

Leseprobe

Über Gegenwartsliteratur  
Interpretationen und Interventionen

Festschrift für Paul Michael Lützeler  
zum 65. Geburtstag von ehemaligen StudentInnen

Herausgegeben von Mark W. Rectanus

About Contemporary Literature  
Interpretations and Interventions

A Festschrift for Paul Michael Lützeler  
on his 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday from former Students

Edited by Mark W. Rectanus

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Mark W. Rectanus

## Introduction: About Contemporary Literature

In his foreword to the first volume of *Gegenwartsliteratur: Ein germanistisches Jahrbuch*, Paul Michael Lützeler remarked: “Es besteht eine Beziehung zwischen der zunehmenden Vielfalt, Qualität sowie Welthaltigkeit der zeitgenössischen deutschsprachigen Literatur und dem wachsenden wissenschaftlichen Interesse an ihr”.<sup>1</sup> Paul Michael Lützeler has been much more than a keen observer of contemporary literature. He has made significant contributions to research and scholarship on contemporary German literature through new projects like *Gegenwartsliteratur* and his ongoing engagement with authors. As the founder and director of the Max Kade Center for Contemporary German Literature at Washington University in St. Louis, he has played an important role in fostering the dialogue with contemporary authors and has expanded the scope of our engagement with contemporary literature by organizing numerous seminars, workshops, and conferences for scholars in the USA and Europe. His own work as an eminent editor, author, and scholar has brought researchers and readers into closer contact with contemporary authors and their work. By creating multiple platforms for conversation and critical enquiry, he has also shaped scholarly discourses on contemporary literature and facilitated a better understanding of how authors and their texts relate to socio-historical, political, and cultural forces, which increasingly defy traditional categories. Here, he reminds us that, “Schriftsteller sind Seismographen ihrer Zeit. Aber sie erfassen nicht nur neue Realitäten, um sie abzubilden, sondern befinden sich als Querdenker häufig in Opposition zu aktuellen Entwicklungen”.<sup>2</sup>

*About Contemporary Literature: Interpretations and Interventions* is dedicated to Paul Michael Lützeler as a contribution to the dialogue that he has created with authors, his students, and colleagues. This volume examines influential works that reflect the complex fabric of German culture and identity. Rather than attempting to offer a comprehensive survey of re-

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Michael Lützeler. “Vorwort.” *Gegenwartsliteratur: Ein germanistisches Jahrbuch/A German Studies Yearbook*. Hg. Paul Michael Lützeler/Stephan K. Schindler. 1 (2002): p. xiv.

<sup>2</sup> Lützeler. “Vorwort.” p. xiv.

cent trends in contemporary German-language literature, these essays provide a range of interpretative and critical approaches which engage emerging themes and issues from multiple, occasionally conflicting, perspectives or positions. Many of the contributions are conceived as interventions – designed to stimulate, challenge, and engage, while reframing and re-conceptualizing our approaches to contemporary texts.

The essays offer insights into a wide range of aesthetic, social, political, and theoretical issues. Particular thematic emphases in the book include: explorations of Germany's recent past and the ongoing legacy of war; notions of futurity among multicultural authors in Germany; reactions to the commercialization of multiculturalism; redefinitions of women's literature, feminism, and motherhood; interrogations of authorial intention and notions of authenticity; literary interrogations of place and explorations of urban and rural spaces in literature; the relationship between theory and literature; the aesthetics of literary expression and rhetoric; pop literature, audiences, and consumer society; and identity in post-unification Germany.

Although the emphasis in most of the essays is on contemporary literature in the German language, the volume underscores the shift to issues and mediations which reflect and resonate the multicultural, global contexts within which contemporary (German) literature is produced. These contributions recognize and address the mediation of cultural, social, and historical forces and tensions which constitute intricate processes of literary communication. They also reflect the consciousness that models of national literatures cannot fully capture the multiple ways in which contemporary texts communicate culture in literature or how they might be re-conceptualized within the contexts of world literature. The impact of globalization in shaping new forms of literary expression is also pronounced in these essays – e.g., through analyses of the globalization of linguistic expression itself or in the interrogation of globally-inflected contexts of everyday life (e.g., the nature of work, migration, media, and product culture) that have become locally redefined. In this process, the essays also register the destabilization of cultural and analytical categories, including shifts in our understanding of what constitutes postmodern and postcolonial texts.

In part, the contributors to this volume are involved in the process of, and work on, *Kontinentalisierung* which Paul Michael Lützeler describes in his book of the same name – both in terms of their situatedness in multiple continental cultures and in their interrogation of particular, local,

continental, and global intersections understood as contested sites of cultural production. As we consider how contemporary literature simultaneously registers and subverts the global through the instantiation of the text and reading, we can also examine the question raised by Paul Michael Lützeler:

Welche Rolle spielt die Literatur im Prozeß der Globalisierung? Literatur hat immer mit Mikrowelten, mit dem Besonderen des Besonderen, mit dem Detail des Details zu tun. Ein besseres Gegengewicht gegen die Verflachung und Vereinheitlichung einer Zivilisation als das der Literatur ist kaum vorstellbar. Sie ist auf eine denkbar umfassende Weise das Gedächtnis der lokalen, regionalen, nationalen oder kontinentalen Kultur, in der sie entsteht. Gegenwart wird hier als Ergebnis des Vergangenen durchschaubar gemacht.<sup>3</sup>

The imbrication of the past in the present and the dialectical relations of the past-present to an imagined present or emerging future(s) are also objects of investigation for many essays in this book. Of particular significance are discourses and interventions surrounding the Holocaust, and the manner in which writers have mediated and represented the experience of the Holocaust through literature. In this context, and throughout the volume, the vitality of critical theory is visible and striking – informing our exploration into how literature can provide an aperture for re-conceptualizing the relations of past-present to future.

This leads us to the first intervention of the volume, “Experiment Mars: Contemporary German Literature, Imaginative Ethnoscapes, and the New Futurism” in which Leslie A. Adelson asks: “What new cultural functions accrue to the literary imagination at the turn to the twenty-first century? And what facets of this imaginative phenomenon come into view when literary ethnoscapes become pointedly oriented to the future rather than the past?” Adelson investigates the “futurist Martian ventures” of Alexander Kluge, Berkan Karpat, and Zafer Şenocak – providing a preliminary mapping of this terrain, which re-conceptualizes the relations between futurity and contemporary German literature. Within the context of contemporary German literature, Adelson suggests that this investigation may assist us in “understanding some structural shifts in

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Michael Lützeler. *Kontinentalisierung. Das Europa der Schriftsteller*. Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2007. p. 14.



world literature today. The making of future histories and the remaking of *ethnos* are among them”.

In “Der Film zum *Krug*: A Filmic Adaptation of Kleist’s *Der zerbrochene Krug* in the GDR”, Gregory W. Baer takes a step back into recent German history in order to examine how literature is re-inscribed in contemporary cultural texts and discourses, in this case film. Baer argues that “the film does not simply represent a socialist update of Kleist’s comedy”, rather it can be understood “as a participant in a larger discourse about elements of a unique East German identity important to the development of the German Democratic Republic during the 1960s.” Baer draws upon socio-political texts which inform the context in which Günter Reisch’s film *Jungfer, Sie gefällt mir* (adapted by Reisch and Jurek Becker) was produced. Baer suggests that the tensions between Kleist’s text and the film adaptation represented a mechanism through which GDR artists could “engage discourses of legacy and destiny in the GDR and [...] contest rigid or monolithic notions of national identity”.

Discourses surrounding feminism and literature are a key dimension of Hester Baer’s essay “*Frauenliteratur* ‘After Feminism’: Rereading Contemporary Women’s Writing”. Baer argues that the category of *Frauenliteratur* has heightened relevance for engaging women’s literature produced in the era “after feminism” – particularly with respect to the “reactionary post-unification term *Fräuleinwunder* [which] has come to describe a new generation of German women writers”. Her discussion situates the trajectory of work by Judith Hermann, Karen Duve, and Silvia Szymanski as “at once aesthetically sophisticated and commercially successful, it partakes of both politics and pop, representing [Linda] Hutcheon’s ‘complicitous critique’ in the best sense”. Baer concludes that Szymanski’s work, in particular, may provide a model for a new definition of *Frauenliteratur* which negotiates the terrain of critical aesthetic innovation while remaining accessible to a wider readership.

Bernhard Schlink’s *Die Heimkehr*, as a “reconstruction of deconstruction”, is the focus of Stefan Börnchen’s enquiry into the nexus of the theoretical legacy of deconstruction associated with Paul De Man and its literary mediation in Schlink’s novel. “Derselbe Krieg mit anderen Mitteln? De Man, Derrida und die Dekonstruktion in Bernhard Schlinks Roman *Die Heimkehr*” investigates the narrative reconfiguration of debates surrounding De Man, Derrida, and deconstruction which, many argued, legitimized the aesthetics of fascist propaganda. Börnchen examines Schlink’s use of narrative doubling and intertextual references to

Schlink's first bestseller, *Der Vorleser*, within the context of debates on De Man and deconstruction. He presents multiple interpretations of *Die Heimkehr* which, as he argues, ultimately cannot keep its promise of historical objectivity, leaving the legacy of deconstruction as an "irritation" unresolved for the reader.

In "Moral Play? Poetics, Ethics and Politics in Juli Zeh's *Spieltrieb*", Claudia Breger analyzes the aesthetic dimension of shifts in the cultural landscape at the outset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, i.e., renewed cultural debates on aesthetics, ethics, and politics, which occurred within the context of the war on terror, unemployment crises, and racist hate crimes. Breger argues that: "In response to these different, if intersecting, concerns, public discourses as well as aesthetic production have in fact been marked by a new emphasis not only on questions of social or political relevance, but also on values as well as religion". Zeh's novel, *Spieltrieb*, provides insight into how these socio-cultural forces are mediated aesthetically. Breger concludes that the novel is ultimately caught in a "narrative balancing act" – "juggling moves of self-reflexivity and closure, deconstruction and the (affirmative) performance of divine authority [...]".

Arguing "with Habermas against Habermas", David Colclasure explores the concept "that at least some instances of literary practice are more appropriately understood as embodying speech acts centered on more complex claims of *intersubjective* authenticity, which turn on the *shareability of experience*". In "Habermas and the Genre-Distinction Between Philosophy and Literature", Colclasure provides a close reading of Habermas' essay "Philosophie und Wissenschaft als Literatur?" – opening the potential for a notion of intersubjective authenticity which would complement Habermas' theory. Habermas' discussion of Italo Calvino's novel *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* represents an attempt, Colclasure argues, to "bridge the world of fictional, literary representations on the one hand and the objective world on the other hand, but ultimately fails." Colclasure concludes that "the literary text engages in communicative action both to the extent that it criticizes and to the extent that it *can be criticized* with regard to the complex claims of intersubjective authenticity that it raises".

Sabine von Dirke's essay, "Sleepless in the New Economy: Money, Unemployment and Identity in the Literature of Generation Golf", examines how the literature of Generation Golf, including much of the pop literature, registers the forces of globalization within the Berlin Republic. Here, the thematization of notions of work in the texts of

authors such as Kathrin Röggla, Georg M. Oswald, Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre, or the pop quintet provide literary responses to identity formation in the context of the everyday workplace and the forces of the global economy. As a result, von Dirke concludes that: “the literature of Generation Golf and, in particular, the pop literary texts “Saisonarbeiter” and even *Tristesse Royale* suggest that identity needs to be anchored outside of work, for instance, in artistic endeavors such as writing scripts or literary texts”.

In “Zur Repräsentation traumatischer Orte in Texten von Dieter Forte, Ruth Klüger und Stephan Wackwitz”, Friederike Eigler investigates how traumatic experiences, that are bound to a specific site, can be portrayed in literature. Eigler explores the particular role that spatial dimensions and narrative descriptions of traumatic sites assume when temporal perceptions are distorted or shifted. Auschwitz, as the quintessential example of a traumatic site, is represented through two different discursive approaches, i.e., in Stephan Wackwitz’s *Ein unsichtbares Land* and in Ruth Klüger’s *weiter leben*. Eigler draws on both texts in order to frame an in-depth discussion of the literary representation of the air war and surface bombing in Dieter Forte’s trilogy *Das Haus auf meinen Schultern*. Eigler concludes that Forte’s discursive approach communicates that which Wackwitz und Klüger (each in a very different way) achieved regarding Auschwitz: “Die Annäherung an einen traumatischen Ort, die sprachliche Weitergabe nicht-erzählbarer Erfahrungen bzw. Ereignisse”.

The mediation of critical theory in literature provides the focus of Walter Erhart’s essay, “Schreib den Roman deiner Generation? – Thomas Braschs *Mädchenmörder Brunke* (1999) und die Dialektik der Aufklärung”. Erhart argues that key dimensions of *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer) assume a central role in the plot of Brasch’s work, without however being bound to models of social criticism associated with the contexts of the early or mid-twentieth century. In this regard, Erhart concludes that: “Die doppelte Geschichte des Mädchenmörders Brunke und seines Erzählers überführt den philosophischen Impuls der Kritischen Theorie vielmehr in ein literarisches Programm”.

“From *Ultradoitsch* to *Siegfriedisch*: The Problem of a Multicultural Literature in Zé do Rock’s Orthographies” situates the work of Zé do Rock within the context of a multicultural literature in Germany, in particular one which also takes discourses on literature as the object of its own enquiry. In her essay, Veronika Fuechtner argues that although Zé do

Rock's texts address discourses and public discussions surrounding nationalism and multiculturalism, they also should be considered "aesthetic interventions within the cultural reference system they evoke" – ranging from Nietzsche to orientation systems in the Munich public transportation maps. In this context, Fuechtner observes that "Orality as the organizing principle of Zé do Rock's orthography reform can also be read as a poetic concept".

In her essay, "Die Frau als Mutter und die Mutter als Frau im Erzählwerk von Birgit Vanderbeke", Nele Hempel-Lamer interrogates the manner in which mother figures are thematized. Through an analysis of four different characters in four different stories, Hempel-Lamer suggests that Vanderbeke's work makes a progressive contribution to debates regarding motherhood in Germany, in particular recent discussions surrounding the low birthrate and childbearing. Vanderbeke's detailed, nuanced narratives search for the causes of everyday exhaustion and frustration revolving around images of motherhood. Hempel-Lamer argues that these texts go beyond the deconstruction of the *Muttermythos*, in part, by exploring Vanderbeke's question "[warum] die Leute keinen Grund mehr sehen, Menschenbindungen einzugehen und Kinder in die Zukunft zu setzen".

"To what extent does humor provide [...] an element of 'external and aesthetic distancing' from a reality that threatens to overwhelm the mental apparatus and to exceed the limits of representation?" This is one of the questions posed by Thomas Kniesche, who examines "Hilsenrath's Humor" in order to come to a closer understanding of the uses of humor in literature dealing with the Holocaust. Kniesche frames his investigation of Edgar Hilsenrath's work by examining Heinrich Böll's *Frankfurter Vorlesungen* (1964) and Theodor W. Adorno's essay "Ist die Kunst heiter?" (1967) – both of which provide insights into dimensions of violence and the Holocaust. While Kniesche's analysis confirms that "Holocaust humor is a delicate and risky undertaking", he argues that it should be considered within the context of a general definition of humor that incorporates "the question of the human subject in its most radical manifestation" or ultimately "How is it possible to make jokes after Auschwitz?"

In his essay "Simply Made Up? Franz Kafka in W.G. Sebald's *Dr. K.s. Badereise nach Riva*", Daniel Medin examines how Sebald interweaves fragments of Kafka's own journey of 1913 into a chapter of *Schwindel.Gefühle*, and in doing so "destabilizes the historical-biographical prece-

dent and contaminates it with his own projections”. Sebald’s narrative provides traces of Kafka’s Gracchus fragments – meanwhile addressing the reader, providing commentary, and interpretation. Medin interrogates how Sebald’s Dr. K. blurs the boundary between Kafka and Kafka’s own characters often “at the expense of particular textual or historical truth”. Sebald’s own fictional voice emerges, Medin concludes, from what remains “a paradoxical tribute to the altered precursor, for this *Schwindel* ensures Kafka’s continued circulation in the reading community”.

The work of W.G. Sebald is also a focus of Karen Remmler’s essay “Traversing Home Territory: Cultures of Memory in W.G. Sebald’s and Ingeborg Bachmann’s Writing”. Remmler explores the “affinities between Sebald and Bachmann [that] are surprisingly overlooked in much of the scholarship on Sebald” through an investigation of how Bachmann and Sebald “engage landscape as a symbolic site of cultural memory that reveals the precarious relationship of individuals to nature and places once deemed unscathed by the pain and contamination of human intervention”. The process of walking provides, in part, an aperture for understanding this relationship and mapping it. Remmler shows how Jean Améry’s essay on home resonates in the work of Sebald and Bachmann so that convergences in the texts emerge via Améry.

In “Postcolonial Subversions in Uwe Timm’s *Morenga*”, Mary Rodena-Krasan investigates *Morenga*’s critical view of the German colonial mind set and colonial policies, showing how Timm’s “depictions of alterity and the association between the subaltern and representatives of colonial authority [...] reveal the paradoxes inherent in the colonizer/colonized duality”. Specifically, Rodena-Krasan analyzes how interactions between the main character, Gottschalk, and the foreign engender “subversions of Manichean allegories that had defined traditional First/Third World discourses [...]”. Gottschalk’s encounters with the foreign lead – as Rodena-Krasan concludes – to a number of questions, including: “Where do the boundaries between cultures reside? Are they possible to cross? Can a third alternative to the dichotomized relationship between South and North, East and West be found? Does a third option even exist?”

Gary Schmidt’s essay, “Sublime Melancholy: The Function of the Homoerotic in Sebald’s *Die Ausgewanderten*”, offers a critical reading of Sebald’s narrative within the complex nexus of melancholy, narcissism, and male homosexuality (as a “privileged but ambiguous signifier”). Schmidt discusses how the loss of an idealized past emerges in Sebald’s prose “as

the quintessence of modern experience itself”, which in “‘Ambros Adelwarth’, is given a queer inflection as it becomes embodied in the tragic homoerotic relationship of German and Jew”. As Schmidt observes, Sebald’s own authorial relationship to homosexuality, in his texts (ranging from *Schwindel. Gefühle.* to *Die Ringe des Saturn*), remains ambivalent: “The homoerotic bond between authors, manifest as symptom in the paranoia of the narrator of *Schwindel. Gefühle.*, becomes celebrated in the Ambrose/Cosmo relationship as a cipher for the author’s relationship to his subject matter”.

The problematization of authorial positions and masculinity are also examined by Carrie Smith-Prei. The author’s multiple roles as writer-reader-editor, provide the context for Smith-Prei’s exploration of “Masculinities in Trauma: Dieter Wellershoff’s 1960s Writings and New Left Psychology”. Smith-Prei argues that an analysis of the act of reading in Wellershoff’s narratives provides an aperture for understanding his aesthetic approach to literature that has a political commitment. In particular, the “traces of the reading act” in Wellershoff’s prose are “found written into the bodies of the male figures [...] in *Ein schöner Tag* (1966) and *Die Schattengrenze* (1969)”. Smith-Prei suggests that the fictional bodies found in these works archive, and provide access to, the psychological impact of repressive social structures on the individual. Smith-Prei concludes that we can enrich our understanding of Wellershoff’s works by reading them both within the context of New Leftist psychology and debates surrounding the subjective and the political.

Finally, we return to questions of authenticity and its representation in literature. In his essay “*Lente in echt* – Contemporary Literature and Playing with Authenticity”, Sebastian Wogenstein interrogates the “relationship between the so-called non-literary reality and the literary text” and notions of authenticity in Rainald Goetz’s *Dekonstruktion*, Daniel Ganzfried’s *Der Absender*, and Robert Schindel’s *Gebürtig*. Wogenstein examines how all three works destabilize or subvert referentiality and authenticity and in doing so raise new questions and implications with respect to the process of writing. Moreover, he argues that authenticity and mimesis have gained heightened relevance within the context of discussions on cultural identity and representations of the Holocaust. Drawing on the work of Theodor W. Adorno, Wogenstein concludes that “the question of authenticity cannot concern a referential authenticity, a mimetic relationship to reality, but at best the authentic ‘abstract fact that it is art at all’”.

The relationships between literature, history, theory, and society – an exploration of the work of authors and readers in complex social contexts – all inform our understanding of past-present-future constellations that are inscribed in contemporary literature and traced through the essays in this volume. Paul Michael Lützeler has played a critical role in increasing our understanding of the many questions that emerge from our engagement with contemporary German authors and their work. The collective scholarship represented in this book reflects the influence of his achievements as a teacher, scholar, and mentor. These essays also reflect Paul Michael Lützeler's ongoing commitment and dedication to his numerous students, on many continents, who represent successive generations of international scholarship in literature, culture, and society. We hope that he will find the essays both engaging and stimulating, and that they will – individually and collectively – continue the dialogue with him.

Leslie A. Adelson

## Experiment Mars: Contemporary German Literature, Imaginative Ethnoscapes, and the New Futurism

This essay marks an initial foray into what I am inclined to call the new futurism in contemporary German literature. What this term might mean is at this stage a set of puzzle pieces with which these experimental remarks begin. A focus on futurity in literature written on the cusp of a new century in any event departs from a longstanding emphasis on the past in both German literature penned after 1945 and the transnational migration literature that began to appear in Germany in the 1970s. Even much of the prose fiction signaling “the Turkish turn” in German literature of the 1980s and 1990s arguably entails imaginative re-workings of a German past in the main – as associated with twentieth-century genocide and the cold war, for example – en route to a shared multicultural future in Europe.<sup>1</sup> Because literatures of migration and their cultural arenas of engagement are constantly changing in our age of globalization, however, some literary conceits of futurity speak to rather different functions accruing to the literary imagination more broadly today. This may apply in particular where labor migration is at play, but we would be misguided to associate such labor-effects with immigrant populations alone (Turks in Germany, for example). The analytical project abbreviated here as “experiment Mars” thus begins by pairing some unlikely conspirators in futuristic time travel to a famously red planet.<sup>2</sup>

Widely known and celebrated in Germany since the 1960s as an innovative filmmaker, social theorist, legal expert, experimental fiction-writer, and – since the 1980s – for his so-called cultural windows in television

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<sup>1</sup> See Leslie A. Adelson. *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. The focus on futurity here also departs from the often touted celebration of new beginnings since 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Kim Stanley Robinson’s so-called Mars trilogy of the 1990s gives us the planet in red, green, and blue variations. For a detailed analysis of realism and utopia in this science-fiction masterpiece, see Fredric Jameson. *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*. London: Verso, 2005. pp. 393-416.



programming, Alexander Kluge might best be considered a multi-medial conceptual artist of extraordinary imaginative range.<sup>3</sup> First published in 1973, his “theory-fiction” titled *Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang* was republished in 2000 as part of a two-volume “chronicle of feelings” including both old and new experimental prose, much of it influenced by the rich German tradition of Critical Theory.<sup>4</sup> Only the first chapter of these “learning processes with a deadly outcome” will concern me here, since it revolves around the loss of earthly territory on a planetary scale and quirky reflections from Mars on what is “left over” (*übrig*) in the human wake of Earth’s demise. “The loss of the planet”, as this inaugural chapter is called, will culminate in the year 2103 in what the text comes to call “*Die Avantgarde im Sektor Morgenröte*” [the avantgarde in sector Rosy Dawn].<sup>5</sup> The military connotations of the term *avantgarde* are hardly coincidental in this work or the oeuvre of an author long concerned with

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<sup>3</sup> For a brief overview of related accomplishments, see John E. Davidson’s entry on Kluge, “one of the most visible and prolific cultural figures” in post-war Germany, in *Encyclopedia of Literature and Politics: Censorship, Revolution, and Writing*. Ed. M. Keith Booker. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2005. pp. 400-401. Many of Kluge’s theoretical insights have been co-authored with the sociologist Oskar Negt. See especially *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*. Trans. Peter Labanyi et al. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1993. (For the German original, see *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung: Zur Organisationsanalyse von bürgerlicher und proletarischer Öffentlichkeit*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1972.) See also *Geschichte und Eigensinn: Geschichtliche Organisation der Arbeitsvermögen, Deutschland als Produktionsöffentlichkeit, Gewalt des Zusammenhangs*. Frankfurt/M.: Zweitausendeins, 1981. *New German Critique* devoted a special issue to Alexander Kluge in 1990 with volume 49. As Miriam Hansen notes in her introduction to it, Kluge’s work was only beginning to be critically debated in the United States at that time (p. 3). See also Peter Lutze. *Alexander Kluge: The Last Modernist*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> The *Lernprozesse* cited here will be from: *Chronik der Gefühle*. Vol. II. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2000. pp. 827-920. Claudia Rosenkranz uses the term “theory-fiction” to characterize Kluge’s *Lernprozesse* in particular. See Rosenkranz. *Ambivalenzen aufklärerischer Literatur am Beispiel einer Text- und Rezeptionsanalyse von Alexander Kluges ‘Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang’*. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Vlg. Trier, 1988. p. 33 *et passim*. See also Klaus Scherpe. “Die Entdramatisierung der Kritischen Theorie in der Literatur: Hans Magnus Enzensberger und Alexander Kluge”, *Cultura Tedesca* 18 (2001): pp. 141-160.

<sup>5</sup> Kluge. *Chronik* (see note 4). p. 918.

the production of both war and hope in human history. Mars of course also denotes an ancient god of war.

If Kluge's imaginative conjurings of a Martian avantgarde prompt us to contemplate learning something new, as the book's original title and narrative trajectory suggest, so does a little-known "futurist epilogue" co-authored by Berkan Karpat and Zafer Şenocak, whose multi-medial collaborations of the late 1990s may even inaugurate a Turkish-German avantgarde of a different sort.<sup>6</sup> Best known in Germany for his incisive journalistic commentary in print, radio, and television media on Turks in relation to European culture and democracy since 1989, Şenocak is also a poet and novelist whose literary production to date has been most en-

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<sup>6</sup> Coined by the authors but not included in their published work, the term "futurist epilogue" is documented in an unpublished conversation conducted with Karpat and Şenocak and recorded by Karin E. Yeşilada in Munich on November 15, 2002 (*Werkstattgespräch*). In her pioneering study of lyric poetry by second-generation Turkish immigrants in Germany, Yeşilada notes that Karpat and Şenocak's "futurist epilogue" represents "an entirely new literary topography" in both migration literature and new German poetry. See Karin E. Yeşilada. "Poesie der dritten Sprache: Die deutsch-türkische Migrationslyrik der zweiten Generation", Diss. Phillips-Universität Marburg, 2005. p. 503. The three collaborative publications that together comprise the "futurist epilogue" include: Berkan Karpat and Zafer Şenocak. *nâzım hikmet: auf dem schiff zum mars*. Munich: Babel, 1998; *Tanzende der Elektrik: szenisches Poem*. Munich/Berlin/Cambridge [USA]: Verlag im Gleisbau, 1999; and "wie den vater nicht töten: Ein Sprechlabyrinth", *Morgen Land: Neueste deutsche Literatur*. Ed. Jamal Tuschick. Frankfurt/M.: Fischer, 2000. pp. 179-190. To the best of my knowledge, Yeşilada is to date the only scholar to have published textual analyses of the "futurist epilogue". In addition to her dissertation, see also Karin Emine Yeşilada. "Nâzım's Enkel schreiben weiter". *Hundert Jahre Nâzım Hikmet, 1902-1963*. Ed. Monika Carbe and Wolfgang Riemann. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2002. pp. 180-211. Yeşilada also discusses a compact disc produced in 1998 as a companion piece in sound to the text *nâzım hikmet: auf dem schiff zum mars* ("Nâzım's Enkel". pp. 203-206). For the CD, see Berkan Karpat and Peer Quednau. *nâzım hikmet: im garten der flüsterpupillen*. Munich: Babel-Bibliothek Intermedia, 1998. If the work advanced by Karpat and Şenocak can be understood as a Turkish-German avantgarde, it cannot be grasped in the same vein as what Feridun Zaimoğlu has termed an "ethno-avantgarde". Interviewed on German television on May 13, 2007, he applied this phrase in the spirit of cultural identity politics to characterize young Muslim men in Germany who wear headscarves by choice.

thusiastically received outside Germany, notably in North America, Great Britain, France, Italy, and Turkey.<sup>7</sup> By contrast, Karpat's installation art, which foregrounds performance, sculpture, and sound in public spaces in Munich, does not seem to have found much resonance as yet beyond the Bavarian capital.<sup>8</sup> While the "futurist epilogue" on which Karpat and Şenocak collaborated consists of three independently published texts – and may also be said to include several of Karpat's performative sound sculptures and installations, especially those incorporating co-authored textual material – this essay will focus on the first published installment of the so-called epilogue – *nâzım hikmet: auf dem schiff zum mars*.

This installment appeared in 1998 with the publishing house of Babel in the form of twelve short poetic segments. The recurring trope of a rocket ship en route to Mars lends itself to juxtaposition with Kluge's "avantgarde" fiction, though other elements of the "futurist epilogue" more readily recall the actual historical phenomenon of the futurist avantgarde in Europe, especially in the Soviet Union. After all, the second installment of Karpat and Şenocak's collaborative labors – *Tanzende*

<sup>7</sup> While Şenocak's language of literary production has long been German in the main, he has recently begun to write poetry and novels in Turkish too. For the latter, see especially Zafer Şenocak. *Alman Terbiyesi*. Istanbul: Alef, 2007. On Şenocak more generally, see especially Zafer Şenocak. Ed. Tom Cheesman and Karin E. Yeşilada. Cardiff, UK: University of Wales, 2003. See also Yeşilada's entry on Şenocak in *Kritisches Lexikon zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*, Ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold. Munich: text + kritik [84. Nachlieferung], 2006. Yeşilada is currently preparing an issue of *text + kritik* that will be devoted to the author as well.

<sup>8</sup> On Karpat, see: Yeşilada. "Poesie der dritten Sprache". pp. 479-480 and "Nâzım's Enkel", pp. 191-194 (see note 6 for both). See also Fabienne Hübenner. "Schatzsuche im kunstfreien Raum – Der Installationskünstler Berkan Karpat". *Die Zeit* (18 October 2002), reproduced on Karpat's Web site <http://www.karpat.de/pag/1/BerkanKarpat.php>; March 20, 2007. A recent publication on avantgarde art in post-Wall Germany includes important installation art by Kutluğ Ataman, a sound-and-sight innovator whose international reputation was first established by his multilingual film production in Germany (*Lola und Bilidikid*, 1998), but no mention of Berkan Karpat, who actually lives in Germany. See *Reality Bites: Making Avant-garde Art in Post-Wall Germany/Kunst nach dem Mauerfall*. Ed. Sabine Eckmann. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2007. pp. 34-36. The Ataman piece included here is "It's a Vicious Circle", in which sound becomes a key sculptural element. Karpat might be compared with Ataman on this count.

*der Elektriik: szenisches Poem*, which followed in 1999 – directly invokes the spirit of Russian Futurism in punning allusions to Velimir Khlebnikov, whom Roman Jakobson once called “the greatest world poet of our century”. As Marjorie Perloff has noted as recently as 2003, however, the Russian Futurist known in the 1920s for his so-called transrational “invention of new words based purely on sound” (as opposed to semantics, syntax, or morphology, for example) remains largely undiscovered in the West despite an English translation of his collected works in 1997.<sup>9</sup> Yet, to say that Khlebnikov’s ghost figures in playful bits and pieces in *Tanzende der Elektriik* – as it does in the coinage *sprachchlebtomane* or “language khlebtomaniac”, for example – is not to say that Karpát and Şenocak mimic the historical Futurist’s aesthetic theory or practice. One might say instead that bits and pieces of historical and cultural matter circulate in all parts of the “futurist epilogue” without ever yielding an intelligible whole. One is reminded here of a line in conversation in Kluge’s “loss of the planet” chapter, where legal and medical experts wonder how they should think about humanity’s material leftovers on Mars after human society on Earth has been destroyed and few interplanetary travelers escape attacks on their space ships intact. Uneasy with the situation even though he himself has not been physically harmed, one of the conversationalists describes the mood that unsettles him: “Ich fühle mich oft ganz zerstückelt” [I often feel all in pieces].<sup>10</sup> The voice of the past is notably “all in pieces” in both texts under examination here.

As I hope to show in reference to *nâzım hikmet: auf dem schiff zum mars*, however, even the most seemingly nostalgic of the textual components in Karpát and Şenocak’s “futurist epilogue” warrants reading against the obvious grain. Resurrecting the ghost of Nâzım Hikmet (1902-1963), modern Turkey’s best-loved people’s poet, who spent years in Turkish prisons for his communist and pacifist beliefs and then died in Soviet exile not long after the Berlin Wall went up, turns out to be more about *Zerstückelung* than social alienation (*Entfremdung*) – more about being all in

<sup>9</sup> See Marjorie Perloff. *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture* [with a new preface]. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2003. pp. xxix, 121. See also Zbigniew Folejewski. *Futurism and Its Place in the Development of Modern Poetry: A Comparative Study and Anthology*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 1980. Perloff cites Jakobson’s *My Futurist Years*. Ed. Bengt Jangfeldt. Trans. Stephen Rudy. New York: Marsilio, 1992. p. 20.

<sup>10</sup> Kluge. *Chronik* (see note 4). pp. 839-840.

pieces than wanting to make things whole again.<sup>11</sup> The notion that this bespeaks some type of futurism rather than despair in post-socialist Europe may well seem far-fetched. Jean Améry, who survived torture at the hands of Nazis at a Belgian concentration camp but hardly intact, once characterized the future as “the authentically human dimension”.<sup>12</sup> If the matter of human life appears “all in pieces” in Kluge’s “learning processes” and Karpat and Şenocak’s “futurist epilogue”, what is there to learn about a futurism that would not merely lament, repeat, or forget an inhumane past?<sup>13</sup>

The question as to such a futurism is fundamentally related, I propose, to changing functions of both ethnicity and literature in our time. Addressing the late twentieth-century “Turkish turn” in German literature, I have argued elsewhere that cultural constellations of *ethnos* today can be incompatible with discrete and continuous ethnic identities as multiculturalism often conceives them.<sup>14</sup> Seyla Benhabib’s critique of what she calls “strong contextualism” and “mosaic multiculturalism” in political theories of membership in contemporary European society reminds us that cultures do not function socially in the age of globalization as “seamless wholes”.<sup>15</sup> This is presumably one reason why the conceptual language of a “runaway world”, interactive “networks”, and proliferating “-scapes” circulates with ever more frequency across the disci-

<sup>11</sup> For overviews of Hikmet’s biography and analyses of his work, see the anthology edited by Carbe and Riemann in honor of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the poet’s birth (see note 6). As Yeşilada notes, UNESCO devoted its World Poetry Day in 2002 to Hikmet (“Poesie der dritten Sprache” [see note 6], p. 480, note 480.) See also Gisela Kraft. “Nâzım Hikmet”. *Kritisches Lexikon zur fremdsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*. Ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold. Vol. 5. Munich: edition text & kritik, 1983. pp. 1-10 [Grundlieferung]; and Dietrich Gronau. *Nâzım Hikmet: Eine Biografie*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1991. Kraft and Gronau also discuss the longstanding ban on Hikmet publications in Turkey between the mid-1930s and mid-1960s, which of course complicates the conception of Hikmet as a people’s poet.

<sup>12</sup> Jean Améry. “Ressentiments”. *Jean Améry: Werke*. Ed. Irene Heidelberger-Leonard. [Vol. 2. Ed. Gerhard Scheit]. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2002. p. 128.

<sup>13</sup> No endorsement of actual torture, dismemberment, or loss of life in war is in any way intended in either the works under discussion here or this analysis of them.

<sup>14</sup> Adelson. *The Turkish Turn* (see note 1). pp. 169-170 *et passim*.

<sup>15</sup> Seyla Benhabib. *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2002). pp. 7-8, 25.

plines. Such rhetoric bespeaks the analytical need for alternative models of sociability and context when older container-models of community and belonging fail us.<sup>16</sup> Accepting a prestigious literary award as recently as 2003, Alexander Kluge even explicitly characterized books as “networks” that are “necessary for survival” (*notwendiges Überlebensmittel*).<sup>17</sup> The trope of survival here clearly echoes Kluge’s fictional concerns with what is “left over” when earthly contexts are destroyed, as we have seen in reference to *Lernprozesse*, but the trope of survival may also conjure – for some readers and listeners – more holistically oriented associations with tradition, legacy, and continuity rather than change. Such associations tend to underwrite many popular and scholarly assumptions – normative as well as descriptive – about the function of ethnicity, even in dramatically changing worlds on planet Earth. For that reason, it is important to note that Kluge’s fictional tale of a Martian “avantgarde” circles around the question of what is “left over” in bits – given the increasingly de-materialized presence of earthly life – and decidedly not “what remains” in any holistic representational sense.<sup>18</sup> Much will pivot on this distinction.

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<sup>16</sup> See Anthony Giddens. *Runaway World: How Globalisation Is Reshaping Our Lives*. New York: Routledge, 2003. The analytical conceit of networks is especially common in urban studies and media studies. Writing on recent avantgarde art in Germany, Lutz Koepnick observes in a related vein that networks represent “the dominant structure of communication, collaboration, and cultural production” today. As he puts it, this is because “the exchange of immaterial goods – of information, knowledge, and ideas” predominates, and the principally “open form of the network” is able to elude “material form, finality, and closure”. See Lutz Koepnick. “Bits and Pieces: Art in the Age of Global Networks”. *Reality Bites* (see note 8). pp. 103-149. Arjun Appadurai’s anthropological study of changing diasporas, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1996, first discussed “global cultural flows” in terms of “ethnoscapes”, “mediascapes”, “technoscapes”, “financescapes”, and “ideoscapes” (pp. 33-34 *et passim*). Negt and Kluge’s frequent rhetorical and analytical recourse to *Zusammenhänge* in situations where nothing quite “hangs together” to present a whole might be fruitfully considered in this historical connection too.

<sup>17</sup> Alexander Kluge. “Büchner-Preis-2003 Rede”. ([http://www.kluge-alexander.de/presse\\_dankrede\\_buechnerpreis-2003.shtml](http://www.kluge-alexander.de/presse_dankrede_buechnerpreis-2003.shtml); Section II, April 19, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> The figure of “what remains” informs Christa Wolf’s eponymous reflections on life in the German Democratic Republic, which were published after its demise. See Christa Wolf. *Was bleibt: Erzählung*. Frankfurt/M.: Luchterhand, 1990.

In the life of academe an attachment to territories and communities thought to cohere in their ideal form seems to lose more and more analytical purchase as global and local phenomena become increasingly enmeshed.<sup>19</sup> This shifting ground of analysis manifests itself in various ways in scholarship on ethnicity in particular. Commenting on “the nature of ethnicity in the project of migration”, for example, John Rex observes:

Although much of the theoretical writing about ethnicity has been concerned with the attachment of an ethnic group to a territory, in fact ethnic communities are often concerned precisely with their detachment from a territory, that it is to say with the business of international migration.<sup>20</sup>

Rex pointedly uncouples ethnicity and nationalism by challenging the ostensible primacy of continuous territorial homelands for migrant communities. Could the primacy of continuous human communities cohering as cultural blocs be similarly challenged if *ethnos* were no longer defined by ethnicity for non-migrating groups too? Could it be that detachment from received forms of communal embodiment serves new forms of social affiliation for which tradition- and legacy-based models of ethnicity can no longer account? The suggestion may not be as bold as years of identity politics lead us to believe. Writing in 1914 – just around the time that Futurist fervor was seizing many European intellectuals<sup>21</sup> – Max Weber defined the lived principle of *ethnos* in terms that are not bound to continuity of blood or even custom:

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<sup>19</sup> The term “glocalization” was coined in Japanese business practices in the 1980s and subsequently adapted for scholarly analysis by Roland Robertson at a conference on globalization and indigeneity. See *Globalization and Indigenous Culture*. Ed. Inoue Nobutaka. Tokyo: Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics. Kokugakuin University, 1997. Critical reflections on interactive global and local spheres are now widespread.

<sup>20</sup> John Rex. “The Nature of Ethnicity in the Project of Migration”. *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Migration*. Ed. Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex. 1997; Oxford: Blackwell, 2003. pp. 269-283, here p. 274. For related theoretical interventions see: Brian Axel. “The Diasporic Imaginary”. *Public Culture* 12:2 (2002): pp. 411-428.

<sup>21</sup> Marjorie Perloff dates the height of “the Futurist Moment” to the six months prior to World War I, though she also discusses Italian Futurism prior to 1914 as well as Russian Futurism of the 1920s and notes that Vladimir Mayakovsky gave his Futurist lectures in Moscow in 1912. See Perloff. *The Futurist Moment* (see note 9). pp. xxi, xxiv; 116-160.

We shall call ‘ethnic groups’ those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists.<sup>22</sup>

As the editors of a recent anthology of essays on ethnicity in relation to both nationalism and migration stress, Weber underscores the constitutive importance of subjective perceptions, not physical facts or cultural traits as such, for the formation of *ethnos* as a social phenomenon.<sup>23</sup> According to Weber, once purposive modes of affiliation turn into personal relationships, the subjective perception of “common ethnicity” may follow – not precede – such relationships.<sup>24</sup> If contemporary literature mobilizes or enables modes of affiliation in newly imaginative ways, perhaps it can be said that this literature, in some respects, also contributes to a re-working of *ethnos* as a social phenomenon today. Beyond the “imagined communities” of national modernities, about which so much has been said in the last twenty-five years<sup>25</sup>, what new forms of imagined

<sup>22</sup> Max Weber. “What is an ethnic group?”. *The Ethnicity Reader* (see note 20). pp. 15-26. Originally published in German in 1922 for inclusion in Weber’s *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie*, this piece is reprinted in *The Ethnicity Reader* in English translation from: Max Weber. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. Trans. Ephraim Fischhoff et al. Berkeley: University of California, 1978.

<sup>23</sup> Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex. “Introduction”. *The Ethnicity Reader* (see note 20). p. 2. Guibernau and Rex also point out that the category of “ethnicity” has become “increasingly crucial in the social sciences” since the 1960s – because of phenomena associated with political decolonization, postcolonial nation-building, and transnational labor migration to Europe – and again since the 1990s, when so-called ethnic cleansing wrought havoc in post-socialist Europe (p. 1).

<sup>24</sup> Weber. “What is an ethnic group?”. *The Ethnicity Reader* (see note 20). p. 19. If the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are often seen as a period of modernity when wholeness ceases to characterize social life – as Nietzsche famously observed – perhaps ethnicity has become rather than remained a compensatory category of presumed wholeness over the course of the last century. Weber’s formulation is useful for revisiting this presumption.

<sup>25</sup> See especially Benedict Anderson’s seminal *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. [1983, rev. ed.] London: Verso, 1991.



communities are possible when the very notion of community either collapses or proliferates in bits and pieces of its former self? The language of networks lends itself to this type of analytical question, of course, especially but not only in relationship to media studies. What additional avenues of analytical inquiry might the literary experiments of conceptual artists such as Kluge, Karpat, and Şenocak suggest? Attention to functions of futurity in their work will help us think about this question.

In countless public debates about immigration and in many scholarly venues too, cultural and ethnic communities are often presumed to cohere on the basis of shared remembrances of shared pasts. This focus on the past is also evident in Weber's definition of ethnic groups cited above, even as the theoretical sociologist highlights subjective beliefs rather than objective histories for collective ties that bind. Yet what would it mean to conceive of ethnoscapas predicated, not on tradition and heritage – not even as subjectively affirmed – but on fictional futures instead? What if some of the ties that bind in the new Europe begin to turn on precisely this distinction? When Arjun Appadurai coined the term “ethnoscape” in his seminal study of global diasporas and changing modernities at the end of the twentieth century, he defined the concept metaphorically – in contradistinction to conventional container-models of ethnicity – as “the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live”.<sup>26</sup> For the renowned anthropologist, the social labor of imagination at this juncture becomes “the key component of the new global order”.<sup>27</sup> Bespeaking an exaggerated and optimistic claim difficult to sustain amidst widespread concerns with terrorism, war, and security today, Appadurai's bold assertion a decade ago should nonetheless give us pause to consider two questions that he does not raise. What new cultural functions accrue to the literary imagination at the turn to the twenty-first century? And what facets of this imaginative phenomenon come into view when literary ethnoscapas become pointedly oriented to the future rather than the past?

As Fredric Jameson's *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* suggests, however, imaginative engagements with the future always also entail imaginative excavations of the past.<sup>28</sup> A literary orientation to the future rather than the past can therefore be only a

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<sup>26</sup> Appadurai. *Modernity at Large* (see note 16). p. 33.

<sup>27</sup> Appadurai. *Modernity at Large* (see note 16). p. 31.

<sup>28</sup> Jameson. *Archaeologies of the Future* (see note 2).

matter of degree and function, not a matter of absolute separation. Some interplay between past histories and futuristic modalities is thus also in evidence in the Martian experiments under discussion here. For example, many of the historical “learning processes” in the Kluge text revolve around “four comrades” (*vier Kameraden*) – members of the German *Wehrmacht* – who escape the military offensive against Stalingrad in January 1943 by heading east, “on foot, in the direction of China somehow”.<sup>29</sup> Captured by Chinese nationalists a few months later, Boltzmann, Zwicky, Dorfmann, and von Ungern-Sternberg are described as “torn-up figures” who nonetheless function throughout the multifaceted narrative as experts in survival. Born in the birth year of the Third Reich, they survive National Socialism, military battles, torture, and slavery in the twentieth century and then the near-complete destruction of Earth in the so-called Black War of 2011. “Tough guys who under normal circumstances didn’t have any significant future ahead of them any more – full of chips and renewed several times over with genetic technologies”, three of them arrive on one of Jupiter’s moons “like dead people”.<sup>30</sup> Despite the increasingly unrecognizable or even scant physical presence of their own bodies, the body parts of human casualties of war (ordered to be reconstituted or “saved” somehow” by the organizational administration on Mars<sup>31</sup>), and even the planet Earth, all four reach the year 2103. This becomes the future vantage point in outer space from which these leftovers of human catastrophe remark and interrogate the trajectory of historical experience that culminates – as far as we know – in them.

This piecemeal interrogation of the past from an imagined future often takes the form of paratextual matter. For example, one section heading that appears as a direct quotation but is never actually attributed to a voice of articulation informs us: “The homeland [*Heimat*] was lost to us in Stalingrad already.”<sup>32</sup> In this example, the loss of a German configuration of homeland is tied retroactively to the loss of a planetary home for human existence. In another example of paratextual interventions, many of which appear as literal footnotes to the ostensible story-line, Zwicky questions Dorfmann’s reported memory about the hairy nape of one casualty’s neck. Dorfmann responds in the same footnote: “It is neces-

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<sup>29</sup> Kluge. *Lernprozesse* (see note 4). p. 843.

<sup>30</sup> Kluge. *Lernprozesse* (see note 4). pp. 850 and 852.

<sup>31</sup> Kluge. *Lernprozesse* (see note 4). p. 838.

<sup>32</sup> Kluge. *Lernprozesse* (see note 4). p. 842.

sary to give the report some flesh and blood”.<sup>33</sup> This is a telling remark, for this experimental tale of bits and pieces reaching from Germany to Mars seems to ask what happens to the material substance of human experience when matter as such is vastly transformed. The implied question is at once highly abstract and discerningly sensual, a by-product in fiction of understanding history literally as a kind of “long-distance” sense.<sup>34</sup> Near the chapter’s conclusion, a seemingly authoritative voice asserts: “Human substance is not destroyed but thickened instead”.<sup>35</sup> This would certainly appear to complicate the production of new ethnoscapings in any future-oriented sense. To repeat Appadurai’s definition, an ethnoscape is “the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live”. In Kluge’s “theory-fiction”, we cannot help but note, neither landscapes, nor persons, nor worlds survive intact.

The threat of planetary destruction and humankind’s cataclysmic demise puts Kluge’s “learning processes” in the conjoined realms of sci-

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<sup>33</sup> Kluge. *Lernprozesse* (see note 4). p. 837, see note 9. One expert on Kluge who is especially well versed in the author’s fondness for puns suggests that the text’s many references to feet entail allusions to the “‘quantum mechanics’ [...] of history”, since the word *quanta* means *feet*. See Rainer Stollmann. “Schwarzer Krieg, endlos: Erfahrung und Selbsterhaltung in Alexander Kluges ‘Lernprozesse mit tödlichem Ausgang’”. *Text und Kontext* 12.2 (1984) [Special Issue on *Zukunftsbilder in der deutschen Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts*]: pp. 349-369. See Stollmann as well for important insights into puns related to the names of the four comrades (pp. 363-366). Rosenkranz claims that the primary function of the survival experts is to provide footnote commentary on events that they themselves recapitulate (*Ambivalenzen* [see note 4], p. 61).

<sup>34</sup> Negt and Kluge elaborated related thoughts on subjective relationships to history as a form of labor in *Geschichte und Eigensinn* (see note 3). For summative commentary, see Leslie A. Adelson. *Making Bodies, Making History: Feminism and German Identity*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1993. pp. 5-13. For incisive remarks on Kluge’s fiction as an interrogation of the relationship between socio-historical abstraction and sensory experience, see Andrew Bowie. “New Histories: Aspects of the Prose of Alexander Kluge”. *Journal of European Studies* 12 (1982): pp. 180-208.

<sup>35</sup> Kluge. *Lernprozesse* (see note 4). p. 854. Stollmann, “Schwarzer Krieg, endlos”, reads *Lernprozesse* as “an odyssey of self-preservation, annihilation, self-destruction” (see note 33. p. 356), but in my view the text probes abstract questions about the elusive substance of historical experience instead. For Kluge, such learning processes cannot be cast as stories about individual persons or human groups *as such*, not even about opportunistic ones.

ence fiction and dystopian literature.<sup>36</sup> While categorical relationships and distinctions between popular forms of science fiction and classical models of utopian literature generally are often disputed, some scholars are clearly inclined to consider utopian fiction a form of science fiction, albeit one that stresses social theory over scientific exploration in alternative worlds.<sup>37</sup> According to Adam Roberts, the overall “history of science fiction” pivots in the main on “extraordinary voyages” through space, time, and technology. Although interplanetary travel represents a common motif, the central feature of science fiction in Roberts’s view is a “radical Will to Otherness, a fascination with the outer reaches of imaginative possibility”. This is a kind of world-building, “in which writers construe alternative but self-consistent societies”.<sup>38</sup> Jameson too is interested in utopian functions of science fiction as “a representational

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<sup>36</sup> Stollmann’s article on *Lernprozesse* appeared in both a volume on “images of the future” (see note 33) and an anthology on “visions of apocalypse”. For the latter, see *Apokalypse: Weltuntergangsvisionen in der Literatur des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Ed. Gunter E. Grimm, Werner Faulstich and Peter Kuon. Frankfurt/M.: suhrkamp taschenbuch materialien, 1986. pp. 148-167. Science fiction elements in Kluge’s work are frequently noted. Rosenkranz notes them as well but explicitly dismisses the notion that Kluge writes in an apocalyptic vein because of what she considers the author’s ironic style. According to Rosenkranz, this allows Kluge to analyze possible alternatives to catastrophic reality (*Ambivalenzen*. [see note 4] p. 32).

<sup>37</sup> See Adam Roberts. *The History of Science Fiction*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. p. viii; and Fredric Jameson. *Archaeologies of the Future* (see note 2), which focuses precisely on the utopian functions of science-fiction literature. For an incisive study of science fiction in the GDR, where the concept of utopia was politically controversial (as it was throughout communist Europe), see Sonja Fritzsche. *Science Fiction Literature in East Germany*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006. On East German film in this regard, see Sonja Fritzsche. “East Germany’s *Werkstatt Zukunft*: Futurology and the Science Fiction Films of *deja-futurum*”. *German Studies Review* 29.2 (2006): pp. 367-386. On science fiction more generally, see John Clute and Peter Nicholls. *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Orbit, 1993.

<sup>38</sup> Roberts. *The History of Science Fiction* (see note 37). pp. vii-viii. Borrowing the phrase “extraordinary voyages” from Jules Verne, Roberts is at pains to define science fiction historically “as that form of fantastic romance in which magic has been replaced by the materialist discourses of science” (p. xi). By his account, the category of the extraordinary thus displaces the category of the supernatural.

meditation on radical difference, radical otherness, and on the systemic nature of the social totality". With the collapse of communism in Europe, according to Jameson, this meditation figures anew.<sup>39</sup> The *Lernprozesse* published in 1973 and again in 2000 can no doubt be interpreted in relation to the cold war as well as hot ones, as can Karpat and Şenocak's poetic meditation on Nâzım Hikmet en route to Mars. But world-building and "self-consistent societies" hardly apply to the Kluge text, where worlds, bodies, societies, and even rocket ships are constantly falling or being blown apart.

Rather than reading *Lernprozesse* as an exemplum of science fiction, I propose to read its bits and pieces as a mode of historical fiction concerned with the production of futurity. (This may at times be related to but should not be confused with the production of a just society.) What could the production of futurity possibly mean? In an acceptance speech on the occasion of yet another literary prize in Germany – in 1985 – Kluge once characterized writing as a "laboratory" of the imagination, a laboratory in which writers serve as "guardians of the last left-over bits of [...] the grammar of time", that is to say, "guardians of the difference" between past, present, and future.<sup>40</sup> Reading Kluge's idiosyncratic prose fiction in relationship to history and historiography is of course nothing new. Other scholars have offered many important insights in this vein, though approaches and conclusions on the subject of history in Kluge's writing laboratory vary widely. Amir Eshel has recently pitted Alexander Kluge's *Chronik der Gefühle* against Günter Grass's *Mein Jahrhundert*, for example, to explore "two alternative paradigms" for "the poetic figuration of the historical" in postwar German literature.<sup>41</sup> For

<sup>39</sup> *Arcabologies of the Future*. (see note 2). p. xii.

<sup>40</sup> Alexander Kluge. "Wächter der Differenz: Rede zur Verleihung des Kleist-Preises". *Kleist-Jahrbuch 1986*. Ed. Hans Joachim Kreutzer. Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1986. pp. 25-37, here pp. 26, 37. In this same speech Kluge likens the responsibilities of writers to those of physicists in the age of "star wars" initiatives. Horrified by a television advertisement that aimed at children by downplaying the danger of such wars, Kluge resorts to English to describe the misleading image of a rainbow acting as a protective shield: "And there are bouncing the rockets" (p. 34).

<sup>41</sup> Amir Eshel. "The Past Recaptured? Günter Grass's *Mein Jahrhundert* and Alexander Kluge's *Chronik der Gefühle*". *Gegenwartsliteratur: Ein germanistisches Jahrbuch* 1 (2002): pp. 63-86, here p. 64. Eshel's particular focus regarding Kluge's *Chronik* is the chapter in Volume I called "Heidegger auf der Krim".

Eshel, Grass's semi-autobiographical retrospective of the twentieth century in 1999 is an Hegelian endeavor to portray the German century "as a cohesive totality".<sup>42</sup> By this account, Kluge's rendition of "the chaos called history" forestalls any possibility of interpretive totality or "closure", and Kluge begins to look a lot like Walter Benjamin's angel of history: "It is not illumination, not the constitution of present or future consciousness, that motivates [Kluge's] narration, but only the curiosity of a poet standing in front of history's catastrophic pile of debris".<sup>43</sup> Arguing that 1989 triggered a renewed engagement with writing about hope for Kluge, Eshel observes that the author's fictional chronicle is built on "emotion" and irony, which together foster reading as "a realm for reflection, a realm of differentiation".<sup>44</sup> For Eshel, Kluge's ironic style of narrating the past aims to "help prevent [...] calamities in the future" that would resemble those of the past.<sup>45</sup>

While Eshel translates Kluge's operative principle of *Gefühle* as "emotion", the operative translation in Andrew Bowie's discussion of history in Kluge's prose would have to be *feeling* instead. This is because Bowie, who also considers Benjamin's theses on history "essential reading for a fuller understanding of Kluge", contends that the author's writing about history (and the history of wars in particular) revolves around "the genesis of abstraction" in social life as "an object of *literary* investigation".<sup>46</sup> Bowie ultimately reads Kluge's literary attention to "the genesis of ab-

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<sup>42</sup> Eshel. "The Past Recaptured?" (see note 41). p. 72.

<sup>43</sup> Eshel. "The Past Recaptured?" (see note 41). pp. 64-65, 72. See also Christopher Pavsek. "The Storyteller in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Alexander Kluge's Reworking of Walter Benjamin". *Found Object* 2 (1993): pp. 83-92. Like Winfried Menninghaus, Eshel stresses that Kluge's writerly materialism is "not allied with a speculative philosophy of history, but with an anthropology that oscillates between theory and empiricism" (p. 83, note 9). The Menninghaus reference is to "Geschichte und Eigensinn: Zur Hermeneutik-Kritik und Poetik Alexander Kluges". *Geschichte als Literatur: Formen und Grenzen der Repräsentation von Vergangenheit*. Ed. Hartmut Eggert, Ulrich Profitlich, and Klaus Scherpe. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1990. pp. 258-272, here p. 262.

<sup>44</sup> Eshel. "The Past Recaptured?" (see note 41). pp. 75-76, 80.

<sup>45</sup> Eshel. "The Past Recaptured?" (see note 41). p. 82. Eshel relies on Linda Hutcheon's argument that irony conveys "an attitude or a feeling" (p. 80).

<sup>46</sup> Bowie. "New Histories" (see note 34). p. 187 and p. 207, note 10. Bowie discusses a range of writing by Kluge but does not focus on *Lernprozesse*.

straction” as a critique of the West German project of so-called *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, as a critique of attempts to portray the past as if it could be recapitulated phenomenologically by human characters or readers. For this reason, Bowie says (speaking of *Neue Geschichten*):

Kluge’s texts rarely attempt to *represent* suffering, and the language of the texts often deliberately mystifies it: more often than not the perspective is that of the persecutors, who unmask themselves in their very language.<sup>47</sup>

The same could be said of *Lernprozesse*, even though the “four comrades” are at one point tortured by Chinese captors before becoming agents of torture for a while themselves. If Kluge’s “learning processes” give us an account of futurity by looking forward and backward simultaneously, this is not exactly a story about a truly alternative world or about social predictability. In this sense Kluge’s historicizing approach to futurity seems to have little to do with either socialist-style “prognostics” or even Ernst Bloch’s “anticipatory consciousness” of hope as a historical force for justice.<sup>48</sup>

A different perspective on the approach to futurity in Kluge’s *Lernprozesse* opens up if we consider the text’s material form. The indispensable principle of montage in Kluge’s work is widely remarked, even though, as Rainer Stollmann contends, we perhaps as yet have “no concepts” for Kluge’s writerly forms.<sup>49</sup> According to David Roberts, who has written incisively on the centrality of montage in Kluge’s work overall, however, the printed page in the author’s prose is always typographically “broken up” (*aufgebrochen*), forms and perspectives mixed. “Photographs, quota-

<sup>47</sup> Bowie. “New Histories” (see note 34). pp. 193, 196. While Bowie interprets Kluge’s prose generally as a critique of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, Rosenkranz reads the pseudo-science fiction of *Lernprozesse* as a historical analogy of the West German “economic miracle” of the 1950s. One factor she stresses is a shortage of labor; another is social disorientation. See Rosenkranz, *Ambivalenzen* (see note 4). pp. 11–29. One might also note Kluge’s frequent allusions to *Trümmer*, including in outer space.

<sup>48</sup> Ernst Bloch. *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1959. On *Prognostik* in the GDR, see Fritzsche. “East Germany’s *Werkstatt Zukunft*” (see note 37).

<sup>49</sup> Rainer Stollmann. “Das Subjektive ist die Form, der Inhalt das Unterscheidungsvermögen: Zu Alexander Kluges *Chronik der Gefühle*”. (<http://www.dickinson.edu/departments/germn/glossen/heft16/stollmann.html>; February 24, 2006).

tions, boxed inserts, titles, maps, diagrams, footnotes, documentary raw materials, interviews, the mimicry of fabricated materials, technical jargon, scientific terminology, legal protocols, etc.” collectively highlight a perspectival gap between existing forms of social alienation and alternative forms of social possibility.<sup>50</sup> Situating the “pseudo-contradiction” between documentary and literary prose, between objectivity and subjectivity in this formal gap, Roberts elaborates Kluge’s indebtedness to Marx and Brecht for his own model of imaginative counter-history (*Gegen-Geschichte*).<sup>51</sup> Roberts might thus be said to provide the theoretical framework that undergirds other scholarly characterizations of Kluge’s aesthetics of difference as a counterforce to oppressive totalities.<sup>52</sup> Roberts also notes that the “decisive historical moment for montage” culminated in the avantgarde movements of the early twentieth century, which saw art as anything but organic and whole.<sup>53</sup> What I wish to argue regarding *Lernprozesse*, however, foregrounds a different relationship to the historical avantgarde in Europe. Kluge’s fractured consideration of increasingly immaterial leftovers in Martian orbit may have less to do with counter-models of history or the status of art than with the material status of human history as one basic building block of any conceivable future. What are the bits and pieces of human need and desire that can be said to sur-vive changing social forms in which such intangible but nonetheless material forces of history are organized? Idiosyncratic interrogation of this question signals both the content and the form of the opening chapter of Kluge’s *Lernprozesse*. This is more about the production of matter from which history could be forged – including *in the form of the future* – than about counter-histories as such.

In this connection Soviet-era debates about factography in the 1920s may prove more relevant to Kluge’s literary experiment with Mars than avantgarde montage in western Europe. As Devin Fore deftly demon-

<sup>50</sup> David Roberts. “Die Formenwelt des Zusammenhangs: Zur Theorie und Funktion der Montage bei Alexander Kluge”. *LiLi: Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 12.46 (1982): pp. 104-119, here p. 108 *et passim*. To Roberts’s list we could add, for *Lernprozesse*, musical notation and song.

<sup>51</sup> Roberts. “Die Formenwelt” (see note 50). pp. 117, 119.

<sup>52</sup> See for example Eshel. “The Past Recaptured?” (see note 41); or Claudia Brauers. “An sich ein Lernprozess ohne tödlichen Ausgang: Alexander Kluges Ästhetik der Lücke”. *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 115 [Supplement] (1996): pp. 169-178.

<sup>53</sup> Roberts. “Die Formenwelt” (see note 50). p. 116.



strates in pioneering research that reassesses the status of documentary styles in modernist aesthetics and socialist realism alike, German and Soviet literatures of the interwar years have more in common than was long thought to be the case, precisely because of non-mimetic approaches to reportage and documentary in both.<sup>54</sup> While scholarship on Russian Futurism often cites the importance of the concept *faktura*, which many Futurists used to stress the materiality of form in their work (as in “texture”, a term derived from painting) – and Kluge scholarship also indexes the mixed “Faktur” of the author’s textual montage – Fore gives us a different futurist vocabulary to entertain.<sup>55</sup> Rather than stressing the materialist aesthetics of Russian Futurists such as Velimir Khlebnikov and Vladimir Mayakovsky (who continued to write poetry rather than “production art” by some accounts), Fore concentrates on avant-garde theorists such as Nikolai Chuzhak and Sergei Tret’iakov. The latter were themselves interested in factography and not merely *faktura* for exploring the material effects of word arts.<sup>56</sup> As Fore puts it, there was a theoretical impasse among Russian Futurists in the Soviet Union in the mid 1920s:

The balkanization of aesthetic production into the tectonic extensivity of ‘building’ and the psychic intensivity of ‘writing’ subscribes to a world view that categorically distinguishes between phenomenal experience and language.

<sup>54</sup> On this point, see especially Devin Alden Fore. “‘All the Graphs’: Soviet and Weimar Documentary Between the Wars”. Diss. Columbia University, 2005. See also the special issue of *October* on Soviet factography, edited by Fore, which includes Fore’s stellar article: “The Operative Word in Soviet Factography”. *October* 118 (Fall 2006): pp. 95-131. I rely here on Fore’s knowledge of original Russian materials, many of which have become archivally accessible only since 1989. Fore situates his own work “within a larger body of recent scholarly work that is reorienting studies of Modernism toward the east” (“‘All the Graphs’”, p. 4).

<sup>55</sup> On *faktura* in Futurist aesthetics, see Perloff. *The Futurist Moment* (see note 9). pp. 69, 126. On Kluge, see Christian Schulte. “Die Lust aufs Unwahrscheinliche: Alexander Kluges ‘Chronik der Gefühle’”. *Merkur: Deutsche Zeitschrift für europäisches Denken* 55.4 (April 2001): pp. 344-350, here p. 344.

<sup>56</sup> Fore cites Benjamin H.D. Buchloh as a “key essay” in this regard. See: Buchloh. “From Faktura to Factography”. *October* 30 (Fall 1984): pp. 82-119, (Fore. “The Operative Word” [see note 54], p. 100, note 19). For Chuzhak’s condemnation of Mayakovsky’s poetry as “literary ‘trash’”, because it ostensibly lacked a productivist dimension, see Fore. “The Operative Word”. p. 95.