabei gedacht haben, unser Maler?" (78). The Kaltmeisters do not understand the painting's form; they are ignorant to the effect that form has on the content – on the bird with which they identify. Both Kaltmeisters appreciate the painting as a simple but accurate portrayal of an Eisvogel. Indeed, Professor Kaltmeister's only aesthetic concerns regard the fact that the bird is "larger than in nature." But Wiggo understands the significance of the painter's formal choices thanks to the inheritance of his mother's love of art:

> Ich erinnerte mich an Museumsbesuche mit den Eltern, [...] Mutter ging nicht zu den Allerweltsbildern, ich sollte besser sagen: zu den von aller Welt besuchten Bildern ... [sie] zeigte mir ein Vanitas-Stück einer Holländerin, Maria von Oosterwijk, war beeindruckt von dem Kunstgriff, daß die Malerin ein kleines Buch mit dem Titel Self-Stryt, das vom Kampf zwischen Gut und Böse handelt, ins Bild geschmuggelt hatte, Mutter blieb lange vor diesem Bild, [...] Mutters Stimme wieder vor einem Stilleben: Hier hat der Maler gegen die Konventionen verstoßen, indem er ein lebendes Tier ins Bild gebracht hat, in einem regelrechten Stilleben hätte das Hündchen da nichts zu suchen; ich konnte also Kaltmeisters Frage beantworten (84-85)

A still-life is usually made up of objects that cannot move – bowls of fruit, a vase with flowers, or glassware – because it is meant to exude tranquility and allow for peaceful contemplation. A still-life is an exercise in composition: the artist's feat is arranging un-dynamic elements into a nonetheless dynamic form. The more poignant genre of still-life

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is the *vanitas*, which is a composition of items that represent death – typically a timepiece, skull, a mirror, or broken pottery. Vanitas are a dark Baroque gesture meant to remind the viewer that life is transient and that worldly pleasure is pointless. That is, vanitas are meant to agitate and unsettle the viewer's (existential) tranquil complacency; they do this by including symbolically-volatile objects in their nonetheless-harmonious-form.

The painting discussed by Wiggo's mother is then an early convention breaker in the still-life genre because it incorporates a living being into its composition. In the seventeenth century the conventions slowly changed to allow living beings as long as the overall work remained controlled, "still."[235] The seventeenth-century still-life thus became an exercise in admitting objects on the level of content, which must then be kept in check by the paintings form. The Kaltmeisters' painting follows in the same tradition but with a more modernist twist: the powerful, life-like bird is framed by painted square, which is framed yet again by a "wallpaper-like" background. That is to say that the vital and vibrant bird is self-reflexively positioned as just an image, just a framed work of art that has viability and relevance as a painting placed in a frame, hanging on a wall. Unlike the rough edges of Picasso's pasted pieces (which include bits of wallpaper) the Kaltmeisters' painting is very a subtle collage with cleanly-welded seams between its parts – they are so clean and hidden that the owners themselves cannot even see them.

Like the painters Wiggo saw as a child and the painter of the Kaltmeisters' still-life, Tellkamp goes against the grain in portraying terrorists in literature and simultaneously

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[235] Ingvar Bergstrom, <u>Dutch Still-Life Painting in the Seventeenth Century</u> (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1983) 295.

comments on the accepted portrayal of such powerful but problematic characters in other texts. He lets a living being – the terrorist Mauritz Kaltmeister who is always teeming with pathos – exist in his portrait of contemporary German society but limits the figure's effective space with strict form. Both Mauritz and the *Eisvogel* remain "kräftig" and somehow "größer als in natura" in the space allotted to them. They are both painted with "besessener Akribie und zartester, beinah träumerischer Klarheit." However, upon closer inspection, both Mauritz and his bird counterpart are only one element of the whole work and, to the well-trained eye, they function as a "Kunstgriff" – artistic device – that forms a tension between the work's many components.

5. Conclusion

Uwe Tellkamp's *Der Eisvogel* breaks convention in the literary portrayal of terrorism. While the majority of works pass their representation of terrorists through the prism of a narrator, who is often a bystander or victim of terrorism, Tellkamp's novel has no such figure; on the level of its content it allows right-wing terrorists to express their ideology with unbridled pathos and without sound critique from other characters. Indeed, the narrating role is spread across eight characters and the most prolific of these, Wiggo, was a friend and conspirator of the novel's most vocal and violent terrorist, Mauritz.

The novel's pathos has received much attention from critics who argue from a tradition that distrusts and has banished pathos from German culture since it became associated with National Socialist politics in the mid-twentieth century. Pathos was originally categorized as one of many rhetorical devices used to persuade by appealing to

an audience's emotion. It then became associated with a sense of individual purpose and conviction that one is taking the right and necessary course. However, during the twentieth century pathos became connected to first conservative and then fascist politics, which used pathos to manipulate a large part of the nation into following fatal and criminal orders. *Der Eisvogel* does continue in this line of thought by making right-wing terrorists some of the most pathos-filled characters in recent German literature.[236] However, this novel neither condemns nor recommends such ideology per se. Rather, it uses the terrorist as the symbol and medium of pathos itself.

Tellkamp has come under fire because his work has been understood as an uncritical portrayal of the conservative ideology espoused by his terrorist characters. It has been considered uncritical because the main figures are unbalanced by philosophically-opposed characters or an enframing, relativizing narrative voice – "uncritical" because lacking any sense of irony on the level of content. The current study has shown that Tellkamp's intricate, collage-like form offers this "missing," oppositional voice in the way that it disassembles the terrorists' expressive power.

The novel's form acts as the strongest "voice" in the whole text; focusing on form as the precondition for understanding this literary text allows it to be understood as a purely fictional artwork that is *not* concerned with expression and analysis of sociopolitical issues but with artistic tradition and form. *Der Eisvogel's* form is constructed around an expression of irony that counterbalances its problematic pathos.

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[236] There might seem to be similarities to Goetz' narrator in *Kontrolliert*. However, pathos is not applicable as either rhetorical style or driving conviction – the narrator is better described as manic or obsessive but this energy is only directed inwardly. Indeed, Goetz' novel is structured around the narrator's inability to conform to the RAF's ideology, which he feels compelled to examine with the logic of literature.

In the original sense of the term "irony" the text both says one thing (in the voice and vocabulary of the terrorists) while, on a whole, meaning another. Irony is also present in its more modern sense understood as an individual's ability to find a distance to his or her own closely-held beliefs and understand these beliefs as subjective and relative so that there is no need to force others to believe the same thing. *Der Eisvogel* projects this sort of irony in a very untraditional way that has brought much criticism upon the novel and its author because it has, until now, been misunderstood. Tellkamp's novel replaces the antagonism of characters' opposing viewpoints found in more traditional novels with an antagonism of content (viewpoint) and form (the viewpoint's portrayal).

The novel's fractured form places the terrorists' viability and fervor inside a restricted space and in this way the novel limits the scope and scale of importance of what these violent characters do and think. Their ideology as well as the pathos which informs and rhetorically-cloaks their words and deeds are thus controlled and placed inside a greater form or context that is focused not on politics but on literature. Indeed, Tellkamp's novel is an examination of the acceptability and role of pathos in contemporary literature. It asks whether or not pathos is an inherent and necessary part of all acts of creation and what literature creates if it is guided wholly by ironic *distance*.

In this way the novel follows a tradition of still-life painting that, in the text, is brought into direct connection with the novel's name, *Der Eisvogel*. Like later versions of the genre of painting, the novel is an exercise in form, which follows the rule that "the inclusion of living elements in a still-life is possible, provided that their role is

subordinate and the tranquility is not destroyed."[237] Tellkamp has allowed the most

pathos-filled figures in contemporary German history, terrorists, into his still-life and

provided his viewer/reader with a convention-breaking work that marks the ironic

reemergence of pathos in German literature.

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[237] Bergstrom 295.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The constellation of literature and terrorism has received considerable critical attention, however, it is almost always the terrorism part, which is given focus. The current study illuminated how three contemporary German novels have appropriated terrorism in their own self-reflexive examinations of literature itself. While providing insights into aspects of terrorism, the current study attempts to offer new approaches to the often-discussed and sometimes-maligned novels by Goetz (*Kontrolliert*), Klein (*Libidissi*), and Tellkamp (*Der Eisvogel*). Reviews and previous research on these works show a conflicting variety of opinions that is often guided by prejudiced concepts of terrorism, an outmoded idea of authorship that confuses text and biography, and political presuppositions. This is particularly true of the works by Goetz and Tellkamp, who have received scathing critique caused by difficulties of approaching terrorism as literary subject matter, the socio-political context of the reader/reviewer, and the agenda for which the texts were used. To shed light on the disparity between the novels and their history of reception was a major motivating point for this study.

The confluence of terrorism and literature is, in and of itself, a fruitful position from which to contemplate issues surrounding the role of literature in modern society. The three novels use terrorism in different ways for structuring their self-reflexive examination of literature. These works' portrayal of the process of writing offer an excellent starting point for discussing not only the difference between thinking and

acting, they also make for worthwhile first steps for examining how the writing process

acts as an important tool of self-examination, that is, of examining one's own thoughts

and concept of self.

Kontrolliert

Rainald Goetz' *Kontrolliert* has been called a "terrorist text"; a work by a frustrated

leftist, who uses his pages as just another platform for spreading radical thoughts and

equally powerful anger regarding the portrayed political scene. For some critics,

Kontrolliert is mostly just a way for a terrorist sympathizer to express hostility towards

an oppressive state and an ossified conservative society; its pages are a space in which

the author can live out fantasies of becoming one of Germany's most notorious terrorists.

In opposition to current research, this investigation shows that Goetz' novel is a

highly-nuanced and passionate plea for an increased regard for the necessary role of

literature in modern society. A metafictional text, *Kontrolliert* shows how literature with

its underlying concept of subjectivity depends on the contemporary political conditions of

its creation. The narrating self is shaped against a backdrop of a state apparatus that

immediately impacts art and society in relation to their political alignment. Goetz' novel

is criticism from within the system, challenging the boundaries of literary expression. The

text is a portrayal of the process of how art and especially literature are necessary tools

for self-creation; it discusses the concept of autonomous subjectivity by submitting one's

ideas, feelings, and experiences to writing. Written in a continuous, present mode, readers

seem to participate in the thought process and the conclusions, apprehensions, hopes, and

fears of the narrating self. An analytical exploration of subjectivity, *Kontrolliert* leads readers along the perceptual borders of thinking and opens a critical perspective on the complexities and paradoxes of a modern, post-capitalist life. Submitting the intricacies of experience to writing allows one to see and thus sustain a state of complicated contradiction; maintaining such a state is shown to be the best possible way to avoid over-simplification and its resulting distortion. Over-simplification and distortion are shown to lie at the root of terrorist activity: violent action can be seen as an 'unproblematic' and, indeed, natural outcome of a simple, unambiguous understanding of the world. That is, terrorism is shown as a way to reduce and moreover reject complexity. Hence, *Kontrolliert* presents terrorism as an antagonist of literature. Terrorists deny the role and viability of literature. To be against the state apparatus is to be against literary representation, for literature not only portrays multilayered conflicts but is in itself a manifestation of complexity.

In *Kontrolliert* terrorism acts as a marker for what literature is not; terrorism is the contrasting object in the foreground that sets off the novel's background and actual focus: literature. By connecting literature directly to the modern democratic state system, the novel does not fit into prevalent political categories that are commonly cited by critics and literary scholars. Goetz' *Kontrolliert* does not 'support' or justify terrorist thought and violent action. Though the novel contains much political critique, its emphasis is on aesthetic contemplation and the resulting social product (a text, for example) as the best means of examining and expressing these concerns.

Libidissi

In the liminal space of the decolonized city of Libidissi, the German spy Spaik uses his narrative to make sense of his fractured world, which circles around a chaotic center of political violence. The novel is – on a meta-level, similar to Goetz' *Kontrolliert* – the portrayal of a mind and sense of self that has been completely ruptured and in the end becomes a terrorist of sorts. Alluding to detective and spy novels, the narrating process reveals only in the last couple of pages of the novel the 'true' identity of its protagonist, Spaik. In fact, Spaik has gone to great lengths to conceal the work from his conscious self, which is narrating the tale; he has done this with use of the medium of writing – with the aid of the written word he has been able to transmit ideas and knowledge between his conscious and unconscious self. Watching the nine video-prayers of the Great Gahis, the Gahis terrorist group's dead leader and prophet, which function as the group's Urtext, Spaik and the terrorists gradually become alike, although Spaik attempts to thwart the violence that the Gahists hope to unleash.

The novel offers insight into the usage of symbolism in terrorist attacks and how – on both the part of the creating terrorist and the receiving target audience – the use of aesthetic processes are part and parcel of the terrorist tool kit. Terrorist attacks are predicated on the same structure of signification as aesthetic products such as painting and literature; that is to say that terrorist acts are necessarily open to interpretation by the "target audience." Terrorist acts require symbols that demand reflection, empathy, and observation in order to *make* sense of them. This portrayal of terrorism is an especially is useful for thinking about the possible common ground between terrorism and literature;

as the novel would have it, with the correct awareness of how a culture understands and uses various symbols, one can better comprehend what intention lies behind a terrorist attack.

The novel's self-reflexive insights can be read as a contemporary portrayal of the role of literature in modern society. The character Spaik exemplifies a typical user of the written word in two ways. First, as discussed in the chapter on Goetz, Spaik uses literature in a similar way as Goetz' narrator: to create a uniform sense of self out of a chaos of paradox and contradiction that makes up the greater reality outside of mediation. Since arriving in Libidissi, Spaik has had to incorporate activities and values (those of the culture of Libidissi) that stand in direct opposition to his sense of self. Through writing and storytelling the novel's protagonist attempts to avert the psychological damage caused by the collision of Western and Eastern, modern and pre-modern, secular and religious perspectives.

The medium which conveys Spaik's narrative fragments deserves attention not only in relation to language – the basic medium at stake in Klein's novel – but as a metaphor. Spaik utilizes the inoperative *Rohrpost* in his apartment building to mentally create distance from difficult and unacceptable parts of his existence. He uses the pipe system to literally posit (post) to his conscious self, the thoughts that he cannot stand to bear. More specifically: By first placing these thoughts onto paper, Spaik allows the medium of writing to capture his thoughts, which the *Rohrpost* then transports to his conscious mind; his mind then processes the information from a more critical, emotional-removed distance. Exploring the nature of terrorism in a globalized, post-colonial, Western-

dominated world allows Klein to explore the role of media and their impact on perceiving and processing information.

Among the media that are self-reflexively examined in *Libissi*, literature, of course, is the most important. In his novel, literary expression serves as a means of separating the experiencing or creating self from reality. Literature and storytelling create a 'false', imaginary reality that undermines the novel's attempts to portray 'truth', coherence, and solutions. By the end of the novel, it is clear that Spaik's entire narrative is a fabrication, a facade meant to present himself (his actions and motivations) to both the reader and his own self in a flattering light. The searching, inquisitive killers, who literally break into Spaik's facade (of both his house and story), act as critical, in fact, meta-level elements in the story, that seek answers to Spaik's mysterious reports. In Libidissi literature is shown as a medium that covers up and represses an undesirable truth. Spaik's literary fragments not only supported a former Western colonial power, but help to rehabilitate the Gahis terrorist group by mediating their messages.

Der Eisvogel

Uwe Tellkamp's *Der Eisvogel* deals with the possibilities and limitations of pathos as a mode of literary expression. Pathos has been largely banned from German literature since 1945 and Tellkamp's novel offers the rationale for this self-inflicted censorship: Right-wing terrorists, the protagonists of *Der Eisvogel*, attempt to reintroduce, for example concepts of 'nation', 'aristocracy', and 'anti-democracy' – ideas that have proven damaging in German history – with the rhetorical help of pathos. Nevertheless,

Der Eisvogel has received much criticism as being a product of a right-wing author, confusing the story's proponents of violence with the viewpoints of their creator. The novel's form, however, offers strong criticism of the ideas expressed; the collage-like form, which this study reveals as formal irony, positions the characters and their statements in such a way that their own philosophical contradictions become apparent.

The main character and narrator, Wiggo, an out of work philosopher, and his new friend, the right-wing terrorist Mauritz, express many opinions and perform provocative harangues against the ills of modern, democratic society, which they equate with a populist mediocrity. The main object of their rage is a pervasive irony in contemporary German culture and politics, which, they claim, is the cause of a destructive cynical skepticism, that undermines any possibility of change towards a more 'unified', 'value'-oriented society. The novel defines pathos as both a rhetorical style as well as a passionate conviction – not effected by ironic doubt – regarding a certain course of action. Both of these understandings of pathos are reminiscent of radical conservative politics in Germany over the past 100 years.

Tellkamp's text attempts to show that a novel's form – and not its content – is the true location of its aesthetic focus, and, in train, authorial 'voice'; a novel's form, *Der Eisvogel* shows, always controls and manipulates its content. The choice of conservative terrorism as content – which is portrayed fully and earnestly – is thus a true challenge for this novel's ironic form, which offers critical insight and perspective onto its content.

Metafiction and Terrorism

Goetz', Klein's, and Tellkamp's novel are representative of the challenges faced by texts that attempt to offer a full and accurate portrait of terrorism: how can literature provide a 'realistic' representation of this violent political phenomenon yet still stay true to its critical and removed origins as aesthetic creation. *Kontrolliert*, *Libidissi*, and *Der Eisvogel* contain a high level of self-reflection, which constantly forces the reader to recognize that these pages are constructs of imagination and one person's creativity, not in any way a complete and authoritative presentation of reality. Each novel uses terrorism differently to examine the border between political action and aesthetic contemplation; the result is a clear denouncement of the possibility of *engagierte Literatur*. With self-reflexive focus on their own form, basis of production, and limits, these texts make it clear that the true purview of the literary author and of literary texts is in the aesthetic realm and nowhere else.

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