PASTS WITH FUTURES:
TEMPORALITY, SUBJECTIVITY AND POSTCOMMUNISM IN CONTEMPORARY GERMAN LITERATURE BY HERTA MÜLLER, ZSUZSA BÁNK AND TERÉZIA MORA

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This dissertation analyzes future-oriented narrative features distinguishing German literature about European communism and its legacies. Set against landscapes marked by Soviet occupation and Ceauşescu's communist dictatorship in Romania (Müller) and against the 1956 Hungarian revolution, eastern European border openings, and post-*Wende* Berlin (Mora, Bánk), works by these transnational authors engage social legacies that other discourses relegate to an inert past after the historic rupture of 1989. Dominant scholarship reads this literature either through trauma theory or according to autobiography, privileging national histories and static cultural identities determined by the past. Shifting attention to complex temporal structures used to narrate literary subjectivities, I show how these works construct European futures that are neither subsumed into a homogeneous present, nor trapped in traumatic repetition, nostalgic longing, or psychic disavowal. My analysis extends and contributes to debates in politics and the arts about the status of utopia after communism and the role of society in political entities no longer divided in Cold War terms of East/West, three worlds, or discrete national cultures. By focusing on Müller, Mora and Bánk, I widen the purview of FRG-GDR discussions about communism to include transnational, temporal and narrative perspectives that scholarship on these authors often overlooks.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Katrina Nousek (b. State College, Pennsylvania, USA) holds a Ph.D. in German Studies from Cornell University and an A.B. in History and Literature from Harvard University.

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INTRODUCTION

I. Postcommunism in Politics and Culture

Postcommunism in literature and the arts distances itself from political theories of postcommunism that posit a necessary transition from real existing socialism, understood as a failed state form that once existed in Europe, to liberal democracy as practiced in states without an official history of communist governments.[1] Whereas postcommunism as a term in the political sciences refers to a teleological development of states, postcommunist literature reassesses the possibilities of constructing plural subjects and evidences utopian orientations toward better futures in the wake of public discourses that posit ends to history, utopia, and society with the end of state socialism in Europe after 1989.[2] Yet literature that continues to engage with experiences in countries that existed in the name of communism in Europe during the twentieth century demonstrates the critical relevance these experiences have for conceptions of the new Europe today by returning to histories that political theory—still surprisingly inflected by Cold War dichotomies that divide Europe into a lingering notion of distinctly different forms of state development in east and west—relegates to the past.

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[1] By official history I refer to governmental forms of capitalist democracy and state socialism. In so far as capitalism and socialism were also cultural counterparts that mutually informed one another for the majority of the twentieth century, their official history is not simply separated. In *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (2003), Susan Buck-Morss demonstrates ways in which a dream of mass utopia rooted in industrial modernity constructs a narrative of the twentieth century through both socialism and European modernity for example. See Buck-Morss, Susan. *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000. Print. By real existing socialism, I refer to governments in the East bloc existing in the name of the Communist Party. My discussion in later chapters will also include the former Yugoslavia, which was not a part of the East bloc after 1948.

[2] Francis Fukuyama's 1989 article "The End of History" declared the end of communism in Europe to demonstrate a development of world orders in which liberal democracy was the ultimate stage of political development. "The End of History?" *The National Interest* 16 (Summer 1989): 3-18. Print. Susan Buck-Morss argues that 1989 marks the passing of utopian projects in both East and West in *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000. Print. Boris Buden shows how 1989 marks the end of society as a viable medium for utopia in *Zone des Übergangs: Vom Ende des Postkommunismus*. Suhrkamp: Frankfurt a/M, 2009. Print. 162 – 200.

The present study therefore focuses on postcommunism as a continued engagement after 1989 with subjective experience marked by real existing socialism by examining literature by authors writing in a transnational vein about communist legacies and former political subjects of socialist states. The analyses of postcommunist literature that follow take up two main questions. First, in what ways are futures posited and formed in this body of texts that are usually read in terms of nostalgic longing or as representations of a traumatic past? And secondly, how does articulating these futures entail reconstructing temporalities and collective subjectivities that provide readers with critical insight into the variety of histories that appear as a homogeneous Eastern Bloc in Cold War discourse? As we will see, postcommunist literature returns to what have been considered failures of state socialism in order to reassess the utopian impulses that remain in cultural postcommunist productions. The works on which I will focus cannot be considered representative of the entire body of literature that focuses on communist themes after 1989, but attending to the formal features through which they unfold stories of failed revolutions, surveillance in real existing socialism and postcommunist transition allows us to see futures in subjects that political discourses ascribe to either a homogenous present moment or a distant past. These futures are formed through a utopian orientation that allows for the critical reconstruction of history through aesthetic subjects that make visible systemic processes underlying social transformations leading up to and in the wake of 1989.

My analysis of postcommunist literature turns to three authors considering socialist experiences both inside and outside the political borders of Germany. These transnational texts widen German discussions about communist legacies after the 1990 unification of the former German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany through their attention to postcommunist subjects transnationally constructed through experiences outside and migration to

Germany. The first chapter focuses on Herta Müller (b. 1953), a Romanian-born writer who grew up in a German-speaking population in the Romanian Banat. Müller left her hometown of Nițchidorf, Romania and moved first to Timișoara, Romania, where she learned Romanian while attending secondary school and later studied German and Romanian literature at Timișoara University. After working as a translator and a teacher in Romania, where she was dismissed from her translation post for refusing to collaborate with the Romanian secret police (*Securitate*) in 1979, she left Romania in 1987 and moved to West Berlin, Germany, where she lives to this day. Her sophisticated literary productions won significant attention from literary circles in Germany in 1994, when she won the Kleist Prize (1994), and more recently worldwide when she was awarded the 2009 Nobel Prize for Literature. Müller's multifaceted oeuvre, which ranges from collage poems, to essayistic reflections on culture and politics to short stories and novels, engages experiences in Romania under Nicolae Ceaușescu's Communist Party (1965-89), deportations and forced labor camps in the Soviet Ukraine, migration to West Berlin, and reflections on language and literary production more generally. Mülller's transnational German prose reflections will be crucial to my analysis for focusing on specific narrative forms that develop through subjective engagement with real existing socialism in Romania.

Zsuzsa Bánk (b. 1965) was born in Frankfurt am Main and grew up in a bilingual (Hungarian-German) household with her parents, who left Hungary shortly after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. She studied journalism, political science and literature in Mainz, Germany and has been living as a freelance writer in Frankfurt am Main since 2000. Her oeuvre includes short stories and journalistic texts, two novels, and a collection of short stories. Her debut roman, *Der Schwimmer*, was published in 2002 and is by far the best received of her works to date. It earned her significant critical attention, including the aspekte Prize for Literature

(2002), the Mara Cassens Prize (2002) and the Adelbert von Chamisso Prize (2004). As a German-born author writing from a transnational perspective about Hungarian history in German, Bánk's biography serves as a counterpoint to that of the other two authors in my dissertation, who migrated to Germany later in their lives. My analysis of Bánk's prose, written by an author who grew up outside the countries of the former Soviet bloc, demonstrates the impossibility of restricting postcommunist literature to biographical relations between author and text.

My third chapter of literary analysis focuses on prose by Terézia Mora (b. 1971). Mora was born in Sopron, Hungary and grew up in the small town of Petőháza, which lies on the western side of Hungary near the border with Austria. After studying Hungarian and German literature in 1989 in Budapest, she moved to Berlin in the wake of Hungarian border openings with Austria and the fall of the Berlin Wall to complete a Master's degree in Hungarian literature and Theater at Humboldt University. Mora writes prose works, including short stories and novels, as well as screen plays for theater, film and radio. She has also completed numerous translations of Hungarian works into German. She has received critical praise in German literary circles for most of her prose work, including the Ingeborg Bachmann Prize (1999), the Adelbert von Chamisso Prize (2010) and most recently, the German Book Prize (2013). Like Müller and Bánk, Mora also writes in German about transnational experiences, yet, in the prose on which I focus, she does so from within the political borders of Germany and from a narrative present moment after 1989.

Attending to the formal and thematic features of works by these authors allows me to reinscribe the meaning of postcommunism as a critical term through which to view social change after 1989 through the lens of culture. In the cultural sense with which I employ

"postcommunism" here, the term bears both a chronological meaning that refers to changes in culture and politics after 1989, as well as to a historical and social field that continues to be influenced by legacies of communist thought and experiences in real existing socialism. Political and sociological discourses of postcommunism turn on the status of political subjects understood through a liberal paradigm that, by extension, constructs an account of postcommunist history based on the assumed, predetermined failure of real existing socialism. The ideal project of communism, a society of social individuals free of alienation, was deeply thrown into question both before and all the more so after the collapse of real existing socialism in Europe in 1989. Articulating the status of communist ideals at the end of state-sponsored socialism in Europe requires a new vocabulary. Real existing socialism differed drastically from the idea of radical emancipation from social alienation that would, in Marxist-influenced theories, occur by way of a historical progression through socialism to a Communist society in which individuals achieve their full potential only in association. After 1989, scholars in literature and the arts therefore seek to reassess the idea of communism, criticize narratives of postcommunism, and formulate a notion of postcommunism that distinguishes real existing socialism in its state forms from the present status of communism and communist legacies.

In "Die postkommunistische Situation," Boris Groys, a philosopher and media critic born in East Germany, trained in Russia and holding positions at New York University and the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design, seeks to describe the status of communism and the so-called postcommunist situation after 1989. He argues that only in the period after the Cold War can communism be integrated into a notion of history, understood as a linear progression through world orders, that political scientists such as Francis Fukuyama and Samuel Huntington declare to end with the supposed victory of liberal capitalist democracy in 1989. For Groys, the end of

real existing socialism and the eastern expansion of "postnational" projects such as NATO and the European Union to the former countries of the Soviet bloc mark the beginning of a postcommunist situation applicable world-wide, not merely to eastern Europe. Instead of reading communism as a caesura in the historical development of nation states, Groys reminds readers that communism was actually the first postnational project—an explicitly ideological social construction that can be shifted from one country to another and that does not depend on a national discourse of organic development through tradition. Noting how real existing socialism tends to become a caesura in western historiographies attendant only to the development of nation-states, Groys probes the problem that communism poses to historiography:

> Über die postkommunistische Situation zu sprechen bedeutet dagegen, das historische Ereignis des Kommunismus ernst zu nehmen und sich ernsthaft zu fragen, welche Spuren von Kommunismus geblieben sind, inwieweit die Erfahrung des Kommunismus unsere eigene Gegenwart immer noch prägt – aber auch, warum sich der Kommunismus als eine bloße Unterbrechung der Geschichte denken lässt. Diese Fragen betreffen übrigens nicht allein die vormals kommunistischen Länder, sondern die ganze Welt, die sich gegenwärtig in einer Situation befindet, die man als postkommunistische bezeichnen kann.[3]

In Groys' tripartite account of postcommunism, the whole world is "postcommunist" since European communism ended in 1989. Real existing socialism[4] had for most of the twentieth

[3] Boris Groys. „Die postkommunistische Situation." *Zurück aus der Zukunft: Osteuropäische Kulturen im Zeitalter des Postkommunismus*. Ibid, et al. Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 2005. 36-48. Print. 36.

[4] Real existing socialism refers to the Communist Party's political and economic implementation of Marxist theory in the GDR. Instead of positing a sudden social transformation to communism, real existing socialism referred to the formation of economic and political institutions of socialism that would ease this social transformation. In the GDR, these economic changes came in the form of the New Economic System (*Neues Ökonomisches System*) proposed at the 6th Party Congress of the SED in 1963 that would form the precursor to what would later be referred to as real existing socialism: "Diese Deutung rechtfertigte die entstandene Kompromißgestalt eines 'realen Sozialismus,' der sich nun nicht mehr (wie in der älteren marxistischen Theorie) als rasch zu durchschreitende Übergangsphase in der Entwicklung der menschlichen Gesellschaft darstellte, sondern als 'eine relative eigenständige sozioökonomische Formation in der historischen Epoche des Übergangs vom Kapitalismus zum Kommunismus im Welmaßstab.'" Wolfgang Emmerich. *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR. Erweiterte Neuausgabe.* Leipzig: Gustav Kiepenheuer, 1996. Print. 185. Rudolf Bahro critiques the implementation of this term in the GDR to demonstrate the distance between political practices of the Central Committee and the theoretical precepts of Marxism: "Nun steckte aber in der 'relativ selbständigen Gesellschaftsformation' einiger Anspruch und vor allem einige reale Erfahrung. Früher oder später stößt jede neue Generation von Marxisten und Sozialisten auf – je nach Temperament und Haltung der Individuen – den Unterschied, den Gegensatz, den Riß, die Kluft, den Abgrund zwischen der Vision der Klassiker

century been understood as an alternative to capitalism. Its viability had been indicated by the existence of communist states organized around an ideology of working towards a classless society. Because these states remained dictatorships with centralized structures of authority, however, their existence counteracted the idea of communism as an egalitarian society free of alienation. After 1989, scholars and intellectuals sought to articulate the legacies of communism not as a state form that had ceased to exist, but as an ideological project that lingers. Groys writes,

> Der Kommunismus war lange Zeit nur ein Versprechen, eine Utopie, eine gedankliche Konstruktion, eine politische Vision...Die Frage nach der Realisierbarkeit der Vision blieb während dieser langen Geschichte allerdings offen. Die kommunistische Utopie lag allein in der Zukunft. Heute ist der Kommunismus Vergangenheit: Er hat als ein reales Ereignis in der realen Geschichte stattgefunden. Die Tatsache, dass dieses Ereignis inzwischen abgeschlossen ist, bezeugt gerade seine Realität. In der Tat blieb noch im Kontext des sowjetischen Sozialismus ein zukünftiges Ziel, eine ideologische Vision. Erst nachdem die Geschichte ihrer Realisierung abgeschlossen war, hat die kommunistische Vision definitive historische Realität erlangt. Abgeschlossen bedeutet hier sicherlich nicht erledigt, überwunden oder unmöglich gemacht. Abgeschlossen bedeutet u.a. und vor allem: zur geschichtlichen Repetition freigegeben.[5]

In Groys' account, the utopia of communism exists in the form of an idea. This idea of communism is a social future toward which countries of the former Soviet bloc ostensibly aimed their constructive efforts, yet the state forms that arose supposedly to provide institutions that would foster development toward a classless society never achieved their proposed goal. In the GDR, for example, the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED) sought to legitimate an "Entwickeltes gesellschaftliches System des Sozialismus" that would function as "eine relative eigenständige sozioökonomische Formation in der historischen Epoche des Übergangs vom Kapitalismus zum Kommunismus im Welmaßstab."[6] In place of the social transformation that

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und der Wirklichkeit der neuen Gesellschaft." *Die Alternative. Zur Kritik des real existierenden Sozialismus.* Köln/Frankfurt a/M: Europäisches Verlagsanstalt, 1977. Print. 20.

[5] Groys, 36-7.

[6] Quoted in Emmerich, 184-5.

would supposedly occur in the GDR, the SED erected an economic system that was criticized for approximating capitalist economies. Regardless of the divergence of real existing socialism and communism, once real existing socialism is relegated to the past by western historical discourses that can only be articulated in terms of nation-states based on shared traditions and cultural forms, its future seems to be fixed to the past as well. Yet as Groys contends, the achievement of communism was to make society into a dynamic social construction: "Er hat die Gesellschaft in ein Gesellschaftsmodell verwandelt. Das heißt: Er hat die Gesellschaft nicht als etwas historisch Gewachsenes und somit Singuläres gelten lassen, sondern er hat sie als eine künstliche Konstruktion begriffen, die von Land zu Land, sowohl exportiert als auch importiert werden kann."[7] Now that communism is seen through the lens of western philosophies of history to be an event, it falls into a series of events beginning with the French Revolution that, according to Marx' reformulation of Hegel's philosophy of history as the production of new subjectivities through the movement of world spirit, is integrated into a revolutionary history of class antagonism and technological development. Once opened to the repetition according to which this history moves, the completed event of communism may also engender a learning process in which a vision of social revolution that did not actually occur can still be recuperated through the traces of the utopian future that remain in postcommunist literature and art.

Yet Groys points to the ambiguity of the actual end of real existing socialism and inquires into the status of the utopia or revolution that does not seem to have occurred. When real existing socialism ended in Europe and the epoch of posthistory supposedly heralded the failure of any organization of civil society other than capitalist liberal democracy,[8] the social utopia it declared

[7] Ibid., 40.
[8] Francis Fukuyama's 1989 article, "The End of History," has become representative of this argument. Fukuyama reads the fall of communist dictatorship in Europe as the end of any viable alternatives to liberal democracy. See "The End of History?" *The National Interest* 16 (Summer 1989): 3-18. Print.

is integrated as an idea into western historiography, too. Yet western historiography for Groys articulates history through nation-states that function both as protagonists and grammatical subjects: "Der 'postnationale' Charakter des kommunistischen Ereignisses erklärt auch, warum sich dieses Ereignis im Kontext einer nationalen Geschichte bestenfalls als eine Pause, als eine bloße Unterbrechung begreifen lässt."[9] Groys' reference to communism as a postnational project cites communism as a social construction created by the Soviet Union that could be moved from one country to another without having to develop from existing political forms in the countries on which it was imposed. When this social formation is seen through the lens of western historiography articulated in nation states and not class subjects—Groys remarks that Marxism has fallen out of fashion as well—it becomes unintelligible because history can be written only as "eine Summe der Nationalgeschichten."[10] The return of nationalism in former countries of the Soviet bloc therefore allows communism to enter historiography written in terms of nation states, but communism can do so only once it ends. Even though the passing of real existing socialism in Europe means state-sponsored socialism enters history, Groys notes how this event does not behave like other events in western history because it does not produce a political subject:

> [...]denn das Subjekt fehlt, das die Verantwortung für die kommunistische Vergangenheit übernehmen könnte. Dieses Subjekt könnte nur das Gespenst einer utopischen kommunistischen Menschheit sein. Diese Menschheit ist allerdings genauso verschwunden wie die ‚neue Klasse' der kommunistischen Nomenklatura, die diese Menschheit historisch repräsentiert hat. Die Gespenster können aber keine Verantwortung für irgendwelche historischen Taten übernehmen.[11]

The communist revolution, as the realization of a society of radically unalienated people, is a paradox. Radical emancipation from alienation suggests that the utopian humanity of

[9] Ibid., 41.
[10] Ibid., 41.
[11] Ibid., 42.

communism would produce something other than political subjects, though in order to be emancipated, a process of subjugation must have occurred. Groys' ironic gesture toward the new class of the Communist Party in real existing socialism hints at just how far the historical existence of what supposedly represented the communist vision was from the idea of a society with a common vision of emancipation. The location of communism cannot be in politics, according to Groys, which depend on hierarchical structures of power, and its conceptual project only seems to disappear with the end of historical representations of communism. This project, as we will see, finds its place in art and literature.

Before I turn to the relationship between postcommunism and art since 1989, I turn to another significant scholar who discuses the postcommunist situation in theoretical terms. In *Zone des Übergangs: Vom Ende des Postkommunismus* (2009), Boris Buden, a cultural critic and philosopher working in Berlin and Vienna, shows how postcommunism has both political and sociocultural connotations. In political science, postcommunism refers to political theories of transition that claim to describe political subjects on a path toward social emancipation in the form of liberal democracy, only to reassert hierarchical social structures in their discursive form. In Buden's account, the period of postcommunism is over, too. At the end of the postcommunist period, the predictions of political scientists that turned into reality by creating the vocabulary that articulated changes in eastern Europe become visible as such. Buden illuminates this ideology of transition, or "transitology," in his critique of postcommunism as a term in political theory:

> Der Postkommunismus wird aus politikwissenschaftler Sicht vor allem als eine Übergangsphase bzw. ein Wandlungsprozeß verstanden, in dem aus einer realsozialistischen Gesellschaft eine kapitalistisch-demokratische wird. So findet die Politikwissenschaft auch keinen Grund, diesen Übergang als eine bestimmte historische Epoche aufzufassen. Es fehlen ihm grundsätzliche Identitätsmerkmale, etwa ein spezifisch postkommunistisches politisches Subjekt oder System, eine spezifisch

> postkommunistische Produktionsweise oder Eigentumsform usw. Deshalb braucht die Politikwissenschaft den Begriff des Postkommunismus gar nicht. Statt dessen bevorzugt sie das schon erwähnte Konzept einer *transition to democracy* und entwickelt in ihrem Rahmen sogar eine eigenständige Disziplin, die diesen Prozeß 'wissenschaftlich' untersucht, die sogenannt Transitologie (*Transitology*). Im Grunde genommen beruht diese auf der zynischen Idee, daß Menschen, die ihre Freiheit selber erkämpft haben, zuerst erlernen müssen, sie richtig zu genießen. Die Bedeutung dieses Paradoxons geht weit über die historische Situation hinaus, in der sich die postkommunistischen Gesellschaften Osteuropas nach 1989 befunden haben.[12]

Buden's account of transitology shows how the entrance of formerly communist states into liberal democracy actually casts the former political subjects of real existing socialist states in Europe into the position of unenlightened children who must be schooled in the ways of civil society. These subjects are deemed (by the transitologists that Buden criticizes) to have no chance at evidencing either individual emancipation or new forms of collective social organization. This is because the discourse of transitology immediately consumes them back into a discourse of political subjugation:

> Nirgendwo kommt das postkommunistische Ideal des mündigen Bürgers so klar zum Einsatz wie in einer der wichtigsten Aufgaben, die sich die *transition to democracy* zum Ziel setzt, nämlich in der Entwicklung der sogenannten Zivilgesellschaft. Sie sei das wahre Subjekt des demokratischen Lebens, das soziale Substrat aller demokratischen Werte, der Gerechtigkeit, der funktionierenden Öffentlichkeit, der Menschenrechte, usw. Und ebendiese Zivilgesellschaft sei in den vom Kommunismus befreiten Gesellschaften Osteuropas noch zu schwach, um nicht zu sagen ‚noch in den Windeln' gewesen, weshalb man sie erst habe erziehen, ausbilden, ‚auf eigene Beine stellen' müssen. Erstaunlicherweise fiel damals niemandem die Frage ein, wer, wenn nicht die Zivilgesellschaften Osteuropas, das *Ancien régime* zum Sturz gebracht hat.[13]

In the above passage, Buden ironically mimes the use of education metaphors characteristic of political discourses about postcommunist transition. These discourses, generated by western observers who participated in the revolutions in eastern Europe only in so far as they oversaw them, place the former political subjects of real existing socialist states in a repressive process of de-subjectification that reinserts potentially emancipated subjects into another authoritarian

[12] Boris Buden. *Zone des Übergangs: Vom Ende des Postkommunismus*. Suhrkamp: Frankfurt a/M, 2009. Print. 36.
[13] Ibid., 42.

structure in Buden's view. The revolutions in the East may have produced a true break with hither-to-existing social forms from which an alternative politics could arise, but instead, political subjects of real existing socialism interested in overturning oppressive dictatorships became discursive proof of the triumph of liberal democracy as practiced in the west. They therefore appear to need schooling in its unfamiliar ways. In Buden's argument, the "Transitionsideologen" responsible for the discourse of postcommunist transition reassert a hierarchical system of governance by imposing democratic practices as they exist (or are desired to exist) in the west. According to these arguments of "transition," the imposition of liberal democratic institutional and economic factors in formerly real existing socialist areas will foster the growth of democracy according to the same type of historical determinism that supposedly guided the teleological progression of real existing socialist states toward communist society.[14] Buden's argument demonstrates in retrospect—from the end of the postcommunist transition through its prehistory—how allegedly postcommunist notions about political development produced political subjects according to ideological notions of what these subjects ought to be. Any collective activity of these potentially emancipated subjects was quickly subsumed into dominant assumptions about how democracy would be practiced. As a result, the revolutions in eastern Europe are not seen to produce new forms of social organization that foster self-emancipated subjects so much as they highlight the re-institution of a hierarchical social order that previously existed in the west. Rather than producing conditions for enlightened, self-emancipated social subjects, the transitology of postcommunist political transition tells a story of collective action and revolutionaries whose social emancipation over time was interrupted when they were subjected to western ideologues reinstituting a hierarchical logic of governance.

[14] Buden quotes several "prophets" of transition that craft these discourses. Among them are political scientists Adam Przeworski, John Mueller, and Tutu Vanhanen. Ibid., 36-9.

But political discourses of transition do not exhaustively describe the postcommunist situation. Discourses about communism that become postcommunist in a different vein after the fall of real existing socialism reassess legacies of communism in its social and cultural forms, too. Buden draws from an earlier study of communist legacies, Charity Scribner's *Requiem for Communism* (2003), to argue that the location of communism is neither politics, nor the socialist societies that existed before 1989, but culture and the hope it engenders. In *Requiem*, Charity Scribner examines utopian traces that remain in literature and art after the end of real existing socialism in Europe. According to Scribner, these traces index a hope that first formed in collective factory labor that no longer exists after the collapse of real existing socialism. Scribner writes, "Socialists aspired not only to lift the genesis curse of labor, but rather to find collective and creative fulfillment *in work*. If the spark that ignited this hope seems to dim in the workplace, its glow can be rekindled in the literature and artworks that remain."[15] Scribner argues that visual and literary cultures from socialist societies "redeem both work and labor" in order to show what role collective experience, as bodies laboring together in the socialized factories of industrial society, had for the imagination of artists producing texts during and after real existing socialism.[16] Because Scribner's understanding of the communist impulse to work towards a better society is rooted in collective labor as practiced in industrial factories that become outmoded by postindustrial forms of labor in a digital age, she focuses her study on the material work of memory in creating postindustrial collectives that communicate communist experience through specific forms of commemoration and remembrance. Scribner's study takes

[15] Charity Scribner, *Requiem for Communism*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003. Print. 20.
[16] Scribner, 19-20. Scribner's larger argument involves Hannah Arendt's criticism of Marx in *The Human Condition*. Whereas Arendt underscores the conflation of work (associated with expertise) and labor (associated with burden) under Stalin, Scribner turns to Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge's notion of the "Zeithof" in *Geschichte und Eigensinn* (1981) to argue with Marx that class consciousness could not have arisen without collective factory labor.

up psychoanalytic terms of nostalgia, mourning, melancholia and disavowal. Society might not exist in the sense of collective factory labor driven by the promise of fulfillment through work, but postsocialist collectives may still be formed in time through continued dialogue facilitated by cultural productions about experiences in the former Soviet bloc, in her view.

Buden reformulates the theoretical framework of Scribner's cultural analysis to show how hope has become a contemporary form of social experience after communist society as an idea has fallen out of fashion. For sociologists such as Karin Norr Cetina, Buden shows, the term "postsocial" refers to the end of a process of social transformation that, by the second half of the twentieth century, evidences a marked reduction in forms of solidarity and interactions traditionally associated with society. In this process, society is an institutional organization spanning from the formation of nation-states in the nineteenth century to neoliberal ideologies of the late twentieth century. Cetina traces the movement of these institutions from nation-states through welfare states to a perceived end of society visible in a late twentieth-century western focus on individualization attributed to the rise of neoliberal economies and reduction in social planning. Whereas in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, nation-states were responsible for organizing and regulating social functions such as education and employment, neoliberal ideologies such as those of Margaret Thatcher posit an end of society as function of the state.[17]

However, as Buden will show, the perceived end of society actually brings up more fundamental questions about what constitutes social experience. A growing neoliberal focus on individuals replaces social institutions, and the social solidarity that Charity Scribner locates in collective factory labor before 1989 can no longer produce society. Instead, drawing from Scribner's emphasis on the collective experience to be found in literature and art, Buden shows

[17] Buden, 90-95. Buden quotes Thatcher in a 1987 interview with *Woman's Own* magazine as saying "who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first" (94).

how hope, as an orientation towards better futures, becomes the location of social experience after 1989:

> die Verschiebung der Hoffnung vom Sozialen ins Kulturelle, die Verwandlung der sozialen in eine kulturelle Hoffnung. Das heißt zunächst, daß die Hoffnung auf ein besseres Leben in einem altmodisch humanistischen Sinne jene Gesellschaft verlassen hat, die früher ihre Brutstätte und ihr Baumaterial war und in der sich diese Hoffnung in der Form sozialer Utopien artikulieren konnte...Jene Hoffnung, die die Gesellschaft verlassen hat, ist nicht bloß verschwunden. In der Kultur fand sie jetzt ihre neue Brutstätte und ihr neues Baumaterial. Ähnliches läßt sich von der Utopie sagen.[18]

Turning to a history of literary utopia rooted in Thomas More, Buden argues that utopia fundamentally entails a hope for a better society. Although political ideologies of society as expressed in state communism seem after 1989 to have failed, Buden reads Scribner's readings of art and literature as demonstrating the transformation of social utopia into cultural hope after 1989.

The end of real existing socialism in Europe also heralded a period of deep cynicism about viable alternatives to capitalism and a hopelessness about notions of society because the socialist project lead to authoritarianism through a promise of freedom from alienation. Furthermore, a neoliberal focus on individual economic subjects, privatization, property rights and elitist governmental and judicial structures that also develops in the postcommunist age deeply obscures collective subjectivities and democratic alternatives.[19] Yet both Boris Buden (with Scribner) and Boris Groys show that "postcommunist" can also refer to utopian legacies of the theoretical project of communism. The post-89 conversations about utopia that Buden references, even if they cynically posit the end of utopia, demonstrate an interest in social

[18] Buden, 168-9.
[19] For a summary of neoliberal theory and the structure of the neoliberal state, see David Harvey's *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. London: Oxford, 2007. Print. 64-86. Harvey defines neoliberalism as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-beings can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (2).

change.[20] This hope for a better future becomes a social dimension beyond society itself in Buden's argument. Its location is no longer existing society, but rather cultural productions through which collectivities are formed in the wake of what sociologists term a postsocial epoch.

However, despite Buden's focus on hope as the location of the social, he argues that social experience is nostalgically structured because it can be accessed only through traces of hope contained in cultural productions from the past.[21] Yet as I will demonstrate, works by contemporary authors on which this study focuses show the imaginative, world-making power that remains in this body of postcommunist literature as well. Whereas Buden focuses on the potential of cultural productions to create social forms in a world seeming bereft of an interest in the social—an important theoretical precept for my work as well—I read postcommunist cultural productions with an eye toward narrative form to show how this literature makes specific social futures in various ways. The present study aims to show how narrative features that construct storyworlds of which the reader becomes a part—and that become a part of her extraliterary world, too—exceed nostalgically structured access to the social experience of postcommunism. They do so by transforming readers' perspectives on social interconnectedness in the extraliterary world as well. The social experience accessible in postcommunist collectivities brought together through hope, which involves a constructive attitude toward the future, also involves an ethical dimension. Literary subjectivities open points of access for readers to multiple temporalities in storyworlds. Forming collectivities in narration in relation to postcommunism entails using literature about real existing socialism and postcommunist transition to provide a point of access to this history that critically reconstructs it. These works

[20] Buden's larger argument considers various versions of utopia formulated during the 1980s through the present, including Inke Arns' "retroutopia" (which posits the technological realization of the utopia of the historical avant-garde) and Boris Groys' "postutopia" (based on Russian conceptualism from the 1980s that cynically reflects a utopia that has lost its ideological power). See Buden, 171-7.
[21] Buden, 183.

do not return to communist experiences in order to dwell nostalgically in communist experiences that are no longer accessible after 1989, but rather to engage the past of real existing socialism to examine critically its utopian potentials.[22] This literature hardly posits experiences in dictatorships existing in the name of communism and socialism in a favorable light, but rather shows the tolls that pressures of surveillance, interrogation, and postcommunist transition have on the social subjects living them, as well as how their legacies might inform a postcommunist readership today.

Postcommunist literature provides a point of access to extraliterary history because it is written from the standpoint of subjects intertwined in this history. History thereby becomes literary and, to a degree, malleable in a manner similar to Christa Wolf's literary experiments with subjective perspective that take an author's particular perspective to work through history and create new social forms in the process. Wolf's experiments, which I will flesh out in more detail below, depend on subjectivities articulated in narration that create a critical standpoint within the histories of real existing socialism they rework and work through. Postcommunist literature not only reflects on the socialist history it takes as its object, but also constitutes this history through a narrating subject who has made it her own. In the analyses this dissertation develops, I articulate how this constitution occurs by bringing into relief the formation of

[22] In *Prinzip der Hoffnung* (written 1938-47 and published in installments between 1953 and 1959), Ernst Bloch distinguishes between concrete and abstract utopia by showing that some versions of utopia are simply the wishful thinking of fantasy—the version of utopia he criticizes—or, when paired with will, lead to meaningful action directed toward the actualization of imagined better futures: "Das Antizipierende wirkt derart im Feld der Hoffnung; diese also wird *nicht nur als Affekt* genommen (denn auch die Furcht kann ja antizipieren), sondern *wesentlicher als Richtungsakt kognitiver Art* (und hier ist dann der Gegensatz nicht Furcht, sondern Erinnerung). Die Vorstellung und Gedanken der so bezeichneten Zukunftsintention sind utopisch, das aber wieder nicht in einem engen, gar nur aufs Schlechte hin bestimmten Sinn dieses Worts (affekthaft unbesonnene Ausmalerei, Spielform abstrakter Art), sondern eben im neu vertretbaren Sinn des Traums nach vorwärts, der Antizipation überhaupt. Wobei also die Kategorie des Utopischen außer dem üblichen, berechtigt abwertenden Sinn den anderen, keinesfalls notwendig abstrakten oder weltfremden, vielmehr zentral weltzugewandten besitzt: den natürlichen Gang der Ereignisse zu überholen." Ernst Bloch. *Das Prinzip der Hoffnung. In fünf Teilen. Kapitel 1-37.* Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1959. Print. 10-11. The critical aspect of the utopia to which I refer takes up Bloch's latter sense of concrete utopia. For a concise discussion of abstract and concrete utopia in Bloch's text, see Ruth Levitas. "Educated Hope: Ernst Bloch on Abstract and Concrete Utopia." *Utopian Studies* 1, 2 (1990): 13-26. Print.

subjectivity through temporal structures in narration. My methodology relies on Ágnes Heller's ethically motivated temporal categories as articulated in *A Theory of History* (1982). I will use these categories to show the critical thrust of the literary-historical perspectives that the narrative works I address here construct.

Classical and postclassical narratology provide a working terminology that allows me to show how this temporal experience is created by literary means, as well as how grammatical subjectivities co-articulate the worlds of which they are a part. The postcommunist literature I address continues to work in the contemporary period, I argue, by engaging readers in constructing mental models. These models are what David Herman refers to generally as "storyworlds." Specifically, the postcommunist literary works I address imaginatively participate in postcommunist collectivities by narrative means. As readers join these cultural works in reflecting on social issues of real existing socialism and its legacies, they open their own experiential spheres to experience the history of real existing socialism as contemporary, despite neoliberal attempts to relegate it to a distant past. The postcommunist literature to be considered here thus contributes to a critique of both real existing socialism and postcommunist transition in their overtly political forms.

II. Postcommunism and the German Democratic Republic

Perspectives constructed in transnational literary works since 1989 by Herta Müller, Zsuzsa Bánk and Terézia Mora use historical material in a manner similar to Christa Wolf's late twentieth-century literary experiments with subjectivity, temporality and narrative form. Yet whereas Wolf's works written before 1989 had the task of producing socialist subjects in the context of the cultural politics of the GDR, prose works by Müller, Bánk and Mora do not have

an official task with respect to real existing socialism. As we will see, they evidence some general principles from Wolf's literary reconfiguration of time and subjectivity, but with significant narrative differences as well.

Christa Wolf, born in 1929 in Landsburg an der Warthe (now part of Poland), was one of the most significant writers working in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) for the entirety of its official existence from 1949 through 1989. During and after this time, Christa Wolf engaged in a series of literary experiments with temporality and subjectivity in which she reworked her contemporary history as a lived history of both fascist experiences and communist transformation. As a member of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* or SED), Wolf negotiated aesthetic principles dictated by the cultural politics of the GDR's Ministry of Culture and its heavy censorship of publications. As a convinced Socialist Unity Party member, she also pressed against these dictates and sought to reform oppressive elements of the SED as well.[23]

Literature in the GDR was given the explicit social-pedagogical assignment of educating its (East German) readers in the aesthetic principles of Socialist Realism in order to produce a new social subject: "Literatur (und so auch die neue, eigene der DDR) hatte Humanität zu bewahren und neue sozialistische Tugenden wie Arbeitsethos und kollektives Verhalten zu

[23] Wolf's status as a public intellectual in the GDR and consistent membership in the SED have led scholars and literary critics to cast her both as a dissident writer (who endured censorship and demonstrated against Party politics) and as a reformist responsible for perpetuating Party politics by making them more tolerable. For a summary of these arguments inside a larger discussion of the complexities of GDR *Kulturpolitik* for both GDR and FRG intellectuals, see David Bathrick. *The Powers of Speech: The Politics of Culture in the GDR.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995. Print. Bathrick shows the difficulty of separating GDR and BRD because they were mutually constitutive of one another. In so doing, he steers his argument away both from moralizing arguments that construct distinct borders between social and political systems in the GDR and FRG, and from literature discursively distinguished in opposition to history. Taking Wolf as paradigmatic for this issue, he asks, "Christa Wolf continually invokes and at the same time violates a set of formal and ideological codes and in so doing renders those very boundaries historically transfigured. Is she inside or out?" (22)

befördern, und dies in einem fixierten Kanon ästhetischer Normen, der durch moderne (man sagte: ‚modernistische') Formexperimente nie verbessert, sondern nur zerstört werden könnte."[24] The aesthetic principles developed with and against the Socialist Realism delineated by Party politics changed over time as artists and writers used them and continued to debate how they could best produce the GDR society of their implied readers. As a functionary of the state, Wolf was funded by the SED and in a position to represent the Party's national interests. Wolf's works engage socialist ideologies aimed at woman's emancipation and portray society in the GDR as an antifascist space of conscious collective labor towards better futures in the midst of ruined landscapes left from World War II and the factories and schools in which this work would largely occur.[25] As Wolf negotiated the cultural politics of the GDR and her own invested, yet critical relationship to these politics, she created new literary forms that go beyond the mere reorganization of existing social form.[26]

Wolf's writings negotiate GDR cultural politics of antifascism and principles of Socialist Realism with increasing sophistication over the course of her oeuvre. Wolf's early works, especially *Moskauer Novelle* (1961) and, to a lesser extent, *Der geteilte Himmel* (1963), adhere

[24] Emmerich, 41

[25] Scribner, 136. Scribner's chapter on Christa Wolf in *Requiem for Communism* (2003) seeks to augment Julia Hell's psychoanalytical reading of Wolf in *Post-Fascist Fantasies: Psychoanalysis, History and the Literature of East Germany* (1997) with a more thorough exploration of tropes and logics of disavowal. According to this reading, "Wolf's stance suggests that today, in postindustrial culture, the only agency that can form a collective is the labor of remembrance. Yet if we put the recollection of work into reverse gear and apply ourselves exclusively to the work of memory, we risk sublating collective mourning (*kollektive Trauerarbeit*) into the only 'labor' that can bring full satisfaction in our contemporary condition of melancholia. This wager, then, risks disavowing the remaining potential of material labor as a collective experience. In this regard, [Wolf's 1996 novel] *Medea* comes dangerously close to the sort of psychiatrization of social malaises that signals the exhaustion of revolutionary possibility. The therapeutic probing of the individual's traumatic memories replaces any reference to concrete social relations" (148). By focusing on the world-making possibilities that Wolf's experiments and the transnational experiments of her literary-historical successors facilitate, I will seek instead to show how key imaginative dimensions in her work maintain social relevance without needing direct translation into a concrete form that would necessarily be associated with the SED or even the GDR as such.

[26] Wolf's creation of new literary forms within GDR *Kulturpolitik* is often referred to as a break with Lukácsian notions of an universal, omniscient narrator that speaks for or as a collective subject. She details this critique of Lukácsian realism in her 1968 essay "Lesen und Schreiben." For a summary of Wolf's argument, see Julia Hell. *Post-fascist Fantasies: Psychoanalysis, History, and the Literature of East Germany.* Durham: Duke UP, 1997. Print. 142-3.

more explicitly to Socialist Realism as implemented in GDR literary theory.[27] Early Socialist Realism in the GDR provided the basis for a cultural politics that sought to affirm the GDR as an antifascist alternative to the Federal Republic of Germany, which according to party politics was linked to the pre-World War II German nation responsible for the rise of National Socialism.[28] In Wolf's *Der geteilte Himmel*, lovers Rita Seidel and Manfred Herrfurth are split by ideological differences that cause Rita to choose to return to East Germany after visiting Manfred in West Germany shortly before the Berlin Wall is built. In keeping with Socialist Realism, the narration takes up an omniscient narrator to mediate the story, which is largely told from Rita's perspective, but also begins to experiment with shifts among temporal layers and socially constructed subjectivities—that is, subjectivities based on shifts among focalizing subjects instead of interior monologue—in an experimental manner beyond traditional Socialist Realist prose.[29] Wolf's narrative experiments with subjective form and temporality continue even more extensively in Wolf's innovative 1968 novel *Christa T.*. While maintaining a conviction that

[27] The aesthetic principles officially informing literary style in the early years of the GDR were intended to promote, in the words of the fifth Party Conference of the SED, "sozialistisch arbeiten, lernen und leben" in order to create a socialist nation that united workers and intellectuals. Quoted in Anna K. Kuhn. *Christa Wolf's Utopian Vision. From Marxism to Feminism.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988. Print. 16. These principles were established after the 1959 Bitterfeld Conference, where it was decided that writers were to join workers in factories, both to gain practical experience with factory labor and to guide workers to write about factory life. *Der geteilte Himmel*, for example, was written after Wolf worked in a railroad car factory in Halle. Kuhn, 28. In addition to portraying themes of industrial labor, the traditional form of socialist realist narrative was drawn from Georg Lukács' notion of socialist literature that stressed intellectual accessibility and objective representations of reality in order to reveal a teleological historical progression toward communism. Erich Honecker officially lifted the doctrine of Socialist Realism in the GDR in 1971, though artistic and literary practices developed, adapted, and diverged from these principles in the course of the 1960s as well. For a summary of socialist realism in the GDR and its development in works by several authors, see Ricarda Schmidt. "GDR women writers: ways of writing for, within, and against Socialism." *A History of Women's Writing in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.* Jo Catling, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print. 190-199.

[28] For a concise summary of literary development from the inception of the GDR through its end, see Helen Fehervary. "The literature of the German Democratic Republic (1945-1990)." *The Cambridge History of German Literature*. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. Print. 393-439.

[29] Kuhn, 27.

antifascist subjectivity is possible only in socialism,[30] *Christa T.* breaks from traditional GDR plot themes of industrial labor to portray a split female socialist subjectivity through a first-person narrating subject weaving through narrative voices as she pieces together the life of her friend, Christa T.. Because Christa T. dies prematurely from leukemia—a subtle critique of the heroic deaths traditionally defining Socialist Realist works[31]—the story told is a composite of Christa T.'s letters, diary entries, literary fragments, and the narrator's memories and reflections. The result is a female subjectivity that, in literary scholar Ricarda Schmidt's reading, "replaces the traditional plot [of industrial labor and confidence that socialist society will develop into communism] and representative protagonist" with narrative reflections that blur "the boundaries between narrator, author and character by an ambiguous use of pronouns [to] explor[e] the fluidity of subjectivity rather than constructing a rigidly closed self-identical subject."[32] The narrative furthermore negotiates the possibilities and limitations of becoming socialist in her present moment through its oscillation between Christa T., who proclaims antifascist sentiments, yet also has difficulty conforming to collective identities in the GDR, and the narrator, who tells her friend's story of the difficulty of developing an individual identity under the constraints of

[30] Sonja Klocke cites Wolf's repeated assertion that socialism is the only alternative to fascism in quotations from *Christa T.* through her later works. See "The Triumph of the Obituary: Constructing Christa Wolf for the Berlin Republic." *German Studies Review* 37,2 (2014): 317-336. Print.

[31] In her feminist reading of *Christa T.*, Elizabeth Boa asks "Why, then, did the author, who *could* have let her live, give Christa T. leukaemia[*sic*] and filter her voice only posthumously through the narrator? Before aids, cancer was *the* symbolic illness, and cancer of the life's blood is a subversive mode of death when set against the aesthetic of socialist realism which demands positive heroes and heroic deaths" (150). Boa's larger argument shows how the classical Marxism of GDR orthodoxy subordinates the oppression of women as "an effect of class society which will, like the state, wither away on the victory of a united proletariat" (141). Boa shows how the collectivist politics and emancipatory discourse of the GDR does not fundamentally change gender relations, but rather "leads to a greater oppression of women than of men and to a culture in which feminine feeling, which is idealized in interpersonal relations, is stigmatized as impractical in the public sphere" (148-9). See "Unnatural Causes: Modes of Death in Christa Wolf's *Nachdenken über Christa T.* and Ingeborg Bachmann's *Malina*." *German Literature at a Time of Change 1989-1990. German Unity and German Identity in Literary Perspective*. Eds. Arthur Williams, et al. Frankfurt a/M: Peter Lang, 1991. Print. 139-154.

[32] Schmidt, 192-3.

real existing socialism, which pressures subjects to conform to its economic standards of productivity.[33]

Wolf terms her formalist experiments in the late 1960s and early 1970s "subjective authenticity," a writing practice that produces a socialist subjectivity through what Wolf calls writing in the fourth dimension of modern prose. As she puts it, the "Dimension des Autors"[34] lends itself to an open-ended, critical mode of relating through writing to GDR society. In Wolf's view, writing changes how an author perceives and acts in the world such that the author's work becomes a dynamic point of relation between the narrating subject and her world. In a 1973 interview with Hans Kaufmann, Wolf reflects on writing a socialist subjectivity in a transformative narrative process of becoming in *Christa T.*. Wolf describes the type of writing that achieves the intended subjective relation of world and work as "subjective authenticity," or a search for language and narrative modes that can adequately describe and partially construct her historical location in the GDR through her views on socialism: "Die Suche nach einer Methode, dieser Realität schreibend gerecht zu werden, möchte ich vorläufig 'subjektive Authentizität' nennen – und ich kann nur hoffen, deutlich gemacht zu haben, daß sie die Existenz der objektiven Realität nicht nur nicht bestreitet, sondern gerade eine Bemühung darstellt, sich mit ihr produktiv auseinanderzusetzen."[35] Wolf's notion of writing is therefore a programmatic realism that relies on a narrator grappling in writing with her world in search of a language that gives her productive and transformative access to it. In so doing, Wolf's narrator intervenes in socialist reality that is not solely her construction in order to make contradictions within the GDR state visible (and, later, in unified Germany), as well as to demonstrate the potentials of the

[33] Emmerich, 208.
[34] Christa Wolf. „Subjektive Authentizität. Gespräch mit Hans Kaufmann." *Die Dimension des Autors. Essays und Aufsätze. Reden und Gespräche. 1959-1985.* Luchterhand: Darmstadt/Neuwied, 1987. Print. 797.
[35] Ibid., 780-1.

socialist project that guided her work. In the fourth dimension, the writing subject is in part produced by her reality, but she also comes to produce it as her narrating subject grapples with the materials composing her world.

Wolf's comments on the fourth dimension are usually read as setting Wolf's work in a modernist tradition that was rejected by the Socialist Realism condoned by the official program for writing in the GDR. Anna Kuhn notes that "In *Christa T.*, [Wolf] explodes the expectations of this [Socialist Realist] aesthetic and creates a self-reflective, open-ended form, rich in ambiguity and contradiction."[36] Wolf's formalist experimentation and self-reflective engagement with themes of writing itself reflect her creation of a different sort of realism that would further the aims of socialism in her understanding. Discontent with the GDR's emphasis on industrial production, she shifts this emphasis on economic production to one on the production of socialist subjects. She emphasizes a humanist reading of Marxism and the capacity of literature, a fundamentally socialist medium for Wolf, to expand the ability of humans to become aware of the social construction of their environment and to motivate their capacity to change it for the better. "For Wolf, belief in the perfectibility of humankind and the ability to think historically, to analyze social forces, and to confront disturbing contradictions in a productive way are part of socialism's legacy, a legacy she hopes will enable us to avoid the seemingly inevitable fate of the world."[37] Though Wolf's comments must on one level be read as those of a writer committed to producing a socialist society in the GDR, the general principles of subjective authenticity she develops as a literary technique to make social processes visible through textual subjectivity is also useful for locating works by the focal authors of my dissertation. The works I analyze also experiment with literary temporalities and subjective

[36] Kuhn, *Christa Wolf's Utopian Vision*, 52.
[37] Ibid., 53.

forms in projects of processual narrative related to communist histories, and to transitions in literature after 1989 as well. Although these later works have no official connection to the socialist project, they do evidence subjectivities that negotiate collectivities and formally and thematically motivate the production of futures other than those explicitly presented.

Writing in the author's dimension changes both the author and the world of which her text becomes a part and into which it is written:

> Nutzlicher scheint es mir, das Schreiben nicht von seinen Endprodukten her zu sehen, sondern als einen Vorgang, der das Leben unaufhörlich begleitet, es mitbestimmt, zu deuten sucht; als Möglichkeit, intensiver in der Welt zu sein...Ein Vorgang, der auch gewisse Teil-Ergebnisse hervorbringt, die man drucken kann (und von denen – last not least – der Autor leben kann), materialisierte Zeugnisse einer Produktivität, die sich hauptsächlich nicht auf etwas Materielles, wohl aber auf etwas hoch Reales und Bedeutsames richtet: nämlich auf die Hervorbringung neuer Strukturen menschlicher Beziehungen in unserer Zeit.[38]

Wolf's reflections on her writing practice while writing *Christa T.* demonstrate that writing works in tandem with the development of a perspective critically in tune with the socially constructed, dynamic nature of the world. In addition to the recompense that Wolf receives for her writing as a state-sponsored author in the GDR, she also notes that writing produces real, though immaterial, relationships in time. Articulating communist subjectivities is for Wolf an ethical imperative that comes with writing in the fourth dimension. The narrating subject constructed in the process of intervening in reality in the fourth dimension transforms the author and her material through a necessary and persistent engagement with reality. For Wolf, this was a social reality committed, according to state doctrine, to the "Aufbau" of a socialist society.[39]

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[38] Wolf, 780.

[39] Wolfgang Emmerich describes the construction of socialism in the GDR as occurring in stages. First, from the founding of the GDR in 1949, the SED spoke of a specifically German path to Socialism that would create a nationalist and anti-Soviet people's democracy (*Volksdemokratie*), though the ways in which this goal was politically and economically implemented—centralized planning and leadership increasingly focused on production—lead others to call it "Stalinization of the GDR" (Hermann Weber). Literature in this period was intended to develop a socialist consciousness that would increase worker productivity and prove socialism a better political system than capitalism (114-115). After the 1961 erection of the Berlin Wall, GDR literature began to be

The narrating subject for Wolf continues to explore and experience constant transformations in her written work, and articulates them through new forms of subjectivity that in turn alter existing forms of social organization. This is, at least, Wolf's claim. Wolf writes,

> Allerdings setzt sie [diese Schreibweise] ein hohes Maß an Subjektivität voraus, ein Subjekt, das bereit ist, sich seinem Stoff rückhaltlos...zu stellen, das Spannungsverhältnis auf sich zu nehmen, das dann unvermeidlich wird, auf die Verwandlungen neugierig zu sein, die Stoff und Autor dann erfahren.[40]

Wolf's focus on subjectivity as the locus of social and historical change through the creation of a differentiated perspective attuned to social collectivities that become visible in narrative partially informs my own analysis of the postcommunist works that follow.

The new subjectivity formed in the process of writing about communist experience in historical time as Wolf describes is fundamentally social, despite its articulation through an individual first-person subject: "Man sieht eine andere Realität als zuvor. Plötzlich hängt alles mit allem zusammen und ist in Bewegung; für ‚gegeben' angenommene Objekte werden auflösbar und offenbaren die in ihnen vergegenständlichten gesellschaftlichen Beziehungen...es wird viel schwerer, ‚ich' zu sagen, und doch zugleich unerläßlich."[41] This statement alludes to both the intervention of Wolf's reflections in the cultural politics of real existing socialism and the social dynamism of grammatical subjects that become a collective subjectivity in narration and across literary and political history. The subjectivity developed by Wolf[42] reworks narrative structures of Lukácsian realism on which Socialist Realism were based. Her focus on a first-person subject articulated theoretically in the quotation above and visible in the oscillation

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recognized as an independent literature aimed at creating utopian visions of a non-capitalist society. In the course of the 70s, GDR literature acquired a critical function that readers in the FRG also applied to their society. Even as literary production grew more differentiated in style and form through the 80s, GDR literature maintained a critical and moral dimension for GDR and non-GDR readers alike (12).

[40] Wolf, 780.

[41] Ibid., 780.

[42] Other GDR writers negotiated new subjectivities of their own. Volker Braun, for example, discusses "working subjectivity" in lyric poetry. See Emmerich, 387 ff. Quoted in Hell. *Post-Fascist Fantasies,* 305 fn 24.

among narrating subjects in her literary work demonstrates the inadequacy of the omniscient, third-person narrators central to Lukácsian realism.[43] Wolf's style of narration also reflects notions key to the cultural politics of the GDR that posited literature as a site where social subjects were to be realized,[44] while emphasizing Wolf's struggle with grammatical subjectivity to find adequate forms of narration. In so doing, she also opens GDR culture up to critique through a female subjectivity that recognized social alienation in the GDR as well, despite the state's ideological discourse pretending otherwise.

In his seminal *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR. Erweiterte Ausgabe* (1996), Wolfgang Emmerich describes a so-called new subjectivity more generally as a fundamentally new style of narration in the GDR. This narrative style weaves together lived history and story as lived in the experience that narrative affords:

> Was bislang als Veränderung des Sujets beschrieben wurde, läßt sich auch auf der Ebene des Erzählens selbst beobachten. Die neue Subjektivität schafft sich auch eine neue, subjektive Erzählstruktur. Indem von Individuen die Rede ist, deren Leben sich nicht mehr nur im Rahmen fixierter Koordinaten abspielt, sondern diese Individuen sich selbst und die von ihnen durchlebte (DDR-)Geschichte befragen und reflektieren, um daraufhin ihre Identität herzustellen (jetzt häufiger in der Ichform), müssen die Autoren zwangsläufig andere Erzählmittel einsetzen.[45]

Emmerich sites Christa Wolf's *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (1968) as one example of „einer kompromißlosen Abkehr vom Konzept des auktorialen, olympischen, allwissenden Erzählers"[46]

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[43] For a summary of Wolf's self-authorization of her own voice by way of Anna Seghers and against Lukácsian principles of Socialist Realism, see Hell. *Post-Fascist Fantasies*. 141-144. Julia Hell's study draws from psychoanalysis to read Wolf's texts symptomatically through their inconsistencies in order to gain access to "psychic structures and unconscious fantasies" (20) that made authors interested in working with the GDR in the first place. Hell posits ideology as the link between the individual psyche and history or the social and seeks to explain the ideological force of the GDR's symbolic system through its founding stories. She thus reads Wolf's break with Socialist Realism as crucial in perpetuating the antifascist narrative foundational to GDR politics. In taking up Wolf's experiments with narrative form, I am interested less in critiquing GDR ideology than in examining how narrative strategies succeeding Wolf's continue to search for adequate narrative means of forming collective subjectivities.

[44] According to Johannes R. Becher, the first minister of culture in the GDR, literature is "das höchste entwickelte Organ eines Volkes zu seiner Selbstverständigung und Bewußtwerdung." Quoted in Emmerich, 41.

[45] Ibid., 198.

[46] Ibid., 209.

that was previously employed in GDR literature. Instead of a pedagogical voice that offers supposedly objective commentary on the story, Wolf's first-person narration locates readers in a perspective that does not claim absolute knowledge of its storyworld but rather experiences it in narrative form. Instead of positing a social totality toward which the story develops, the narrational style collects Christa T.'s life in fragments that never add up to a heroic arrival in socialist society, but rather probe the possibilities of narrating subjects collectively negotiating and constituting GDR reality. By inviting readers into her struggles to constitute GDR society through a specific experience of writing located in an exploration of subjectivity articulated at least partially in the first-person narrating voice, Wolf's writing carries an intended ethical impulse that engages readers and narrator in the exploration of social experience. Wolf's persistent engagement and construction of the narrative standpoint through which to constitute GDR history as a social project are perhaps best visible in her explorations of narrative form. Her project is not merely an exploration and extension of literary form, but also a search for future-oriented, hopeful collective forms that exceed the individual.[47] As the narrating I of *Christa T.* assembles her friend's letters, diaries, written fragments, an invented interview and her own reflections and memories, for example, clear distinctions between the narrating voice and the various accounts of and by Christa T. merge to demonstrate the social construction of subjectivity and the lives of what otherwise seem like individual subjects.[48] Emmerich's

[47] In a recent article about Wolf's literary production before and after 1989, Michael Minden addresses the ethical nature of Wolf's project that exceeds mere literary theoretical experimentation by fostering social hope: "In the context of the GDR, these investigations produced not just 'formalist', oppositional aesthetic results, but on the contrary defined an area of experience, accessed by a poetic rather than an instrumental use of language, which in its very indeterminateness constituted a moral imperative for individual subjects in relation to their collective future" (197). See Michael Minden, "Social Hope and the Nightmare of History: Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster* and *Stadt der Engel.*" *Publications of the English Goethe Society*. 80.2-3 (2011): 196-203. Print.

[48] Elizabeth Boa examines the public and private spheres these forms suggest in her feminist reading of how *Christa T.* stages autobiographical and biographical writing through a narrating I that constructs the life of Christa T.. See Boa, "Unnatural Causes," 143. In Boa's account, Wolf's writing opens a female subjectivity that does not forego roles traditionally ascribed to women (wife, mother), but also refuses to be reduced to them.

reference to "(DDR-)Geschichte" locates the productive experience of Wolf's narrative in the extraliterary discourses and history it shapes, showing how Wolf's body of work constitutes a "hartnäckig bohrende, produktive literaturtheoretische Arbeit, die in einer programmatischen Bestimmung zeitgemäßer Prosa gipfelt."[49] Writer and history are interwoven into Wolf's fourth dimension of narrative to define a certain type of literary procedure with a communist cause.

Yet after the end of state-sponsored communism in the GDR, the political relevance of the fourth dimension appears fixed to a specific point in historical time. What then is the status of literary works written in the fourth dimension that continue to grapple with socialist history in narrative form when this history is woven into a postcommunist situation? And what if the literary work in that situation is no longer understood to belong to a project of social development related solely to real existing socialist states? Works by Herta Müller, Zsuzsa Bánk and Terézia Mora may be read as successors to Wolf's literary experiments that take some cues from her explorations of narrative form. These authors have never explicitly restricted their aesthetic principles to a political project of nation building, nor do they address an East German readership as such. As transnational reflections on the history of real existing socialism and its legacies in German, their works expand contemporary readers' experience of this history beyond the cultural politics of the two Germanys. Yet just as Wolf's subjective authenticity is an ethical project of working through fascist and socialist history as a social construction in time and over time, the works explored here maintain a collective dimension of narration to construct collectives still aimed at social transformation. They do so through postcommunist critique.

III. Postcommunist Literature

[49] Emmerich, 210.

Taking up Wolf's notion of subjective authenticity as a critical paradigm for reading literature in light of the historical and social conditions with which it engages, I turn to transnational literary works by Herta Müller, Zsuzsa Bánk and Terézia Mora to ask what critical utopian potentials might remain in cultural productions that engage with the history of real existing socialism, but that were never officially or ideologically invested in the realization of a specific socialist state. Whereas Wolf's literary production was implicated in the formation of the GDR until 1989, writing by these authors was never produced in the framework of specific national affiliations or socialist projects. Furthermore, although readings of postcommunist literature through psychological frameworks tend to focus on literature as facilitating a nostalgic return to places inaccessible after 1989, I argue that postcommunist literature does not evidence a past-oriented longing for something no longer present, but rather criticizes real existing socialism, inspires collective action, and suggests the ethical possibilities of a subjectivity that forms social collectives in narration. The social collectives involved in Buden's reformulation of Scribner's text, as discussed above, interpellate readers into storyworlds through specific forms of narrative address and demonstrate the possibilities of and limits to alternate forms of social organization. Postcommunist literature puts forth subjective and temporal configurations that orient readers in multiple temporalities within what has been considered a totalizing present of real existing socialism progressing teleologically toward a known future.[50] As such, it triangulates a unique position with respect to both discourses of real existing socialism and those of postcommunist transformation. By terming this literature "postcommunist," I wish to emphasize the critical

[50] Susan Buck-Morss shows how the Bolshevik notion of time as the development of history through class revolution constrained other cultural temporalities by inserting them into a single narrative about the progression of history toward a known goal dictated by the Party: "Millennialists, avant-gardists, and utopian dreamers of every sort were eager to interpret the revolutionary future as their own. Bolshevism needed to speak for all of the people, structuring their desires inside a historical continuum that, at the same time, contained their force. In the process of being inserted into the temporal narrative of revolutionary history, the utopian dimension of a wide variety of discourses was constrained and reduced." Buck-Morss, 43.

continuity these works maintain with a theoretical project of communism aimed at future-oriented thinking. Postcommunist literature critiques existing conditions and creates future-present ages[51] that bring readers into the history of real existing socialism and political transition with an eye toward making better worlds.[52] In so doing, these texts orient readers through narrating subjects toward other futures than those conditioned by the histories the texts describe.

Though works by these authors may be read as successors to Christa Wolf's experiments in creating new social forms through narration that also shapes the history in which narration takes place, their literary-historical reception and production differ from hers in important ways. Whereas Wolf's work was seen as actively supporting a political project of transformation and was materially supported by GDR institutions until 1989, the authors addressed in my dissertation neither write explicitly in support of a political project, nor do they receive state support for their cultural production. Evaluations of moral degradation related to any possible complicity with official authorities have thus not informed the literary critical reception of these authors or their texts in the same way. In Wolf's case, the 1990 publication of *Was bleibt?*, a novel written in 1979 in which a first-person narrating subject describes being under surveillance by the Stasi, lead to public accusations of the author's moral culpability and complicity with antihumanitarian practices of the GDR. These conversations came to a head in the so-called *Literaturstreit* that debated the moral status of authors working for the GDR and those who tried to distance themselves from it. These debates over the relationship of author, work and morality

[51] "Future-present age" is part of philosopher Ágnes Heller's terminology for parcing various relations, attitudes and orientations to history. I elaborate Heller's temporal categories in the section on analytical method that concludes this introduction.

[52] In an article on German literature without a transnational perspective, Georgina Paul uses the term "post-socialist literature" in place of *Wendeliteratur* to shift emphasis from German unification as the significant event marking this literature to its continued emphasis on "the way in which socialism as a publicly proclaimed goal had shaped ways of thinking which were not altogether overcome, but were partially carried forward into the new era" (291). See Georgina Paul. "The Privatization of Community: The Legacy of Collectivism in the Post-Socialist Literature of Eastern Germany." *Oxford German Studies*. 38, 2 (2009). 288-298. Print.

interrogated the role of literature as *Gesinnungskitsch* that made an oppressive state more livable as well.[53] When the GDR ended, its authors and scholars found themselves in the position of supposedly knowing how to achieve a socialist state that had only been possible through their works (if at all): "Jetzt stand die künstlerische Intelligenz der DDR, der vielleicht wichtigste Teil dieser ‚interpretierenden Klasse', plötzlich mit ihrem Objekt der Begierde namens ‚wahrer Sozialismus' mehr oder weniger allein da."[54] Whereas literature produced in the framework of GDR cultural politics was supposed to produce collective labor aimed toward a socialist society and its literature became the medium for the production of socialist class subjects, after 1989, only texts remain anchored in these goals, which themselves have been critiqued for their emphasis on the human tolls of a narrow focus on industrial productivity. If "true socialism," which here I am equating with the theoretical project of communism, can be said to exist in literature produced with a socialist society in view, then collectives that form after 1989 must be those which hold to this shared project despite the material existence or absence of a socialist state. The location of collectives after the end of real existing socialism in Europe shifts to collectivities found in the future-oriented hope that remains in cultural productions. Public interrogations into an author's moral responsibility are therefore less relevant than his or her

[53] The debates composing the *Literaturstreit* began with Frank Schirrmacher's review in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and a debate between Ulrich Greiner and Volker Hage in „Die Zeit" on June 1 and 2, 1990. Hans Noll criticized Wolf's belief in building a socialist state and her participation in the SED even earlier in a 1987 review in "Die Welt" that stated, "Die große Lebenslüge der Christa Wolf bestehe darin, dass sie sich einem politischen System zur Verfügung stellte, dessen Amoralität ihr bewußt ist" (464). Karl Heinz Bohrer's critique of the „Kulturschutzgebiet DDR?" debated the role of literature in the GDR more generally, criticizing both Wolf's aesthetic practice as "Gesinnungskitsch" and public opinion that sought priest-like figures in GDR authors. Bohrer argues for the imaginative potential in literature more generally, though he does not see this in Wolf's works. For a thorough summary of these debates and the numerous authors involved, see Emmerich, 464-77.

[54] Emmerich, 16.

works, and their persistence, like Christa Wolf's, in working through historical limitations on their own terms.[55]

The works on which my dissertation focuses give important insight into the variety that characterizes postcommunist literature. The authors considered here each have different relationships to real existing socialism, thus demonstrating the fallacy of considering postcommunist literature through biographical experience alone. Although Herta Müller's stated refusal to work as an informant for the Romanian *Securitate* (the Romanian secret police) has sparked discussions that echoed the *Literaturstreit* about what is considered dissident literature and the moral status of dissident writers,[56] Müller's works have brought much more attention in Germany to critiques of real existing socialism as practiced outside Germany.[57] Terézia Mora, born in 1971 in Sopron, Hungary and arriving in Germany in 1990, made her literary debut in 1999, well after the end of real existing socialism, with texts describing rural areas in the Hungarian People's Republic (1949-1989). Zsuzsa Bánk, born in 1965, grew up outside

[55] In this I share David Bathrick's disinterest in questions of moral culpability regarding Wolf's struggle to articulate her position with respect to the GDR and its legacies: "Of interest to me is less the question of the text's 'critical' attitude toward the state, although clearly that is a theme of the book, than what it reveals about the narrator/writer's tortured struggle to situate herself—cognitively, emotionally, psychically—in relation to a system within which she is both willing participant and an object of ostracism." Bathrick, 234.

[56] These debates were started when Stefan Sienerth discovered Romanian secret police files that show the involvement of Müller's colleague, Oskar Pastior, a poet and, like Müller's mother, a deportee to forced work camps in the Soviet Union at the end of World War II. See Stefan Sienerth's article "'Ich habe Angst vor unerfundenen Geschichten': Zur 'Securitate'-Akte Oskar Pastiors.' *Spiegelungen*. 59.3: 236-71. Print. Sienerth is critical that Pastior seems to make no attempts to resist involvement with the Stasi, despite having found only a single report in which Pastior incriminates a person. Müller wrote *Atemschaukel* (2009), the novel for which she won the 2009 Nobel Prize for literature, in collaboration with Pastior and defended him despite accusations against his participation with the Securitate. In this respect Müller's case is the opposite of Wolf's because Müller's refused collaboration with the Securitate made her lose her job. In terms of public reception, similarities might be drawn between the *Literaturstreit* and insinuations of plagiarism regarding the 2009 novel *Atemschaukel*, though the openness with which Müller collaborated with Pastior makes these insinuations difficult to ground. See C. Schmidt and L. Müller. "Herta Müller und Oskar Pastior - Der verstrickte Gefährte." *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. 17. September 2010. Web. 25. January 2015. <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/2.220/herta-mueller-und-oskar-pastior-der-verstrickte-gefaehrte-1.1001186>. As accusations of moral superiority tend to result in reductionist comparisons that lack the differentiated lens of a critical or creative view of literary-historical issues, however, I do not pursue these issues here.

[57] Most of Müller's work takes place outside Germany (in Romania and the Soviet Ukraine). A notable exception is *Reisende auf einem Bein* (1989) which is set mainly in an unnamed Berlin. This work thematically reworks the perspective of a third-person narrating subject to draw parallels between communist dictatorship in Ceauşescu's Romania and social pressures and political structures in West Berlin.

Frankfurt am Main and gained significant critical recognition for her story of a family's journey across the Hungarian People's Republic published in 2002. She describes her own access to the history of real existing socialism as a process of speaking with her family and visiting parts of formerly socialist Hungary on vacations.[58] I have included these divergent biographical perspectives on the history of eastern Europe to demonstrate a multiplicity of experiential orientations toward specific instances of real existing socialism. As authors of postcommunist literature, these writers invite readers to participate in the reconstruction of real existing socialist history and postcommunist political transition, showing how these histories are relevant to contemporary readers. The different biographical relationships these authors have to real existing socialism demonstrates the inadequacy of reducing postcommunist literature to matters of biography, though Wolf's explicit engagement with her own history is exemplary in demonstrating in one obvious way how the biographical can play an overt role in constituting literature that both informs history and is written through it. Like Wolf, Mora, Müller and Bánk partially constitute the history that becomes their subject in the course of narrative. As the narrating subjects of the works considered in this study take on their own life in storyworlds that are part of extraliterary worlds but not identical to them, the subjectivities these literary texts form in narration engage postcommunist readers in collectively imagining other futures. This select body of postcommunist literature shows how specific moments of communist history continue to be useful for reflecting on and thereby shaping postcommunist situations as well.

The German novels included in this study evidence a range of issues associated with real existing socialism in Europe and its fall. These issues include revolutions in eastern Europe, oppressive dictatorship in Romania, and the postcommunist transition period through the lens of

[58] See quotations from an interview with Hungarian-born writer Péter Nádas in "Ein Lob des doppelten Blicks: Zsuzsa Bánk hat einen herzzereißenden ungarischen Roman geschrieben." *Die Zeit*. Nr. 47. 14. Nov 2002. 3-4. Print.

migration to Germany from former Yugoslavia. The transnational subjectivities in these texts lend a crucial perspective to contemporary German literature by engaging issues of postcommunism beyond the political unification of the GDR and the FRG. By attending to formal aspects of these literary texts, I show how non-linear temporalities articulate collective subjectivities that interpellate readers as well in imagining histories that were once reduced by binary Cold War politics to a homogenous entity behind the Iron Curtain.

Herta Müller's work probes the viability of collective subjects in communities under surveillance by the Romanian Securitate during the rule of Ceaușescu's Communist Party. The grammatical constitution of plural subjects in her texts functions through a type of social cognition that transpires only in narration. As plural subjects are articulated and disarticulated in narration, they make social pressures on the subjects of real existing socialism visible. Müller's complex forms of subjectivity exceed individual, supposedly autonomous subjects without erasing individual difference by oscillating between a first-person narrating subject who seldom and only hesitantly employs the plural pronoun "wir" while reflecting explicitly on the plural subjects employed by figures around her. This creates a standpoint from which the reader can examine the limitations to and possibilities of collective temporalities that both condition alternative futures and establish a critical gaze from which to reflect on conformist pressures. In addition, the erasure of individuality as posited by a dictatorial collective "we" is undercut by Müller's processual narrative, which works by way of associative networks constructed through motifs that accrue specific meanings for the first-person narrating subject as they appear in various contexts throughout a work. Readers are thereby given a narrative standpoint from the past of real existing socialism that pressures them to ask what ethics might produce a future resistant to social conformity, as well as what might constitute a plural subjectivity that can do so

without confining the future through the various "we"s she has known in the real existing socialist state.

In Zsuzsa Bánk's 2002 novel *Der Schwimmer*, characters carve out their own ways of marking time against the rural backdrop of the Hungarian People's Republic. Whereas world historical events defining some chronologies of this period echo in the background—the 1968 Prague Spring is a rumor that washes ashore one day, Stalin's death in 1953 is woven into a personal recollection of the times, and the successful revolutions of 1989 are a future indexed as yet to be—the protagonists' travels after their mother leaves for the west are brought to the fore. Narrative focalization in this novel orients characters and readers alike toward the seemingly impossible future revolution of 1989—which does not appear in Bánk's narrative—through a style of narration that attributes special significance to events through dialogue and resists the dictated significance of Stalin's death as a meaningful event. The collectivity formed in narration here implicates readers in constructing a meaningful relation to another story about life during real existing socialism that discourses about Cold War history do not address.

In Terézia Mora's 2004 novel, *Alle Tage*, events posited as actual and virtual in narration unsettle distinctions among possible futures in the text, thus constructing a social hierarchy that demonstrates the possibilities of virtual literary postcommunist experience (narrated through subjunctive verbal modes and textual features that locate events outside the plot experienced by the characters) and the limits to actual literary postcommunist experience (that takes place in the plot). In other words, the figures in the text are coded such that the narrative events involving all the characters shape textual futures—though some can more actively than others. Whereas the protagonist, for most of the text a linguistic genius, progresses toward a future in which he is reduced to a fraction of his former linguistic prowess, another character that becomes his formal

foil disappears to leave merely a trace. These competing futures open a narrative temporality in the form of multiple possibilities, only one of which is actualized in the text. The figure whose future is sustained by the text interpellates readers into a social collectivity that impinges directly on the extraliterary world through a reference to the novel's publication date. Through this temporal marker that brings Mora's story about postcommunist transition into meaningful relation with the temporality of the book's production, *Alle Tage* brings attention to former political subjects of states that no longer exist in a postcommunist Germany that otherwise seems to erase them.

Analyzing these postcommunist texts as parts of a body of postcommunist literature within Germany suggests that they are not complementary to the emerging contours of Germany within the New Europe, but constitutive of it. They do not offer a foreign perspective from which merely to observe social processes unfolding within German culture envisioned as a stable entity, but rather give insight into the social and cultural fields at work constituting German culture as it continues to develop.

IV. Analytical method

Postcommunist literature by Herta Müller, Zsuzsa Bánk and Terézia Mora favors narrative procedures at the intersection of subjective form and temporal structure. Their works enable critiques of postcommunism that distinguish postcommunist literature from merely nostalgic reflections on a past that allegedly no longer affects the present, and from single-minded representations of traumatic experience. To articulate formal aspects of these works more fully, I will turn first to temporal categories that Hungarian-born philosopher Ágnes Heller lays out in her future-oriented *A Theory of History* (1982). Additionally I will draw on terminology from classical and postclassical narratologies of story-telling.

Ágnes Heller's future-oriented *A Theory of History* (1982) addresses history as a collective interpersonal enterprise. Heller, a student of Georg Lukács and member of the Marxist-informed Budapest circle, builds her theory of history, which she distinguishes from a philosophy of history, by using temporal categories adapted from Heideggerian notions of Being as fundamentally futural.[59] Unlike Heidegger, however, Heller works out an ontology of history that passes through stages of historical consciousness. She distinguishes her theory of history from philosophies of history by positing the moral need for Utopia as a collective future that orients the active construction of history by the subjects constituting it in the service of "those who have suffered most."[60] The interplay of temporal categories in the historiography foregrounded in her theory produces a plural subject that is both the location of history and the grammatical 'we' that constitutes it: "Historicity is not something which happened to us. It is not a propensity we 'slip into' as into a garment. We are historicity; we are time and space."[61] There is no history in Heller's account without the people who make it. Yet history, as the construct of European philosophies of history that have excluded other populations also sharing the world, has posited this "we" in false consciousness without acknowledging its exclusionary procedure. Heller thus contrasts this collective grammatical subject with her notion of 'Togetherness,' an absolute present 'constituted by those […] living for and against each other.'[62] Heller acknowledges her own standpoint within the Eurocentric philosophical tradition that constructed the concept of history,[63] and aims to transform this Eurocentric perspective critically by

[59] In *Sein und Zeit* (1927), Heidegger delineates notions of authentic and inauthentic temporality defined through their anticipatory and expectant relations to the future, respectively.
[60] Heller, 298. Heller's theory of history calls for an empathetic historiography oriented toward making histories meaningful which are not traditionally in the purview of historical reconstruction stemming from western paradigms. This also motivates her notion of Togetherness, as I go on to discuss.
[61] Ágnes Heller. *A Theory of History*. London: Routledge, 1982. 3.
[62] Ibid., 41.
[63] Ibid., 299. "'History', as a construction of the philosophy of history, was comprehended as the reflection on, and the projection of, modern civilization."

theoretically reworking its temporalities to recognize cultural contemporaneity (Togetherness) within a temporal structure called "historical present."[64] Rewriting history attuned to its hithertofore exclusion of contemporary subjects therefore requires an ethical reconstruction of history with Togetherness as its aim and theoretical standpoint.

Heller develops nine temporal categories that refine colloquial notions of past, present, and future. Heller's categories include "present history," "historical present proper," and "present-present age" as well as their past and future correlates:

> Present history encompasses all events and happenings whose consequences are alternative in character, and also events which can threaten us or fill us with hope; events to which we can relate both practically and pragmatically. Historical present is the cultural structure we are 'inside'. The present-present age is the sum total of meaningful objectivations, systems of belief, and values which are essential to our way of life; which direct and 'steer' our attitudes to our world.[65]

These three modes of the present demonstrate subjective orientations toward history that are not only temporal. Instead, at the crux of temporality and subjectivity, they express cultural attitudes toward history and various uses of it. Present history can be a source of hope or despair, the historical present is the structure shared by the "we" writing history, and the present-present age is the present made meaningful to and by those living it. In their past correlates, past history is a stream of events with fixed outcomes that no longer influence attitudes, the historical past is a transcended cultural structure, and the past-present age is composed of events that still influence attitudes and to which we bestow meaning. Because historical present is the cultural structure we are inside, reconstructing history in view of Togetherness requires establishing meaningful relations with pasts and futures—i.e., turning them into past-present and future-present ages. In

[64] Ibid., 41.
[65] Ibid., 44.

so doing, past and future become related to the present through past events for which we are responsible and future events which we are collectively invested in realizing.[66]

By constructing future-present ages in terms of Togetherness, Heller's theory of history emphasizes the importance of utopian thinking for orienting collective ethical action in the present without dictating a concrete form the future ought to take: "Should our Togetherness be reflected upon as the absolute present, and should we relate to the past as to past-present ages (from the viewpoint of our present-present age), we see future as a *future-present age.* For this reason, future-present age becomes an image – a Utopia – to which meaning (values of the consciousness of planetarian responsibility) has been attributed."[67] Utopia therefore becomes a capacity to imagine alternate futures collectively, but does not describe or prescribe the futures themselves. When we make the past relevant as a past-present age, we—as collective grammatical and historically-located subject—construct an historical present in which a form of subjectivity emerges as the narrating and collective subject of its own future-oriented historiographical creation.

Heller's temporal categories demonstrate various cultural attitudes at work in naming what is determined as past, present and future. In the readings that follow, I will show how particular literary works make future-present ages out of communist history in their texts in

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[66] In *Making Bodies, Making History* (1993), Leslie A. Adelson takes up Ágnes Heller's analytical categories in her discussion of postwar West German prose to show how "the postwar contestations of 'German' identity (construed in terms of both personal and national identity) have always been about the making and remaking of German history" (36). Adelson's discussion uses the interpretive dimension of Heller's constructivist notion of history to interpret the social meanings of discursive configurations of bodies in works by Anne Duden, TORKAN and Jeannette Lander. These texts evidence subjects constructed within and against historical constraints that show the "socioaesthetic construction of the body" and make visible social operations undergirding "the constitution of subjective agents of history" in so doing (29).

[67] Ibid., 48. Planetarian responsibility is Heller's term for the ethical commitment that is opened through a reflective, dialogical relation to the past (i.e., to past history and historical past that makes them past-present ages) that understands the past "in terms of common humanity." Utopia functions as a regulative idea (the idea of what Ought-to-Be) in Heller's theory that is directed by need satisfaction (which is historically specific and therefore not universalizing) and works through rational argumentation. Put briefly, the common image of the future (the future-present age that is Utopia) that Togetherness makes theoretically conceivable is commonly acceptable based on the strength of the logic supporting it.

different ways. Each text invites readers to construct social collectives beyond merely psychological means by socially constructing mental models of storyworlds to reconstruct history through narrative process. To explore the literary means by which these texts do so, I turn to the tools of classical and postclassical narratology. Postclassical narratology develops structuralist accounts of narrative to relocate the classical emphasis on a divide between story and discourse (or *fabula* and *sujet* in formalist terms respectively) to text types viewed on a spectrum of narrativity. Structuralist narratology, having done away with the referent in lieu of the signifier and signified, is unable to account for the inferential and referential features by which readers model storyworlds.[68] Postclassical developments in narratology thus include a variety of disciplinary approaches developed after the advent of structuralist narratology and seek to understand better how narrative is both marked by particular conditions of production and foundational to social cognition.[69]

In Herman's postclassical approach, narrative is both a text type and a cognitive structure. Drawing from the theory of text types, Herman shows that all texts are produced in particular communicative situations or in accordance with institutional and social practices, and that relations among various types of texts (including description, narration and explanation) create a gradient among text types in a variety of configurations through operations such as embedding, alternating, or conjoining. A text can furthermore belong to several text types at

[68] Postclassical narratologist David Herman argues that narratologists integrated structural linguistics into their approach at the same time that other fields were demonstrating the insufficiency of structuralism within linguistic theory. His examples include Chomskyan generative grammar and analyses of language attentive to the socially situated features of utterances. Herman delineates the history of narratology from Russian formalism through European and Anglo-American approaches to narrative studies in chapter two of *Basic Elements of Narrative*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. 23-36. Print.

[69] David Herman coined the term "postclassical narratology" in his introduction to a volume of new approaches to narrative: "Postclassical narratology (which should not be conflated with poststructuralist theories of narrative) contains classical narratology as one of its 'moments' but is marked by a profusion of new methodologies and research hypotheses; the result is a host of new perspectives on the forms and functions of narrative itself" (2-3). See David Herman, "Introduction: Narratologies." *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis*. Ibid., ed. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1999. 1-30. Print.

once (a novel can be narrative and have moments of description, for example).[70] However, despite the ways in which texts are marked by communicative or social conditions in which they are produced, postclassical narratology can still identify structural features that make them narrative: "although contexts or occasions help determine the meaning or function of storytelling acts, analysts can work to identify structural properties of those (situated) acts themselves—properties thanks to which they function as instances of narrative rather than as syllogisms, recipes, warehouse inventories, sayings in greeting cards, or mathematical theorems, as the case might be."[71] Focusing on the text-type narrative—a unique text type because of its temporal structure—Herman's postclassical narratology analyzes structural properties of narrative in order to develop critical categories for better understanding how the communicative and cognitive properties of narrative shape the worlds in which they circulate.

The worlds in question are what Herman calls storyworlds: "mental models of who did what to and with whom, when, where, why, and in what fashion in the world to which recipients relocate—or make a deictic shift—as they work to comprehend a narrative."[72] Storyworlds are modeled both from information in a given text, as well as from information implied by a given text that prompts readers to consider what might be possible in a storyworld. As readers relocate through narrative to storyworlds, they make inferences based on textual cues and fill in narrative gaps by considering what the range of possibilities might be at any given moment. As textual cues guide readers to judge the degree to which the storyworld diverges[73] from extraliterary

[70] See Herman's illustrative distinction among narrative, explanation and description, as well as summary of the theory of text types in chapter four of *Basic Elements*.
[71] Herman, *Basic Elements*, 76
[72] Ibid., *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002. Print. 9. Deixis refers to a variety of referential textual cues such as "this" and "now" that require readers to shift their centers of reference from the world in which they interpret a narrative to the coordinates of the storyworld they mentally reconstruct.
[73] Herman borrows the language of "relocation" and "divergence" from Marie Laure-Ryan's formulation of a principle of minimal departure in *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (1991). In Ryan's

worlds in which they participate, they construct mental models based on referents and logics determined by the possibilities of the storyworld. Narrative is therefore the basis for "world-making,"[74] or socially building worlds in an extraliterary world from a given text through readers located both where they are reading a story, and in the story logics they mentally reconstruct while reading.

My analysis draws from postclassical narratology to show how the storyworlds built in postcommunist literature construct collective temporalities in which histories of communism and postcommunism become meaningful, past-present ages. As readers reconstruct moments from real existing communism and postcommunist transition, they participate in the construction of temporalities that maintain a futural dimension which may or may not be explicitly posited in the text. This dimension, at the intersection of temporality and subjectivity, carries the utopian impulse of communism never actualized in politics or society. By attending to the future-present ages these texts help to index and construct, readers make storyworlds in which the future orientation of a time some call the past enters and shapes their own temporalities. I explore the narrative features through which this occurs in the chapters that follow.

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account, readers will interpret narratives according to the degree to which the logic of storyworlds departs from expectations readers have in the extraliterary world. A science fiction text contains narrative cues that prompt readers to expect aliens and unfamiliar technologies, for example, whereas a news report cues interpreters to make inferences about a world less divergent from the extraliterary world. See Herman, *Basic Elements*, 113-114.

[74] "World-making" is philosopher Nelson Goodman's way of accounting for the existence of a plurality of possible worlds irreducible to a single world due to the procedures of weighting, ordering, composition and decomposition, deletion and supplementation, and deformation by which these worlds are perceived or presented. Herman adopts Nelson's general idea that worlds are made from other worlds and develops analytical tools for examining the narrative foundations of these processes.

CHAPTER ONE

'INTERMENTAL THOUGHT' AND ALTERNATIVE FUTURES: POSTCOMMUNIST NARRATION IN HERTA MÜLLER'S *HEUTE WÄR ICH MIR LIEBER NICHT BEGEGNET*

> Am ersten Morgen im verrutschten Turmblock hatten Paul und ich so viel geredet, bis die Sonne im Mittag stand. Mich wunderte schon, wieweit man zu Müttern und Vätern zurückdenken muß, nur um zu sagen, woher der eine von uns zum anderen kommt.[1]
>
> All that we transmit to ourselves (including the meaning which at bottom humanity "gives itself," since our tradition has become that of the species, perhaps of all species) has begun to transmit itself in front of us, toward or coming from a "we" that we have not yet appropriated, and which has not yet received its name, if ever it should have one. But communism was something like a call coming from there: from "us."[2]
>
> Beyond condemnations, critiques, and nostalgia, actually existing socialism seems actually to provide the form of what Derrida once called "the experience of the impossible." More precisely, as it unfolds its own field of immanence, the study of postcommunism vacillates between the impossibility of pronouncing communism dead and the impossibility of its return.[3]

I. Introduction

Wenn ich nach quälenden Verhören wieder auf der Straβe ging, der Kopf zerwühlt, die Augen starr wie eine Gipsfüllung, die Beine fremd wie von jemand anderem geliehen, wenn ich in diesem Zustand auf dem Heimweg war, zeigten mir diese Pflanzen, was mit mir los – und mit Worten nicht zu sagen war. Sie brauchten, um das zu zeigen, nichts als die Düfte, Farben und Formen, die sie sowieso hatten, und den Ort, an dem sie ohnehin standen. Sie vergrößerten das Geschehene zur Ungeheuerlichkeit, fügten dieser Vergrößerung aber schon das Schrumpfen bei, das zum Sichdreinfinden nötig war, um das zuletzt Geschehene einzuordnen ins Vorherige.[4]

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[1] Herta Müller. *Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet*. Munich: Carl Hanser, 2009. Print. 213.
[2] Jean-Luc Nancy. "La Comparution / The Compearance: From the Existence of 'Communism' to the Community of 'Existence.'" Trans. Tracy B. Strong. *Political Theory* 20.3 (August 1992): 371-398. Print. 384.
[3] Ovidiu, Tichindeleanu. "Towards a critical theory of postcommunism?: Beyond anticommunism in Romania." *Radical Phillosophy* 159 (Jan/Feb 2010): 26-32. Print. 32.
[4] Müller. "Wenn wir schweigen, werden wir unangenehm – wenn wir reden, werden wir lächerlich" in *Der König verneigt sich und tötet*, 4th ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 2009), 74-105. Print. 77.

During a lecture on poetics at Tübingen University, Herta Müller recalls changes in her own perception after interrogation by the Romanian secret police (*Securitate*) and reflects on her tendency to use objects in her surroundings as a means to locate herself in space and also to recognize a temporal continuity from before the interrogation to the present moment. Müller's descriptions of traumatic experiences in Romania during real existing socialism under Nicolae Ceauşescu (1967 – 1989) often prominently feature this use of objects, which marks a stylistic tendency across the author's multifaceted oeuvre that ranges from novels and short stories to poetic and political essays, journalistic writings, and collages of images and text. Born in 1953, Müller spent her early years in a German-speaking community in Nitzkydorf, a town in the Romanian Banat, and remained in Romania for thirty-four years until her emigration to Germany in 1987. Her works have received increasing critical acclaim in Germany since 1994, when she was the first German-speaking Romanian author to win the Kleist Award, and most recently worldwide upon receiving the 2009 Nobel Prize for Literature. Given Müller's political and biographical background, discussion of her works is often framed by contexts of ethnic and national identity, or by trauma theory to analyze so-called failures of representation in depictions of experience in real existing socialism. Though these contexts are useful and important points of orientation, single-minded focus on them tends to reduce the complexity of Müller's literary engagement with experiences under the Romanian dictatorship and in a divided Germany to fictional documents that merely represent details from Müller's life. In what follows, I propose instead a method of tracing forms of narrative temporality and literary subjectivity in Müller's texts that, when considered in the context of postcommunist Europe, reveal striking aesthetic possibilities for bringing a mode of historical reflection to bear not only on the past of European communism, but also on postcommunist futures. Beyond mere representations of experiences

under European communism, my emphasis on today's postcommunist context foregrounds future-oriented aspects of the text that imply ethical imperatives. How might these texts articulate transnational subjectivities no longer coded in national terms or divided into Cold War binaries and three-world geopolitical models? Müller's descriptions of communities fraught with betrayal and fear both present moments of subjective resistance through certain forms of social organization, and enable a critique of sociohistorical structures that conditioned a specific troubled future, now past, in the real existing socialism of Ceauşescu's Romania.

Herta Müller's literary style is marked by a vocabulary of images that return repeatedly both in the course of a text and across her oeuvre. These images usually take the form of specific objects that appear in multiple contexts, motifs of circulation that accumulate increasingly complex associations on the part of both reader and narrating subject. The objects encountered by the narrating subject evoke memories of past experiences that reveal a multilayered temporality at work in the narrator's subjective experience. Her present moment is not radically severed from her past, but rather inextricable from and partially defined by associations with past experiences. The more Müller's narrators recognize the past in the present, the better they are able to steer their futures toward future outcomes that might be different than the past futures they have come to recognize. As they watch and reflect on the lives playing out around them as well as their own, they develop a type of foresight that guides them in situations that have not yet reached their conclusion. Seen in this light, a narrating subject's encounters with the past, though traumatic, also offer important points of orientation by way of which she may influence futures that are still open.[5]

[5] For an extended discussion of this process of orientation that establishes associative networks through motifs of circulation in Müller's prose, see my article "Accumulating Histories: Temporality in Herta Müller's 'Einmal anfassen—zweimal loslassen.'" *Herta Müller: Politics and Aesthetics.* Eds. Bettina Brandt and Valentina Glajar. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013. 252-272. Print.

Though the resulting form of subjectivity is highly dependent on past moments, it is not completely determined by them. Whereas a structure of temporality confined to a present time understood as the endless repetition of the past might suggest the impossibility of change in the future, I argue that the combined structures of temporality and subjectivity in Müller's texts enable the articulation of an open-ended future precisely by way of this repetition. Rather than collapsing past and present into identical moments, the motif associations that accumulate around objects repeated in various narrative contexts foreground the processual nature of Müller's narratives and the narrator's capacity for re-signification. By adjusting associations accumulating around objects, words, and phrases in the course of narration, the narrator continually rearticulates her relationship to the figures and objects around her. The narrating subject's explicit reflections on the associations that constitute her past-indebted present moment thereby construct formal relationships to material objects constituting her literary world. Readers activate these formal relationships as they apprehend the fictional histories of linguistic objects within the horizon of the text. As readers recognize particular textual details that re-appear in multiple contexts, these narrative motifs form an implicit associative network that is not overtly foregrounded for readers' attention, but is nonetheless crucial to their understanding of the text. Just as the narrating subject in the quotation opening this chapter section describes using the objects around her as a means for grounding her perspective—"Wenn ich in diesem [zerwühlten] Zustand auf dem Heimweg war, zeigten mir diese Pflanzen, was mit mir los [war]"[6]—so too do readers find a sort of grounding through the repetition of details that allow them to recognize the history as narrated and formed in relationship to material and linguistic objects circulating in the

[6] Müller, "Wenn wir schweigen," 77.

text.[7] This chapter will analyze how this process works in Müller's prose and then use the author's stylistic strategies for conceptual reflection on postcommunism as a cultural phenomenon.

The emphasis in Müller's prose on an often autobiographical narrating subject recalling traumatic experiences in Romania during real existing socialism under Ceaușescu has led many scholars to approach her works through the lens of trauma theory. For example, scholars such as Brigid Haines, Beverly Driver Eddy and Lyn Marven have gained insight into Müller's work by using trauma theory to show how the literary strategies and subjectivity present in her texts are the result of Müller's expression of her previously repressed past.[8] These analyses address the impact of Müller's biography on her writing and compellingly examine implications of trauma for the author's style of narration. The concept of trauma has been useful in literary studies for exploring relationships between literary representation and historical experience in the twentieth century, a period marred by wars, torture, deportations, mass murder, and the particular horrors

[7] Emerging scholarly fields such as Material Culture Studies and Thing Theory attend to theoretical distinctions among things and objects, as well as the constitutive role of language in demarcating these distinctions. Though my work touches on these issues, I do not use Müller's works to develop theoretical claims about subjectivity as such. Instead, I focus my analysis on the manner in which Müller's narrator establishes social thought and future possibilities by way of object-based associations that structure the novel's temporality and the narrator's subjectivity. For related theoretical discussions, see the essays collected in *Things*. Bill Brown, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. Print. Brown's introduction to the volume, which has since become definitive of its titular "Thing Theory," gives a concise overview of various approaches to the paradox of "thingness" as both the metaphysical or sensual excess of objects that cannot be contained by the words that name them, and as the apperceptive mode by way of which objects and subjects emerge in the first place (that is, materiality is prior to the objects by way of which it is perceived). The interdisciplinary field of Material Culture Studies draws from structural anthropology, social history and art history to analyze how social relations are constituted and transformed in and by things. See Philip Bracher, Florian Hertweck and Stefan Schröder's overview of the discipline in *Materialität auf Reisen: Zur kulturellen Transformation der Dinge*. Berlin: LitVerlag, 2006. Print. 1-24. Anja Maier's essay in the same volume uses these methodologies explicitly for analyzing Müller's work. See "'Gegenstände, wo die Haut zu Ende ist.' Dinge und Körper in Herta Müllers Prosa." 175-197. For studies attuned specifically to the gendered codifications of things, see Gisela Ecker and Susanne Scholz, eds. *Umordnungen der Dinge*. Königstein: Helmer, 2000. Print.

[8] See Beverly Driver Eddy, "Testimony and Trauma in Herta Müller's *Herztier*," *German Life and Letters* 53, no. 1 (January 2000): 56-72. Print.; Brigid Haines, "'The Unforgettable Forgotten': The Traces of Trauma in Herta Müller's *Reisende auf einem Bein*," *German Life and Letters* 55, no.3 (July 2002): 260-281. Print.; Lyn Marven, "'In Allem ist der Riss': Trauma, Fragmentation, and the Body in Herta Müller's Prose and Collages," *Modern Language Review* 100, no. 2 (2005): 396-411. Print.

associated with the Holocaust.[9] Often the literary strategies associated with this type of representation hinge on gaps or fragmentation as aesthetic solutions for representing the trauma of an event despite the ostensible impossibility of articulating a traumatic event itself.[10] In her analysis of the relationship between Müller's prose and collage work, for example, Lyn Marven writes, "The effects of trauma take two main, interrelated forms: trauma disrupts the structures of memory and creates a distorted body image. Trauma cannot be integrated into narrative memory and exists only as a gap or blank spot; it therefore cannot be articulated, and returns in the form of surprisingly literal flashbacks, hallucinations, or dreams."[11] Marven's analysis addresses the corporeal fragmentation and semantic as well as syntactic gaps in Müller's prose and collage works to show a development in the artist's projects over time that may be helping the author "overcome the trauma that underlies their aesthetic of fragmentation."[12]

This description of trauma does resonate with elements characteristic of Müller's work and also offers one explanation for her narrating subjects' recurring associations with past experience in present moments and her own stylistic tendency to ascribe anthropomorphic

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[9] Dominick LaCapra and Cathy Caruth have made especially significant contributions to conceptualizations of trauma and its use in literary studies. See LaCapra's reflections on the need to distinguish between structural (psychoanalytic and linguistic) trauma and specific historical trauma without reducing the significance or specificity of the latter by way of universalizing or historicizing it through the former in his seminal *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2001. Print. Esp. Ch 2. and *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994. Print. LaCapra is particularly critical of Caruth's understanding of trauma as "a central characteristic of the survivor experience of our time" in which traumatic experience paradoxically defies recollection, yet is only accessible to historical understanding through this incomprehensibility. See Caruth's introductions to *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* Ed. Cathy Caruth. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995. Print. (Quotation on page 151) and her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996. Print.

[10] Brigid Haines notes an important distinction in the motivations behind such gaps. In her summary of discourses surrounding trauma, she notes how subjects may either be unable to articulate a traumatic event, or may refuse to do so in order to maintain the singularity of the experience: "The traumatized individual cannot grasp what has happened to him or her, does not possess the memory of the traumatic moment, but is possessed by it as it intrudes periodically upon consciousness in the form of flashbacks. Even if he or she perceives it to be possible, the traumatized individual resists seizing the memory and transforming it into narrative – thus potentially opening the way towards recovery – for fear of diluting the experience and betraying those others who may not have survived." Haines, 267-8.

[11] Marven, 398.

[12] Ibid., 411.

qualities to surrounding objects. However, I wish to shift the emphasis from gaps that merely hold the place of traumatic experience to the manner in which Müller's works open a space for the articulation of subjectivity that engages traumatic experiences, through literary form, without being restricted to or overdetermined by them. By focusing on the narrative intersection of temporal structures and subjective forms at work in Müller's texts, I will show how Müller's stylistic configuration of past and present—what a reading through trauma theory might characterize as discrete flashbacks to traumatic experience—develops a temporal structure in the associative course of narration that enables the articulation of a possible future not overdetermined by trauma.[13] The reflections of Müller's narrators are not solely retrospective attempts to represent the trauma of individual past experience, but rather indicate a forward-looking mode of social "intermental" reflection conditioning the articulation of future possibilities. Read in the context of European postcommunism, Müller's engagement with the oppression and fear marking her narrating subjects' experiences in real existing socialist Romania thus exceeds representational descriptions to become a sophisticated literary meditation on historical experience between real existing socialism and postcommunist futures. This may touch on psychological consequences of trauma but shifts the emphasis to social and linguistic structures mediating this experience. The formal narrative connections among past, present, and future subjects articulated in Müller's works in other words raise important ethical issues about

[13] Margaret Littler's discussion of Müller's novel *Reisende auf einem Bein* (1989) also attends to subjectivity in Müller's prose. Littler draws from Rosi Braidotti's feminist theory of a nomadic subject to read the novel's protagonist as a "postmodern female embodied subject" that "does not seek to dominate or unify what she sees" (111) and that is "arising from trauma but sustained by postmodern city life" (116), thereby identifying subjective qualities beyond that of a traumatized subject. However, she still understands Müller's prose as primarily motivated by trauma and explicitly turns to Müller's biography to account for indeterminacies in the text. I seek to avoid this methodological move and to understand instead the effects of indeterminacy as a significant stylistic feature of Müller's prose. See Littler's chapter titled "Herta Müller, *Reisende auf einem Bein* (1989)." In: *Contemporary Women's Writing in German: Changing the Subject*. Brigid Haines and Margaret Littler, eds. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004. Print. 99-117.

the potential of subjective resistance in historical moments marked by political interrogation, state surveillance, and social conformity.

II. Intermental Thought: Continuing Consciousness in Narratology

> Besser es stünden einem die Dinge selber und zum Anfassen im Kopf statt der Gedanken, an denen man ohne Ende grübelt. Leute, die man haben oder loswerden will, und Gegenstände, die man behalten oder verloren hat. Es gäbe eine Ordnung: Mitten im Kopf steht Paul, und nicht mein Ankrallen und Wegrücken von ihm in gleicher Liebe. An den Schläfen laufen die Gehsteige, so lang sie wollen, und an den Wangen stehen vielleicht die Läden mit Vitrinen, nicht meine grundlosen Ziele in der Stadt. Im Hinterkopf ist Albus Laufbursche, der womöglich in dem roten Auto unten sitzt, bevor er hier läutet und mich bestellt.[14]

The above excerpt is drawn from Herta Müller's 1997 novel, *Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet*, the story of a first-person narrating subject who recalls a wide range of past moments and future desires as she rides a tram to an appointment for interrogation by the Romanian secret police, and the keystone text of my analysis in Section III. Both this novel and Müller's writing more generally articulate subjective forms very different from longstanding western notions of subjectivity. Whereas the latter tend to depend on a dichotomy of mind and body in which external gestures and actions express internal truth content, subjective forms in Müller's work stress the social dimension of subjectivity.[15] These subjectivities are constructed not according to stable internal truths as the narrator of the above quotation might wish ("*Besser es stünden einem die Dinge selber und zum Anfassen im Kopf…Es gäbe eine Ordnung*), but in dynamic exchanges and interactions among figures and their surroundings—"[*die*] *Gedanken, an denen man ohne Ende grübelt*"—as formal configurations of grammatical subjects and objects.

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[14] Müller, *Heute*, 110-111.

[15] I touch only briefly on the long history of philosophical and theoretical notions of subjectivity in so far as it helps to position the narratological focus of my own analysis. For a recent critique of authentic subjectivity as contrasted to performative and rhetorical notions of subjectivity, see the introduction and essays collected in *The Rhetoric of Sincerity.* Ernst van Alpen, Mieke Bal and Carel Smith, eds. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009. Print.

Although many scholars read Müller's works along the lines of her biography, seeking to connect her textual themes to events and experiences in her life, my reading focuses on the literary aspects of her writing—including her specific use of motifs—in order to see how her texts, beyond reporting an individual life story or experience, call subjective forms into being by literary means. Her narration underscores the porous nature of subjectivities connected over and through time, as well as the interrelation of grammatical and narrating subjects and the storyworld[16] with respect to which they are constructed. If authentic experience as mapped onto literary subjects by way of authorial autobiography connects moments in literary texts with moments proper to an author's life, what Müller's texts underscore by contrast is the impossibility of authentic experience proper to a single subject. This is not merely about alienation and oppression, but also about a kind of "future-making."[17] By denying parameters of internality and externality often otherwise associated with subjective authenticity, Müller foregrounds moments of recognized and recognizably intersubjective connections that retain ethical import without recourse to universalized subjects. At once thematic and formal, these narrative connections have implications both for the figures in the storyworld, understood as unique composites of larger social and historical trends in Romania under real existing socialism, and the engaged reader through whom these pasts become what Agnes Heller terms "past-present ages" with implications for a shared future.[18]

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[16]"Storyworld" is a term I borrow from postclassical narratologist David Herman, who uses it to refer to how readers reconstruct worlds based on narrative cues. Storyworlds include not only the world presented in the story, but also the various alternative actions and possible worlds readers consider in order to understand the narrative logic at work. He writes, "storyworlds are mental models of who did what to and with whom, when, where, why, and in what fashion in the world to which recipients relocate…as they work to comprehend a narrative." *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002. Print. 5.

[17] See anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition*. London: Verso, 2013. Print. Appadurai's studies investigate how hope or "the capacity to aspire" for human survival functions as a "future-making" activity in various cultures.

[18] Please refer to the dissertation introduction for a detailed discussion of how I understand my project to build on Heller's. In short, Heller differentiates colloquial notions of past, present, and future into nine temporal categories

The opening lines of Müller's 1997 novel *Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet* foreground the intimate relation of literary subjectivity and narrative temporality developed in the story to come on which my analysis in Section III focuses: "Ich bin bestellt. Donnerstag punkt zehn."[19] To stake out a modest ground in debates about subjectivity that have taken many forms in long-standing theoretical and philosophical traditions, I turn primarily to the tools of postclassical and cognitivist narratology. The focus in these fields on understanding how subjects (among other textual elements) come to be by way of grammatical and narrative features and patterns will help me establish a more refined vocabulary for bringing Müller's particular literary strategies to light. In the process, postclassical and cognitive narratology will also help me elaborate how *Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet* exceeds in literary form both authorial biography and traumatic repetition.

In *Social Minds in the Novel* (2010), Alan Palmer describes and troubles narratological typologies divided into internalist and externalist perspectives in order to expand notions of subjectivity by emphasizing the complex social nature of storyworlds. Through readings of several English-language works of literature including Charles Dickens' *Little Dorrit* (1857), George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1872) and Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love* (1997), Palmer develops the concept of a "social mind" constituted through characters, their individual and collective actions, and their relationships and situations in the storyworld. Although he strictly limits his arguments to the fictional worlds of novels, he is not shy in professing his alignment with an

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(past history, historical past, past-present age and their present and future correlates) in order to call for the reconstruction of the past from the standpoint of an absolute present she terms "Togetherness." Past history refers to inert events that no longer influence present attitudes; the historical past is a cultural structure that is transcended when a subsequent present (a new cultural structure) emerges; and the past-present age is the historical past and/or past history with which the present is still concerned (i.e. the past which the present considers meaningful to interpret and which influences present attitudes). Her ethical imperative to create a future worthy of "cognitive love" (49) involves engaging all forms of the past as past-present ages in order to establish values that guide the construction of future-present ages. See Heller's *A Theory of History*. London: Routledge, 1982. Print. Esp. pages 36-50 and 79-89.

[19] Müller, *Heute*, 7.

overall cognitivist turn in literary studies that makes more general claims about the cognitive function of narrative in perception. Palmer discusses his concepts in the context of English-language novels only, but he also understands the mental processes at work when readers apprehend worlds of narrative fiction to be inherently related to those processes with which humans negotiate real worlds as well. At first glance his strict division of fiction and reality seems to place him in the tradition of classical narratologists such as Dorrit Cohn and Käte Hamburger, who understand fiction as a distinct, privileged site for gaining access to the consciousness of others.[20] As a cognitivist, however, Palmer's provisional horizon dividing the literary from the real is largely heuristic: he suggests that the processes with which readers construct social minds as they read novels are the same as those with which they confront the real world when speculating about or assuming knowledge of the thoughts of others. However, he restricts his explicit claims to the world of fiction and leaves psychologists, sociologists, and practitioners of other cognitively oriented disciplines to draw more concrete claims about the influence outside novels of the paradigms he discusses. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly for the discussion to follow, he distinguishes his work from the internalist paradigms of Cohn and Hamburger through his strong claim that reading subjects can and do have access to the thoughts of others: to read novels as social minds is, for Palmer, to focus on implicit and explicit moments of understanding and communication in novels, including both "surface" cues (e.g., gestures, facial expressions, emotions) and verbal statements of understanding. Though Palmer's distinction between verbal and nonverbal moments in the texts that he reads functions largely on the level of thematic elements and his keen suggestions for refiguring assumptions about how thinking in the storyworld occurs seldom investigate the role that formal aspects of

[20] See Dorrit Cohn. *The Distinction of Fiction.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999. Print. and Käte Hamburger. *The Logic of Literature.* 2d, rev. ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973. Print.

literature might play in achieving or resisting collective thought, his interest in demonstrating reciprocal, co-constitutive interactions of narrating subjects and their surroundings, as well as his suggestive expansion of critical notions of subjectivity, serve in this chapter as a helpful point of departure to read with and against the forms of subjectivity articulated in Müller's *Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet*.

Two main concepts drive Palmer's discussion in *Social Minds in the Novel*: "continuing consciousness" and "intermental thought." Palmer defines "continuing consciousness" as "the ability to take a reference to a character in the text and attach to it a presumed consciousness that exists continuously within the storyworld between the various, more or less intermittent references to that character."[21] In general terms, the continuing-consciousness framework sustains forms of subjectivity articulated in the narration of a literary work even if a given character is not consistently present. Palmer's term refers to the reader's tendency to make assumptions about what a character is likely to do in a particular situation based on information presented in the course of the narrative, even if the assumed actions are not actually described in the narrative. As such, "continuing consciousness" involves inferences made by readers about how characters think as well as what they are likely to think about others, including how they imagine others will think about them. Despite the ostensible individuality of each figure in a fictional world, Palmer works to undermine external and internal precepts of subjectivity by stressing intersubjective processes of consciousness formation.[22] He insistently underlines the

[21] Palmer, Alan. *Social Minds in the Novel*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2010. Print. 10.
[22] Palmer positions his book squarely as a contribution to cognitive approaches to narration and goes into admirable detail that I unfortunately can only abbreviate here. He devotes his first two chapters to an extremely lucid summary of narratological debates in which he helpfully organizes a litany of terms that describe "aspects of mental life in the novel" into two main groups: internalist and externalist. Internalist perspectives prefer concepts such as interior monologue and stream of consciousness, whereas externalist perspectives include Bakhtinian dialogicality and continuing consciousness. See Palmer, 1-64 (here p.40).

social nature of fictional figures: these minds cannot be thought independently of the minds around them or of the culture of the settings in which they live.

One of the main qualities that Palmer ascribes to social minds in fiction is a type of collective thinking he terms intermental thought: "Such a thinking is joint, group, shared, or collective, as opposed to *intramental*, or individual or private thought. It is also known as *socially distributed, situated,* or *extended cognition*, and also as *intersubjectivity*."[23] Palmer argues that all novels (not only his examples) are fundamentally social because the construction of storyworlds depends on readers' abilities to interpret textual cues—a necessarily social process. Palmer thus embraces the communicative possibilities of language and intersubjectivity despite linguistic functions that also suggest the impossibility of comprehensive communication. He acknowledges moments of failed communication and solipsism to be sure—features of texts more visible through internalist perspectives that underscore the inaccessibility of one consciousness to another—but his study clearly emphasizes ways in which fictional characters communicate through thematically nonverbal means (such as gestures, facial expressions, emotional reactions) as well as through thinking that is not easily attributable to one or another single character. He asks, "What tools should we use to measure the self that is located between the individual and others?"[24] To illustrate his approach, he borrows an example from psychologist James Werth that involves two people who work together to figure out where a pair of lost shoes might be. One person has no idea where the shoes are, but through a series of questions helps another person find them. The person who has lost the shoes, having forgotten them in the first place, can also not be said to have the desired knowledge of their location. Together, however, they are able to produce this knowledge. Palmer writes, "If you draw the line

[23] Ibid., 41.
[24] Ibid., 29.

narrowly around single persons, and maintain that cognition can only be individual, then things remain inexplicable. Neither *on their own* remembered. If you draw the line more widely, and accept the concept of an intermental cognitive system, then things are explained. The intermental unit remembered."[25] As this example shows, intermental thought involves not only the potential accessibility of minds to each other, but also the functionality of relationships established among minds. Collective thinking facilitates the production of knowledge that, in Palmer's example, is used to find a lost object. At least one member in the intermental unit was sure the shoes existed, and although it may seem difficult to argue that collective thinking actively produced them, collective thinking did in this instance produce the shoes as the object of a search.

Palmer's concept of intermental thought is a powerful tool for thinking about the ways in which collective thinking can produce knowledge and how it is constituted in and by narrative. In Palmer's account, storyworld, novel, and social mind are virtually synonyms that shift the terms of narratological debates and construct new points of access for reconfiguring our understanding of narration, how it works and what it does in literature. Intermental thought will prove helpful for thinking about the degree to which minds might be deemed accessible to one another in Herta Müller's literary oeuvre, especially under depicted conditions of surveillance in tightly knit communities that are also fraught with betrayal (see Section III.4).

Furthermore, the social coordination facilitated by intermental thought brings into relief another medium used to connect subjects, though in a very different manner: temporality. I will distinguish several different temporal structures in the analysis to follow, one of which stands in

[25] Ibid., 43. There are of course objections to this reading of the situation. One could argue that the person who forgot the shoes might indeed have the knowledge of their location stored somewhere not readily accessible for recall. Alternatively, one could understand the moment of forgetting as negated knowledge, which still suggests that an individual subject is responsible for remembering, not the intermental unit. However, Palmer is interested in refiguring his analytical vocabulary to stress an externalist, social perspective precisely so as to avoid attributing 'unseen' or assumed qualities onto mental processes alone.

particular contrast to intermental thought. Standardized temporality, in its objectified clock form, becomes one of the main methods for manipulating subjects when intermental thought is not operative. When Major Albu, the Securitate officer interrogating the first-person narrating subject of Müller's *Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet*, claims intermental access to the narrating subject's thoughts that he does not have, he uses standardized temporality in the form of appointments for interrogation to force a particular form of social coordination. Müller's chosen form of narration, working by way of temporality and subjectivity, is able to resist this control. Albu's attempts to collapse the narrating subject's present moment into a homogeneous temporality that limits her field of possible action to fearing interrogation appointments are also intended to negate her subjective agency. However, the narrator's thoughts range across past, present and future, recombining memories and desires, reflections, descriptions, and predictions in a narrative that thwarts homogeneous temporal structures and Albu's intentions alike.

Both temporality and subjectivity involve social components—time as a manner of subjective coordination, subjectivity as a fundamentally intersubjective negotiation—that touch importantly on the issues of social organization. Postcommunist literature, by offering a point of intermental access to experiences in real existing socialism from within particular historical moments, makes us probe evolving relationships among subjects as both singular and interconnected. How are communities formed, what obligations may we have to our contemporaries, what constitutes being-together, and what sorts of ethical imperatives arise in the course of these considerations? How do the realities of real existing socialism as presented in these literary works compare to the theoretical and philosophical precepts of communism or to a code of ethics more generally? And how might Müller's fictional narratives about real existing socialism in Romania help us address both the distortion of philosophical ideals in real existing

socialist states that have failed so miserably, and the aspiration to more ethical futures in postcommunist Europe?

Müller's work emphasizes the unique specificity of singular subjects—neither autonomous individuals in a liberal sense, nor faceless collectives—despite their dependence, both desired and not, on other figures in the storyworld. In my discussion of the novel *Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet*, I will therefore focus on three emphatic intermental units constituted by the relationships among the narrator and interrogating secret police officer Major Albu, her second husband Paul, and Lilli, a close friend who is executed after attempting an illegal border crossing. Each figure influences the form and possibility of narration differently. Though the narrating subject is left in the final line of the novel without either of the trusted figures who have undergirded most of the narration, her successful resistance to having her subjectivity be collapsed into Major Albu's official temporality suggests the significance of her narrative resources for articulating relations across and with recourse to time. Although the standardized temporality of clocks can be used for social coordination, it can also be abused for controlling lives by dictating daily rhythms and routines (as, for example, when Major Albu summons Müller's protagonist to interrogation at whim), thereby obscuring possibilities for resistance. Müller's narration, however, establishes other formal connections among subjects too. The novel's storytelling thus coordinates subjects without dictating when and how a connection must occur, and also without eliding the difference between subjects into an absolute identity. By making meaningful connections with the past that remind us that its concerns, beliefs and attitudes are part of a past-present age—Agnes Heller's term for a historical past that retains meaning for the present age and therefore calls to be interpreted and engaged—narration in Müller's hands allows for future-oriented connections among subjects that maintain temporal

difference and subjective difference alike to avoid oppressive erasures of specificity through the elision of subjects into a uniform collective.

III. Herta Müller's Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet *(1997)*

Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet follows the reflections of a first-person narrating subject as she rides a tram to an appointment for interrogation by Major Albu, an officer of the Romanian secret police (*Securitate*). Ranging from a trip with a group of students to the Carpathian mountains to a berry crushed on a shoe, the narrator's thoughts weave through past memories, present impressions, and future possibilities. As the narrator's observations of the people in the tram around her and the passing scenery provoke memories from other times and places, these observations open a space for reflection in her present moment that the pressures of state surveillance, state-sponsored murder, and concomitant social relationships in Romania under Ceauşescu constantly threaten to eclipse. The official summons to interrogation is a dictated means to control her life that aims to collapse her subjective time into irregular but serial standardized appointments that may or may not happen at 10am on any given day. Though the narrator ostensibly runs on the interrogator's clock and grows so obsessed with the possibility of being summoned that she seemingly can do nothing but wait for the official summons, the fundamentally heterogeneous temporality of her reflections connects past, present, and future figures and objects in the course of narration. This opens a space of resistance via temporal structures and interconnected subjects that cannot be collapsed into the homogeneous regularity and linear temporality of the 10am appointments. Though on one level her life plays out largely at the behest of temporalities controlled by other figures in the storyworld—Albu's summons and the whims of a tram driver who prefers buying croissants to keeping a regular timetable, for

example—she marks another time through narration. In so doing, the narrating subject is able to orient herself both in history—a process that occurs most significantly when the narrating subject and her second husband share their family histories with one another, thereby developing a critical distance from the historico-political circumstances in which they find themselves—and in her present as she recognizes structural repetition in the lives lived around her.

At one point during the tram ride, the narrator remembers going to a cobbler's shop to get her husband Paul's shoes fixed. When she arrives at the shop, a younger man has replaced the old cobbler with whom she had had many a trusted conversation, and she learns that the latter is dead, likely having killed himself because of poverty. Her recollection is not narrated continuously, but rather takes an episodic form, interspersed with other memories as well as scenes occurring in the tram in the narrative present. My reading will focus on one portion of the narrator's conversation with the new cobbler in which she remembers a particular exchange with the older one. This scene involves three main temporal layers: an unmentioned present time inside the tram implied by the simple past tense narration that marks the scene as a remembered moment; the present time of the memory in which the narrator stands in front of the younger cobbler; and the past in which the narrator speaks with the previous cobbler that she explicitly remembers from this (remembered) present. I quote the passage at length:

> Der alte Schuster stellte Daumen und Zeigefinger an seine Mundwinkel. Das ist heute nicht mehr wichtig, eine Nebensache, wie so vieles im Leben.
>
> Auch ich erzählte dem alten Schuster von meiner toten Oma, und daß mein Opa nach dem Tod meines Tatas gesagt hatte, das Leben sei ein Furz in der Laterne, es lohnt sich nicht die Schuhe anzuziehen.
>
> Da hat er Recht, meinte der Schuster, das muß ein halber Philosoph sein, ein dummer Mensch sagt sowas nicht.
>
> Dann zeigte er zur Holzwand, wo an jedem Nagel Schuhe hingen:
>
> Schauen Sie her, das mit den Schuhen sehe ich anders, sonst hätte ich kein Brot zum Beißen.
>
> Unter die Lippen gespannt, verwandelte sich die vom Lederwachs vergilbte Haut zwischen dem Daumen und Zeigefinger des Schusters in eine Schwimmhaut.

> Meine Vera, die hat sich wenigstens selbst soweit gebracht. Aber im Irrenhaus mit ihr sind zwei junge Frauen, die wurden irr bei der Polizei und haben nichts getan. Die eine hat Kerzenwachs aus der Fabrik gestohlen, die andere einen Sack Maiskolben vom Feld. Jetzt sagen Sie, was ist das schon.
>
> Ich habe weder Gummi noch Leder für Halbsohlen, sagte der junge Schuster. Er schlüpfte mit den Händen in Pauls Sandalen, wie in Fäustlinge, drehte sie mit den Sohlen nach oben und sah die zertretene Brombeere an. Seine vorstehenden Zähne gingen auf und zu, ich war in Gedanken woanders. Der Junge mit den Staubschlangen war tot, weil ich keine Geduld zum Spielen hatte. Mein Tata, weil er sich nicht mehr vor mir verstecken wollte. Mein Opa, weil ich mit seinem Tod gelogen hatte. Der alte Schuster, weil ich auf das Sattwerden der Welt getanzt hatte. Das Schiefmaul wickelte die Sandalen wieder in die Zeitung.
>
> Schauen Sie in zehn Tagen herein, dann sehen wir weiter. Ich sah schon weit genug, nickte und ging.[26]

Shortly before this passage the older cobbler describes in more detail the sequence of events culminating in the internment of his wife Vera in a mental institution. The cited passage is important for several reasons. First, the simultaneous presence—in the narrator's thoughts—of both cobblers marks the scene as a temporal palimpsest from the vantage point of the narrating subject. Second, the narration weaves together first- and third-person singular and first-person plural pronouns, connecting subjects across and through time with some unique deictic shifts that establish the older cobbler as the narrative center of reference despite the presence of his younger successor. And, lastly, the narrator establishes a relationship between her actions—formulated in the past perfect verb tense (*gelogen hatte*, *gesagt hatte*, *getanzt hatte*)—and the fates of those around her that she characterizes in terms of a causal relationship (*weil*). This last point, seemingly removed from the structures of temporality and the forms of subjectivity that are the focus of my analysis, is a necessary digression for understanding how the narrating subject might rework her conditions of alienation into the possibility of a different future. Employing

[26] Müller, *Heute*, 132-3.

hypotaxis[27] to posit a causal nexus around herself in which her past futures thematically and syntactically relate her to the fates of other figures in her storyworld, I contend, marks the first step toward articulating a subjectivity that can, at least grammatically speaking, assume a position capable of enacting her own possibilities. These possibilities will first take the form of various ways of "becoming fed up with the world" ("Möglichkeiten vom Sattwerden der Welt"[28]) to which I will refer as a typology of possibilities (**Section III.3**). Having syntactically established a relationship between her past futures and the figures around her through a causal relation, the narrator's guilt will eventually subside once she realizes she is as much subjected to the world as an actor in it and cannot possibly be the single cause of others' fates (**Section III.2**). However, the knowledge she gains through intermental reflection on the relationship of her actions to future outcomes still matters (**Section III.4**). Constructing a typology of possibilities, she begins to project a future in structural terms, thereby imagining possible futures in order to resist some and steer toward others (**Section IV**).

III.1 The Cobbler: Configuration of a Past-Present Age

The multilayered temporality of the above scene in the cobbler's shop is evidenced in the figure of the cobbler, who is split formally and temporally into two identifiable subjects. Though the younger cobbler stands in front of the narrator as she waits in his shop, the remembered presence of the older cobbler overlays the younger one and dominates the reader's attention by means of the narrative duration[29] devoted to him. Although the two figures are usually

[27] Hypotaxis is a syntactic structure based on subordination in which a proposition combining clauses or sentences defines the nature of the relationship between the phrases. Parataxis, by way of contrast, refers to a series of sentences or clauses among which syntactical relations are left undefined.
[28] Müller, *Heute*, 137.
[29] Narrative duration refers to the length of narrative attributed to scenes in narration. It is one of the three ways that literature produces a sense of time as laid out in Gerard Genette's 1972 *Narrative Discourse*. The other two are

distinguished by the adjectives *alt* and *jung*, two references to *Schuster* without adjectives in the middle of the passage require the reader to use contextual cues to deduce the figure intended. Understanding the significance of this shift requires us to situate the above excerpt in the novel's overarching episodic form. Though it contains no chapters, Müller's novel entails a series of episodes that range from a single paragraph to several pages in length, separated from one another by a double space. Within each episode the narrator dwells rather consistently on a single theme, usually by recalling a particular memory, reflecting on her current relationship to Paul, or observing people in the tram around her. These memories and reflections might seem to flow and digress like a stream of consciousness, but transitions within a single episode actually work through a relatively clear and often overtly stated chain of associations. At one point, for example, she reflects on her association of sparrow wings and a colleague's moustache, noting the strangeness of the thought patterns that bring these images together: "Daß die Schwalben über dem Bohnenfeld, aufgefädelt in den Wolken, die gleichen Flügelspitzen wie Nelus Schnurrbart haben, ist unbegreiflich, aber nur ein Fehler. Wie bei allen Fehlern krieg ich nicht heraus, ob die Gegenstände oder die Gedanken es so haben wollen."[30]

Connections across the episodes, however, are difficult to discern. A basic formal pattern entails alternations between the present moment of narration in the tram, which includes observations and speculations about figures around her as well as reactions to unforeseen events (such as when the tram stops too early to get the narrator to her appointment or when the conductor forces a passenger carrying a lamb off the train, running over the lamb as he departs), and narrated moments from the past (such as previous interrogations, the narrator's relationship with her first husband, and recollections of meeting her second husband). Each episode posits a

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order and frequency. See Gérard Genette. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method.* Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Foreword by Jonathan Culler. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980. Print.

[30] Ibid., 112.

beginning of a story and can be understood discretely. Yet these stories and motifs therein accumulate and many reference other stories from earlier episodes as well, enhancing or altering the reader's understanding of each story or memory as later episodes build on those that have come before. This general pattern is, however, also broken at times when a sequence of several different memories occurs before the narration returns to the present moment in the tram.

The conversation with the old cobbler quoted above functions in this latter manner. Four episodes—two that describe moments in the tram and one that recalls the narrator's family's New Year's Eve party—separate the narrator's entrance into the cobbler's shop and her remembered conversation with the older cobbler (while looking at the younger) in the quotation. The episode containing the embedded excerpt begins with the narrator's earlier statement, "Ich ging gerne in die Werkstatt zu dem alten Schuster, weil er gesprächig war."[31] In the course of the narrator's fond recollections of her conversations with the older cobbler, which continue into the above-quoted excerpt, nothing signals to readers that the narrator is looking at the younger cobbler while thinking of these older conversations until the adjectival modification ‚jung' indexes the narrator's present location at the time of her recollection. Within the episode, the narrator initially seems to inhabit two temporalities: the narrating subject conversing with the older cobbler in his shop at the time of the memory as narrated, and an implied subject remembering this moment from the tram. The introjection '*jung*' then requires readers to refigure their understanding of the situation by way of a third temporality occurring chronologically between the other two, i.e. sometime after the old cobbler has died and before the present time of recollection. Within the overall novel, however, readers are introduced to the young cobbler four episodes and several pages earlier when the narrator first arrives in his shop. At that moment she is not only unpleasantly surprised by the absence of her trusted conversation partner, but also

[31] Ibid., 130.

dismayed by the unsympathetic, business-minded attitude of his successor: "Wenn ein Alter stirbt, kann ein Junger nichts dafür, dachte ich, aber Mitleid haben kann er. Dieses Schiefmaul ist froh, daß zwischen den Läden, wo von morgens bis abends Kunden kommen, eine Werkstatt frei geworden ist."[32] Given the digressions and recollections recounted in the intervening pages, the moment in the presence of the younger cobbler becomes increasingly eclipsed by other stories the narrator recalls. When she returns to her train of thought regarding the cobbler, it is only with the reference to '*jung*' that readers have reason to connect this episode with the previous one in which the narrator first enters the shop. '*Jung*' therefore both distinguishes the physically present figure from the remembered figure that overlays him in the narrator's mind and marks the transition of the narrating subject from the more distant past into a less distant past with a single word.

This temporal shift appears abrupt and has a distinctly different quality from traumatic associations that would force the narrator to dwell on troubling past experiences. In the cobbler episode, the narrator prefers to remain with the old cobbler in her thoughts in place of the young man in front of her. Remarking "Ich war in Gedanken woanders," and underscoring her lack of interest in the younger cobbler and his inability to fix the shoes immediately—"Ich sah schon weit genug, nickte und ging"—the narrator refuses both the young cobbler's timetable, which would have her wait ten days to do what she wants to do immediately, and devotes the majority of her narration to her memory of the old cobbler.[33] Doing so brings the significance of her narration into relief. She may not be able to get Paul's shoes fixed or have a new conversation with the cobbler who had comforted her in the past, but the narrative duration of this scene and its thematic placement of the narrator elsewhere in thoughts suggest that the narrator can

[32] Ibid., 114.
[33] Müller, *Heute*, 133.

prioritize her dialogue with the older cobbler nonetheless, thus giving his remembrance the time she deems due to it, over the less savory figure in front of her. Yet readers must be careful to note that the narrator's reaction is neither nostalgic desire for the older cobbler, nor disavowal of his death—psychological attitudes often associated with postcommunism.[34] Rather, she actively rejects the younger cobbler's entrepreneurial attitude that loses sight of a human for a business opportunity: "Wenn ein Alter stirbt, kann ein Junger nichts dafür, dachte ich, aber Mitleid haben kann er. Dieses Schiefmaul ist froh, daß zwischen den Läden, wo von morgens bis abends Kunden kommen, eine Werkstatt frei geworden ist."[35] While the cobbler's business-minded successor might forget changes in the community that allowed him to get his job, the narrator not only uses her narration to fill in the holes in his memory, but also punctuates her remembrance with a pointed demand for sympathetic action in the present moment directed toward a future not merely concerned with careerism.

In the temporal palimpsest created by the narrated figure of the cobbler, an effect occurs in distinct contrast to when the narrator feels overwhelmed and distressed by an uncontrollable chain of associations with her own traumatic memories and external signs that she is under surveillance. For example, in the episode with which the story about the cobblers can be said to begin, Paul returns home barefoot in borrowed pants, his shoes and clothing having been stolen at the factory where he works. At first he and the narrator laugh about the situation and the clownish, extra-large pants and makeshift wire belt he is wearing, but when Paul's pant zipper sticks painfully in his pubic hair, the playfulness of the situation quickly dissolves and Paul

[34] See Charity Scribner's reading of "key texts, artworks, and films which convey the currents of mourning and melancholia that are stirring on both sides of Europe today" and that "most forcefully register the politics of memory" in *Requiem for Communism*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003. Print. 9. Scribner's study addresses traces of utopian thought in cultural productions from former Eastern Bloc countries to suggest alternatives to postindustrialist and neoliberal logics. However, her reading of these works largely according to rubrics of disavowal, nostalgia, melancholy and mourning tends to obscure the works' potential as sites of creative resistance that remain productive to engage when state-sponsored forms of communism are ascribed to past history.
[35] Müller, *Heute*, 114.

violently tears himself away from the narrator. Feeling guilty for her laughter—but also motivated perhaps by curiosity about a suspicious red vehicle parked on the street below—the narrator decides to take Paul's sandals for repair. When she fishes the sandals out of the closet, she sees a berry on which he had stepped the last time they had gone dancing: "An der rechten Sohle klebte eine zertretene Brombeere. Ihretwegen, aber auch wegen des roten Autos, kam alles auf einmal über mich: der letzte Sommer am Fluß, Pauls Nacktheit nach dem Duschen in der Fabrik, unser Tanzen im Flur, wie grob mir Paul die Schere aus der Hand riß."[36] In this moment, two visible features of the narrator's world—the crushed berry and the red car—provoke uncontrolled associations in the form of serial images that the narrator cannot control, order, or contain. By contrast, in the excerpted scene from the cobbler's shop, the figure visible in the narrator's present jolts her out of her reflective thoughts and back into the situation before her in the present. In stark contrast to the overwhelming images, however, the image of the young cobbler, albeit the catalyst of the narrator's reflective process, is far less able to disturb the trajectory of the narrator's thoughts than her observations of the berry and the car. The earlier impressions unleashed by these objects—a summer, a brusque action, a particular nakedness, and shared dancing—were overwhelming as indicated by the speed with which multiple, widely divergent yet extremely intense moments occur to the narrator here. Yet when she faces the younger cobbler, her thought progression maintains a continuity that his appearance does not. The image before her breaks up into a collage of protruding teeth (*Seine vorstehenden Zähne*) and a crooked grin (*das Schiefmaul*), while the older cobbler in the narrator's thoughts maintains a figural continuity establishing him as the deictic center for the unmodified references to "Schuster." Until "*jung*" locates the narrator's process of recollection in space and time and thereby establishes it within a tri-partite temporal structure as a memory within a memory (all the

[36] Ibid., 110.

narrator's reflections in the past tense are already recollections from the present moment in the tram), the old cobbler is *the* cobbler: both the only cobbler in the picture this episode provides, and the figure definitive of the generalized reference to '*Schuster*,' which he comes to bear as if it were a name. By contrast, the young cobbler is never referred to simply as *Schuster*—neither in the quoted episode nor in the episodes that precede it—and in the course of narration he is additionally denigrated with the moniker '*das Schiefmaul*.'[37] This is hardly a moment in which traumatic memories overwhelm and exceed the narrating subject. Instead the narrativization of the scene reveals a form of control that the narrator asserts over her environment. She not only defines for herself which figures deserve which names, but she also devotes the attention to the older cobbler that she feels him due through narrative duration (which is one key marker of temporality in prose fiction). Her narrative organization of the world requires constant reflection and reordering throughout the novel—for readers and narrator alike—but in organizing her surroundings on her own terms and making absent figures present in the face of those inclined to forget, she opens a space of subjective resistance against social pressures distorting trusted social relationships.

As the narrator articulates her relationship to the older cobbler in the face of the younger, she underscores continuity between the physically absent figure and her present moment, thereby configuring a past-present age. To recall, Agnes Heller terms "past-present age" the historical

[37] Müller often relates an anecdote about inventing her own names for flowers during her childhood as a way of mitigating her alienating surroundings through poetic language: "Ich aß Blätter und Blüten, damit ich zu ihnen gehöre, denn sie wußten, wie man lebt und ich nicht. Ich redete sie mit ihren Namen an. Der Name *Milchdistel* sollte wirklich die stachelige Pflanze mit der Milch in den Stielen sein. Aber auf den Namen *Milchdistel* hörte die Pflanze nicht. Ich versuchte es mit erfundenen Namen: STACHELRIPPE, NADELHALS, in denen weder *Milch* noch *Distel* vorkam. Im Betrug aller falschen Namen vor der richtigen Pflanze tat sich die Lücke ins Leere auf. Die Blamage, mit mir allein laut zu reden und nicht mit der Pflanze. Aber die Blamage tat mir gut. Ich hütete Kühe und der Wortklang behütete mich." In: "Herta Müller - Nobelvorlesung: Jedes Wort weiß etwas vom Teufelskreis." *Nobelprize.org.* Nobel Media AB 2013. Web. 15 Aug 2013. http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2009/muller-lecture_ty.html. For an interview with Müller in English addressing similar themes, see Larry Rohter. "Naming her World, Part by Part." Herta Müller's Literature, Born of Isolation. *New York Times.* May 19, 2012. C1. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/19/books/herta-mullers-literature-born-of-isolation.html?pagewanted=all (Accessed July 26, 2012).

past that is meaningful for the present. The past-present age marks an interpretive relationship to the past that informs the values with which actors in the present orient the construction of preferred futures. The narrator's configuration of past-present ages works formally in the novel as '*jung*' works lexically in the cobbler passage to facilitate the narrator's remembrance of her trusted relationship to the older cobbler and to critique his purely business-oriented view of their conversational exchange. More generally, this configuration of continuities characterizes the narrator's articulation of her relationship to other animate and inanimate figures and her tendency to orient herself in thought by dis- and rearticulating intermental units within those relationships. I address this process of articulation in Section III.4.

III.2 Schuld*: Causality, Hypotaxis, Agency*

The narrator's explicit establishment of relationships to other figures in the storyworld involves a crucial but surprising step: earlier reflections on the fates of figures around her hypotactically assert the narrator's relationship to these fates as a *causal* relation, as though she were single-handedly responsible for their deaths. The narrator's repeated statements that she is to blame for figures around her who meet ends that otherwise seem unrelated to her actions is not, as some have argued, a sign of how deeply paranoia produced by fear of interrogation has permeated her subjectivity and contained her perspective.[38] Instead, I argue, this narrative

[38] I address Wolfgang Braungart's reading of *Heute* in this vein below. Norbert Otto Eke attributes to the narrator a measure of subjective resistance against the hegemonic structures of the dictatorship by arguing that "her thoughts are a self-*manifestation* of the attempt at self-*reassurance*, creating images of desire, which transport the protagonist beyond the interrogation" but Eke ultimately sees these attempts as failed "in two ways: topographically (she fails to disembark at her destination), and psychologically (the novel ends not with the desired self-stabilization but rather with self-dissolution through incipient madness)" (112-3). Eke's conclusion is largely based on his determination of moments left ambiguous in the story (ie, positing that the narrator will inevitably go mad) and characterizations (being forced to exit the tram early as the narrator's failure, and finding out that her partner is likely betraying her as a moment of bad luck) that I view as unwarranted by the text. See Eke's essay, "'Macht nichts, macht nichts, sagte ich mir, macht nichts': Herta Müller's Romanian Novels." *Herta Müller*. Eds. Brigid Haines and Lyn Marven.Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013. Print. 99-116.

gesture of hypotaxis is a necessary step in her unfolding reflective process. This is a process in which the narrator recognizes but does not resign herself to her lived world. Narrating assumed responsibility becomes a decisive point of entry for negotiating the socio-historical conditions in which the narrator finds herself. This point marks a moment in which she begins to articulate a position of agency that remains formally active even after the narrator recognizes that she cannot possibly be responsible for the fates of her family and friends despite being fundamentally connected to them. She cannot be the sole cause of her world's problems, but she does figure actively into her world, and her actions matter. The narrator's subjective agency is not to be found in an assumption of causal responsibility, but rather in her contemplation of the ways in which she is not causally responsible for the structural sociopolitical and historical factors that play into her present moment. In this view, her contemplation of the past evidences an active desire to change these factors or, at least, to navigate them in a preferred manner. This desire motivates her construction of a typology of possibilities which, in turn, will structurally condition possible futures different than the past futures she has come to recognize. Whereas a reading of Müller's novel under the sign of postcommunist nostalgia might understand the narrator's contemplation solely as a wistful and inevitably failing desire to return to a previous state in order to change the course of past events, attention to the syntactic mechanisms driving narration brings to light the future-making resources of the narrator's intermental reflections and typology of possibility.

When the narrator initially learns of the older cobbler's death from the ungracious replacement impatient for her business, her thoughts go first to the cemetery where the cobbler is buried and next to a series of regrets manifesting as possible actions that would have undone past actions. Her regrets are provoked in part by a joke the young cobbler makes:

> Na, sind die Schuhe wieder durchgetanzt, scherzte er. Ich weiß nicht, ob er scherzte. Ich weiß nur, daß ich, kurz bevor ich in die Werkstatt kam und vor dem neuen Schuster stand, zum ersten Mal wirklich getanzt hatte auf ein Lied, in dem der Tod daherkommt wie der geschenkte Teil des Lebens. Ich hatte seit dem Tanzabend im Restaurant mit meinem ersten Mann nicht mehr getanzt, und mit Paul noch nie. Ich hätte nach dem Tanzen mit Paul nicht zum Schuster gehen dürfen, wenigstens noch einen Tag hätte ich warten müssen, dann wär der Schuster am Leben. Sein Tod war meine Schuld.[39]

Perhaps the young cobbler is simply making conversation, perhaps he is teasingly admonishing the narrator for having danced away good soles so frivolously. Either way, the narrator does not pretend to be able to interpret his comment or have intermental access to his thoughts.[40] Although she first describes his statement as a joke (*scherzte er*), she does not understand it as one and, apparently uninterested in surmising his intentions, begins to work through her reaction. Unable to take the situation lightly given the startling revelation of the older cobbler's death, she positions herself with respect to this distressing information by narratively linking a chain of events that have led her to visit the cobbler's shop. On one level, her 'if-then' conclusion that waiting a day would have impacted the course of events such that the cobbler would not have died seems nonsensical. However, if the narrator's thoughts are read as an attempted explanation as to how she comes to the knowledge that the cobbler is dead, another understanding of the exchange comes into view. Although the older cobbler has been dead for some months, the narrator is first made aware of his death when she enters the shop. In a sense, it is the moment of receiving news of his death that has, for her, killed him: had she not entered the shop, perhaps she would never have learned he was dead. In this early moment in her reflective process,

[39] Ibid., 116. Several pages earlier the song is described as "das Lied, in dem der Tod daherkommt wie der geschenkte Teil des bezahlten Lebens" (106). These moments call for a closer analysis of materiality, debt, and consumption that I will forgo here.

[40] This moment does, however, offer an interesting case of intermental thought in that the first sentence, if attributed to the first-person narrator, asserts access to the young cobbler's psyche in so far as it characterizes him as intending to make a joke. Yet the second sentence revokes this characterization. This is and is not a matter of intermental thought: the narrator either has the feeling that he is joking or feels guilty herself about having danced and hears it as a cruel joke. In any case, she is largely not interested in what he thinks after he speaks so disrespectfully of his predecessor and the emphasis is not, in this moment, on intermental processes but rather on addressing the implications of the troubling news.

however, she connects knowledge of his death to a sense of personal guilt, and draws the conclusion that her actions have in fact caused him to die. The statement is not exactly false—because the narrator walked into the cobbler's shop, she now knows the older cobbler is dead—yet the narrator's feeling of guilt is, at this point, based on a mistaken connection of literal causality. Having experienced some happiness dancing with Paul to a folksong[41] in the same world that has others committing suicide, she sees her pleasure to be at fault for their deaths. Others, it would seem, foot the bill for her frivolity. Though making the connection between herself and her world is crucial for constructing a subjectivity positioned to structurally condition future possibility, her determination of this connection according to causal logic will transform upon further reflection.

The narrator's assertion of casual logic comes to a head when she formulates her relationship to the fates of several figures in her life in terms of the conjunction '*weil*.' This hypotactic characterization as one of causality is a surprising moment in the context of Müller's literary style, which usually works instead by way of parataxis and merely implicit associative networks established through circulating motifs. To recapitulate the final lines of the extended excerpt with which I began: "Der Junge mit den Staubschlangen war tot, weil ich keine Geduld

[41]In another essay, Müller explores her deeply ambivalent relationship to the song she references here: "Welt, Welt, Schwester Welt," an 18th-century Transylvanian folksong that she has translated into German in the novel. Müller discusses how the frank, folkloric references to mortality in the song destabilize convictions about a Communist utopia: "Es versteht sich fast von selbst, warum die Diktatur diese Lieder nicht ertragen konnte. Sie unterwandern das Gemüt und den Verstand. Das Leben kommt als verschlossenes Gepäckstück daher, das man für sich selber ist. Mag man sich kreuz und quer in dieser Haut herumtragen, man erfährt lediglich, wer man sein will - aber nicht kann, wer man sein muss - aber nicht will. Etwas anderes gibt es aus diesen Liedern fürs Leben nicht zu lernen, als dass man sich zugewiesen ist, ohne Wahl. Die Lebenszeit, sie bedeutet das Abnutzen des Lebens schlechthin, die Tage fressen sich. Und es kann dieses Eigengepäck, ist es nun einmal auf diese Erde gestellt, nur einer abholen - der Tod. Und zu lernen ist aus diesen Liedern, dass der einzelne, jeder, für den kleinsten Schmerz zu schade ist. Ich habe bis heute und an mir selbst nicht verstanden, wie diese Lieder es schaffen, durch ihre Trostlosigkeit zu erleichtern. Über all die Jahre hab ich nicht nur an mir gemerkt, dass sie der Schwermut bei kommen, ohne zu verharmlosen. Vielleicht geben sie Halt auf schmalstem Grat, und deshalb spürt man, das Gefühl trauert am allerschönsten den Verstand." In: "Welt, Welt, Schwester Welt: Wer mich singen hört, glaubt, ich hab nichts im Kopf - Maria Tănase." Herta Müller. *Immer derselbe Schnee und immer derselbe Onkel*. Munich: Carl Hanser, 2011. 231-243. Print. Here 241.

zum Spielen hatte. Mein Tata, weil er sich nicht mehr vor mir verstecken wollte. Mein Opa, weil ich mit seinem Tod gelogen hatte. Der alte Schuster, weil ich auf das Sattwerden der Welt getanzt hatte."[42] Each of these sentences references previous episodes in the novel. The first sentence, for example, has to do with a crippled boy with whom the narrator used to play in the dust. One day the narrator's dress had become dirty, and she had left him to play alone. Two weeks later, the narrator learns that the boy was too heavily anesthetized during an operation on his leg and died. Just as the narrator understands her actions to have caused the cobbler's death because of an unarticulated connection occurring by way of a shoe that leads her to knowledge she would prefer not to have—bringing Paul's shoe to the cobbler is, after all, how she learns of the older cobbler's death and, in a sense, what killed him for her—she takes the blame for the boy's death in this moment, even though a previous passage clearly states the boy died by accident and/or bad doctoring. Perhaps the narrator reasons that staying longer to play with the boy would have delayed the operation and had a different result—neither reader nor narrator can know. However, articulating the connection between her and these other figures as one of causality seems to me to have two main effects: first, the narrator's subjectivity is foregrounded as the linchpin of a multilayered temporality through which figures from the past surface in the present and are activated as past-present figures (i.e. configuring past-present ages in Heller's sense). Second, the narrator's regrets—voiced as counterfactual actions that could have taken place, possible things she could have done to avoid fateful outcomes—suggest both a strong desire for change and the assumption that her actions could seriously impact the course of events. This is, I argue, an important step toward the subjective agency that the narrator achieves through narration. Articulating the nature of her connection to other characters is an important moment that, in the course of reflection, allows her to establish some connections and resist

[42] Müller, *Heute,* 133.

others. The establishment of connections combined with a typology with which she organizes patterns of behavior in the world around her becomes a means for her to turn regrets about past possibilities into yet-to-be-actualized possibilities that structurally condition a future. Before turning to this typology, let me address another scholarly reading of the passage to clarify the stakes of my own.

Other scholars have grappled with moments in Müller's writing in which the narrator finds herself responsible for events that are largely out of her control. Rather than recognizing the resistant agency that accrues to the narrating subject in this case, prevalent readings suggest that the first-person narrator becomes increasingly trapped in a web of associations initiated by her fear of missing the interrogation appointment and the possible punishment or torture that might result. In "Auch eine reflexive Moderne," for example, Wolfgang Braungart argues that the narrating subject of *Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet* internalizes the temporality of the regime to the extent that everything in her surroundings is made to relate to the summons.[43] Taking the first line of the novel, "Ich bin bestellt. Donnerstag Punkt zehn." as his point of departure, Braungart shows how the summons to interrogation increasingly defines the narrator's identity.[44] Not knowing when the interrogation will occur, or who is a spy and who is not, the narrator reads everything in her surroundings as signs of possible danger. The result, Braungart shows, is a mode of symbolic perception in which the narrator allegorically reads the world in sole reference to her summons. Yet Braungart works hard to embellish the symbolic connections supposedly pressing in on the narrator on the novel's terms through his own symbolic reading of

[43] Braungart, Wolfgang. "Auch eine reflexive Moderne: Herta Müllers Roman *Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet*." *Figurationen der literarischen Moderne*. Eds. Carsten Dutt, Roman Luckscheiter. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2007. Print. 43-56. See also Nobert Otto Eke's discussion of the "de-automatization of perception" that occurs in Müller's prose in "'Macht nichts, macht nichts, sagte ich mir, macht nichts': Herta Müller's Romanian Novels." *Herta Müller*. Eds. Brigid Haines and Lyn Marven.Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013. 99-116. Print. Eke reads Müller's motifs as metaphors of confinement and circularity in which time disappears and power takes hold of the body, thus undermining the narrator's sanity and sense of self.

[44] Müller, *Heute*, 7.

colors, phonetic resonances, and acronyms in the novel. The red of Paul's motorcycle prophesies his betrayal when it matches the red of Lilli's corpse, for example, and the one-letter difference between Paul and Albu's names, according to Braungart, clearly foreshadows the former's involvement in the spy network. Though Braungart's description of the narrator's hypersensitivity to her surroundings shows the influence of ideological pressures on the narrator's (in)ability to come to terms with herself amidst the alienating conditions of life under Ceaușescu's dictatorship, his argument merely stresses the traumatic connections that mark the text's point of departure, while his reading ignores the connections the narrator actively establishes through a pointed form of processual narration.[45] His reading is thus more in line with Major Albu's statement "Die Dinge verbinden sich" than with the narrator's response, "Bei Ihnen, bei mir nicht."[46]

Although the narrator frequently references specific traumatic events, and although a general atmosphere of *Todesangst* does aptly characterize this novel (and many of Müller's other works, too), to claim that the narrator's subjectivity eventually collapses into an identity completely out of her hands, or to argue that she is finally subsumed by the discursive constraints of an ideology she wishes to resist, to my mind overlooks the function of the narrator's reflective meanderings. Instead of focusing on the narrator's articulation of her relationship to the fates of figures around her as one of guilt-ridden causation, and instead of reading the novel in terms of an inescapable psychosis, let us shift our attention to what articulating this causal nexus *does* effect in Müller's narration: What can it be understood to achieve when such articulation is not read in isolation or as repetition, but rather as one discrete point in a series of intermental reflections that effect a transformation in the narrator's thought process?

[45] Braungart's prescriptive statements such as "Aber die Erzählerin muß begreifen, daß sie das Glück nicht einmal ‚zu Hause lassen' kann: Es gibt keines." are also telling (4).
[46] Müller, *Heute*, 28.

When the narrator's self-ascription of *Schuld* is viewed with respect to preceding and succeeding moments in narration, her active reworking of her relationship to figures in her past, present, and future comes into relief. Toward the end of the novel, for example, the narrator's feelings of guilt for her historical conditions subside to the extent that she can say, after relating her grandfather's prejudices about Paul's family's involvement in the Romanian Communist Party: "Was in meinem Opa bohrt, ist nicht unsere Schuld."[47] Her earlier momentary conviction that she had *caused* the cobbler's, cripple's, father's and grandfather's deaths might suggest momentary paranoia, but read as just one link in a chain or a series of references in the text, a different reflective function of narrative form emerges. Functionally, the narrator's articulation of these links also marks her increasing awareness of her participation in a social and historical fabric extending well beyond the constraints of the homogeneous identity '*ich bin bestellt*' with which the novel begins. When the narrator declares that her Grandfather's relation to his past is not her and Paul's debt, she both recognizes the sociohistorical factors that have specifically conditioned her own temporal moment, and rejects the necessity of these factors as the sole determiners of her present (and by extension future). Her ability to reject the feelings of guilt or debt she had previously felt for her historical circumstances as they figure into her family history thus both evidences the transformative effects of her intermental reflection with Paul, and enables a subjective form that extends her temporal existence beyond a homogenous present moment determined by repeated appointments for interrogation. The narrator's previously established logic of causality falls away to bring the function of her reflections to the fore, and the standardized temporality that the Securitate attempts to impose unilaterally upon her is effectively undone by the creative repetitive temporality of her own narration.

[47] Müller, *Heute*, 194.

III.3 Möglichkeiten vom Sattwerden der Welt*: A Typology of Possibilities*

The increasing control the narrating subject exercises through narration entails an explicit typology of possible fates (*Möglichkeiten vom Sattwerden der Welt*) into which she organizes figures in the storyworld. Establishing and refining this typology is slow work on her part with uncertain results. Although the typology that the narrator proposes suggests a stable syntactic vantage point that conditions the future invoked in the concluding lines of the novel, the typology as such will neither verify nor realize that future. Still, the narrator's articulation of this typology does underscore the transformation of her feelings of guilt for or indebtedness to (*Schuld*) the world in which she is a part into a mode of contending with historical realities without being absorbed by them or mimetically reproducing them. This typology works in tandem with the narrator's process of orientation in her present moment and in her history through dialogue in and intermental reflection on relationships with people and objects (Section III.4).

Shortly after the narrator declares herself the cause of so many fatal outcomes because of having indulged in dancing, she begins to realize the narcissism of this stance, and she sees that the deaths around her are more the function of worldly conditions than her own actions: "Aber das Sargbrett klopft besonders denen, die sich im Tanzen auf das Sattwerden der Welt ein Glück machen wollen. Ja, so hätten wir es gern, daß wir die Krone tragen und die Welt sattwerden. Aber ist es nicht umgekehrt, daß die Welt uns satt wird, und nicht wir sie."[48] Regardless of the worldly power they might wield, individuals share a finite, mortal existence.[49] Though the

[48] Müller, *Heute*, 135.

[49] For a discussion of the centrality of death and dying as motifs and temporal markers in Müller's early works (*Barfüßiger Februar*, *Niederungen, Der Mensch ist ein größer Fasan auf der Welt*), see Norbert Otto Eke. "'Überall, wo man den Tod gesehen hat.' Zeitlichkeit und Tod in der Prosa Herta Müllers. Anmerkungen zu einem Motivzusammenhang." *Die erfundene Wahrnehmung: Annährung an Herta Müller*. Norbert Otto Eke, ed. Paderborn: Igel-Verl. Wiss., 1991. 74-94. Print. On a related note, this moment is also interesting as one of the few statements of ‚wir' that is not rescinded as a false statement of collectivity. Whereas the narrator criticizes other

narrator first assumes responsibility for her friends and family's deaths, her acknowledgment of shared mortality helps her to see the situation in a new light. As soon as material existence trumps the people taking advantage of it—a reference to her supposedly frivolous dancing at a wedding in a world that also contains the suffering of others—the narrator's past-oriented regrets about what she could have done to avoid their deaths, as absurd or paranoid as they may have seemed, turn into a future-oriented desire to know the multiple ways in which a life could play out. Acknowledging that everyone will die helps the narrator relativize her sense of blame for the deaths around her and shifts her attention to critical recognition of the material conditions undergirding these deaths. Placing herself at the center of a causal nexus is therefore only the narrator's first articulation of a fundamental interconnectedness she shares with figures around her. Her guilt upon recognizing that she may live and dance while they are dying initially produces a feeling of fault for their deaths. Yet, realizing that she too will die, she begins to think first of Lilli, her closest childhood friend, who falls in love with an officer and is executed after their attempted illegal border-crossing, and then of various ways in which the world becomes fed up with the people living in it. In so doing, the narrator constructs a typology out of the possibilities for *sattwerden* under conditions of real existing socialism:

> Ich wollte wissen, wie das Leben spielt, und ging auf dem Heimweg vom Schuster alle Möglichkeiten vom Sattwerden der Welt durch. Die erste und beste: Nie bestellt und nie irr werden, wie die meisten. Nie bestellt, aber irr werden, wie die Frau des Schusters und Frau Micu neben dem Eingang unten, ist die zweite. Die dritte: Bestellt und irr werden, wie die zwei um den Verstand gebrachten Frauen in der Anstalt. Bestellt und nie irr werden, wie Paul und ich, das ist die vierte. Nicht besonders gut, aber in unserem Fall die beste Möglichkeit.[50]

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groupings of figures into the first-person plural pronoun as never having fit together in the first place, she does not rescind the collective united in its finitude (see references to the narrator's step family, or "Paraputch," on page 122, and her own family, "Drei, die sich schon lange belogen, wenn sie 'wir' sagten über sich, und wenn sie 'unser' sagten zu einem Wasserglas, einem Stuhl oder einem Baum im Garten." p. 80)

[50] Müller, *Heute*, 137.

Three aspects of this passage are particularly striking: the desire for knowledge that inspires the construction of the typology ("*ich wollte wissen*"), the manner in which the narrator constructs possible lifestyles by observing the people around her, and the structural function of the typology by means of which the narrator conditions a future. These observations not only thematically mark the past futures of the lives around her, but also take an ambivalent grammatical form that plays on the passive voice, as well as future and imperative verb tenses. The various combinations of being summoned (or not) and becoming insane (or not) help the narrator organize and read her present moment. This typology thus manifests a critical standpoint from which the pressures of the surveillance state closing in on the storyworld become intelligible to the narrator in her own terms. Although the novel evidences plenty of divergences from the typological pattern she establishes—divergences that continually prompt her to construct new terms to better describe her situation—its structural terminology will become a narratively established point of reference when she is betrayed by Paul in the novel's final scene and thus confronts a new experience for which even her own typology has not prepared her.

The narrator's reflective process of constructing a typology works in tandem through alternation with observations about the storyworld. Lilli, for example, challenges the narrator's initial four, neatly symmetrical categories in the passage above. The narrator then modifies them by appending a fifth category through further reflection: "Ja, das ist die fünfte Möglichkeit: sehr jung sein, schön bis zum Gehtnichtmehr, nicht irr im Kopf, aber tot. Um tot zu sein muß man nicht Lilli heißen."[51] Constructing this typology however, despite (and perhaps because of) its descriptive imperfection, provides the narrator a means to temporarily grasp her present moment and mark alternatives by grouping the lives she watches playing out around her. The thirst for knowledge driving this passage—"*Ich wollte wissen, wie das Leben spielt*"—evidences a marked

[51] Ibid., 137.

transformation from the previous moment in which the narrator first learns of the old cobbler's death and then stabilizes herself by reflecting explicitly on what she knows ("*Ich weiß nur…*"). Instead of falling into despair or nostalgia when hearing the news of the old cobbler's death, the narrator is motivated by her frustration at the younger cobbler's careless attitude regarding his predecessor and his inability to fix Paul's shoes at the time she desires—"Nicht in zehn Tagen, wie der junge Schuster meinte, sondern an dem Tag zwischen sieben und halb neun wollte ich etwas für Paul tun. Es war mir nicht gelungen."[52]—to hone her critical gaze through further reflection. As she seeks to understand how life plays out, she watches the lives around her and adjusts the typological categories by way of which she achieves a measure of control despite destabilizing forces in the storyworld: "nach dem Tod des alten Schusters hielt sich nichts mehr im Zaun."[53]

III.4: Intermental Thought: Lilli, Paul, Major Albu

Though each of the figures mentioned in the four different combinations of being summoned and/or becoming crazy receive sustained narrative attention in the novel, the narrator mostly hones her increasingly critical gaze through the appended fifth category based on her childhood friend, Lilli. This results in an ongoing interplay of typology and narration that effects temporal and subjective changes alike. Lilli's life serves as a sort of foil for the narrator's own: by recalling their shared experiences growing up, the narrator describes and assesses the choices that Lilli makes and those that seem to be made for her. These recollections are important because they can be understood as a crucial part of the critical process through which the narrator establishes her own, immanent ethics. The social pressures of her contemporary moment in real

[52] Ibid., 134.
[53] Ibid., 135.

existing socialist Romania, and the National Socialist history undergirding it, present a world in which conformity to the party's dictates seems the only option, and trust in others impossible at best. No universal code of behavior is available to help the narrator negotiate social interactions distorted by self-interest and fear, and she is on her own to figure out how she should act in any given situation if she does not wish to adhere to party dictates.

Working in tandem with the ostensible emphasis on individual decision in Müller's novel, however, is an intersubjective process of dialogue and intermental reflection determined by specific narrative forms through which the narrator establishes her ethical and experiential typology and thus reconfigures her relationship to her own past and present as well as those of others. The narrator's reflections on her relationship with Lilli are particularly important because Lilli and the narrator constitute a much stronger intermental unit than other figures in the novel. The narrator resists forming intermental units with both the younger cobbler and Major Albu. In the former case, she denies having the access to the younger cobbler's consciousness necessary to know certainly if he were jokingly or seriously admonishing her for dancing through her shoe soles. In the latter case, she denies Major Albu's assertion that he can read her thoughts during the interrogation sessions. With respect to Lilli, however, the narrator not only imagines that Lilli sees through her eyes, but also locates her perspective in her friend's position through homodiegetic narratorial focalization.[54] As she recalls stories Lilli once told her, the narrator

[54]Categories of narrative focalization remain contested within postclassical developments to classical narratology. I borrow this term from Goran Nieragden, who seeks to reconcile Mieke Bal's "narrative situations," Gérard Genette's "internal and external focalization," and Susan Lanser and Wilhelm Füger's discussion of "homodiegetic narration." Nieragden borrows Lanser's theoretical distinctions among gradations of homodiegetic narrators based on their proximity to and involvement in the story they report in order to distinguish degrees of identity relations among character, narrator, focalizer and agent. However, the formal relationship of Lilli and the narrator in this moment somewhat confounds Nieragden's distinction between narratorial (the narrating character focalizes) and figural (focalization is delegated to another character) homodiegetic narration. Müller's narrator perceives the scene as Lilli, but other textual cues indicate that narration has not transitioned completely to Lilli, nor has the narrator replaced Lilli as narrator of the story. For Nieragden's terminological descriptions, see Goran Nieragden.

assumes a position within Lilli's memories as though she herself were present in moments she hears about only second-hand.

Returning to the concept of intermental thought in my own reading of the relationship to Lilli as narrated, I will show how time and intersubjectivity function differently in three intermental units presented in the novel: those formed by the narrator with Lilli, Paul, and Major Albu, respectively. Whereas Major Albu uses standardized 'clock time' to impose a false intersubjectivity based on unquestioned epistemological certainty accruing to those in power, the first-person narration establishes a temporality that connects subjectivities across past and present through focalization. The narration is thus always a matter of a connective configuration of subjects that does not collapse them through identity. Major Albu might attempt to force the narrator to identify as 'bestellt,' but both Lilli and Paul offer vantage points and dialogic partners that help the narrator negotiate her alienating conditions by different means instead. By organizing these vantage points into the aforementioned typology, the narrator prepares herself with a structural means to assert a desired future when she can no longer depend on Paul and Lilli. Even when Lilli is dead and Paul has betrayed her, the narrator will be sustained in part by way of her typology. Yet because the processual narration works against structural definition by constantly shifting contexts of meaning, the narrator is never trapped by her structural typology, even if its terms, albeit of her own making, are in some ways as overdetermined as Major Albu's ideology.

Immediately preceding the paragraph in which the narrator describes her interest in knowing how life can play out is a short vignette in which Lilli's stepfather, a member of the Communist Party, angrily reproaches Lilli's mother for the latter's request that he refuse to be

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"Focalization and Narration: Theoretical and Terminological Refinements." *Poetics Today* 23.4 (Winter 2002): 685-697. Print.

involved in secret meetings with informants. The short conversation portrays in miniature political and social pressures of the time. Although Lilli's mother worries about the safety of her husband and wants him to stay home, her stepfather feels he must cater to the Party in order to feed his family:

> Ein paar Tage nach diesem Gespräch [über Major Albu] sagte Lilli, ihre Eltern hätten Streit gehabt. Ihre Mutter wollte den Stiefvater nicht aus dem Haus lassen. Der Grund war ein Rendevous, aber nicht mit einer Frau. Vom Zeitungskiosk am Park war die Rede, wo ihr Stiefvater nachmittags um fünf erscheinen sollte. Lillis Mutter sagte:
>
> Heute bleibst du mal hier, ich ruf in der Zentrale an und sage denen, du bist krank. Wozu wachsen überall, wo man hinschaut, Kinder nach, du mußt ein Machtwort sprechen, die sollen sich Jüngere suchen.
>
> Sie stellte sich in seinen Weg. Der Stiefvater steckte die Brieftasche ein und schubste sie weg:
>
> Ein Machtwort sprechen, und wo bitteschön ist meine Macht, hast du eine Ahnung. Zu Hause, da bist du groß, schrie er, aber auf dem Markt drückst du mir schnell die Melone in die Hand, machst deine rechte Pfote frei, damit dir das Kamel von Leutnant seinen Handkuß geben kann. Und dann sagst du als Frau auch noch: Die Ehre ist meinerseits. Hier zu Hause packt dich die große Courage, aber wenn so einer auftaucht, kannst du die Spucke im Mund nicht mehr schlucken vor Angst. Nimm lieber deine Herztropfen.[55]

In this moment, the narrator assumes Lilli's storytelling position. Lilli is not explicitly mentioned in the transition, but the narrator formally assumes her narrative perspective, providing the reader a view of the storyworld to which she could not have had direct access. Having initially heard the story second-hand, when she recalls it while riding the tram, she does so first by recounting Lilli telling the story to her, and then by seamlessly shifting narrative focalization to Lilli's mother and stepfather, positioning the reader to see through Lilli's eyes. In the first sentence of the excerpt above, narration retains the first-person narrator as its deictic center, marked by the use of a third-person possessive pronoun '*ihre*' in reference to Lilli and the past perfect subjunctive

[55] Ibid., 137. The division of public and private spheres is one point of comparison between socialist and capitalist systems taken up by scholars to undermine bipolar Cold War divisions. For a discussion of the relevance of a private sphere to the development of postsecularism after 1989, for example, see Boris Buden's discussion of "postcommunist conversion" in *Zone des Übergangs: Vom Ende des Postkommunismus*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2009. Print. 107-159.

II form "*hätten…gehabt*" employed in place of the subjunctive I in this context to distinguish Lilli's words clearly as indirect speech. The rest of the paragraph continues to be focalized through the first-person narrator, until narration is shifted to Lilli's mother via direct speech reported in the present tense. The transition from Lilli's reported story as the narrator recalls it to the scene described is so smooth as to be almost unnoticeable at first glance, yet the next two sentences highlight the peculiar narrative situation: "Sie stellte sich in seinen Weg. Der Stiefvater steckte die Brieftasche ein und schubste sie weg." Although the words of Lilli's mother and stepfather could still be recounted as direct speech and maintain a narrative situation in which the first-person narrator recounts Lilli's story as Lilli might have told it, these particular lines recall the scene from a homodiegetic vantage point that seems operative when we read that the stepfather pushes his wife out of the way. The definite article *der* in place of a possessive pronoun remains consistent with the preceding paragraph introducing the two figures as "Lilli's mother" and "the stepfather," and nothing else in the narrator's recollection gives reason to believe she was with Lilli while watching the argument. Not originally privy to the scene, the narrator moves into and through Lilli's story to recall it as though she were experiencing it through the latter's eyes. This particular form of narrative focalization emphasizes the strength of the intermental unit constituted by Lilli and the narrator by way of the latter's privileged access to Lilli's consciousness.

Yet with other characters, Major Albu in particular, this is not the case. Lilli serves both as an external foil for the narrator and as an internalized point of view through which she thematically and formally imagines herself looking and evaluating her world. Major Albu, however, is denied such access to the narrator's consciousness, despite his assertions to the contrary: "Der Major Albu sagt: Man sieht, was du denkst, es hat keinen Sinn, zu leugnen, wir

verlieren nur Zeit. Ich, nicht wir, er ist doch sowieso im Dienst. Er schiebt den Ärmel hoch und sieht nach der Uhr. Die Zeit, sie steht dort drauf, aber nicht, was ich denk. Wenn Paul nicht sieht, was ich denke, sieht er es schon längst nicht mehr.“[56] This passage underscores the opposition of standardized temporality, objectified on the clockface, and intermental thought. Whereas Major Albu claims he has access to the narrator's thoughts according to her facial expressions during the interrogation sessions, and he therefore arguably understands his relationship to the narrator as an intermental unit, the narrator rejects any possibility that he can get inside her head. These are different subjects living different temporalities on the same clock: not only does the narrator refuse to group herself with him into the first-person plural pronoun '*wir*,' but she also distinguishes the fundamentally different nature of their time. While she watches her life tick away at the behest of ten o'clock appointments, he is doing his job, waiting to receive so many hours in cash at the end of the day. Although they appear to be in the same place at the same time, partaking in the same conversation, the narrator denies the Major the access to her consciousness that she grants and takes from Lilli. Major Albu may not be able to see it as he looks at her, but just as she was "in Gedanken woanders" while speaking with the young cobbler, her thoughts here exceed the Major's interrogative tools, too. He can control the duration of her presence—a temporality represented by the clock—but he cannot control the presence of her thoughts. This situation is essentially the same as the narrator's: by controlling the narrative duration attributed to a particular figure, she also controls the extent of its claim on the reader's attention.[57] Yet narrative temporality may penetrate subjective bounds to which clock time

[56] Ibid., 18.

[57] Philipp Müller does an excellent job drawing provocative parallels and contrasts among confession, the autobiographies demanded during secret police interrogations, the process of self-subjectification in autobiographical writing, and critics who seek to measure Müller's works according to biographical details. Philipp Müller turns to Herta Müller's use of the concept "autofictional writing" (borrowed from George Arthur Goldschmidt) to argue that the aforementioned procedures subjectify a person to hermeneutic analysis and ignore social dimensions of Müller's aesthetic strategies. Autofictional writing, according to Philipp Müller, thwarts the

remains external, and the narrative perspective articulating knowledge claims is crucial in this regard. When Major Albu claims that he can see what the narrator is thinking, he asserts epistemological certainty that he can not possibly have. Yet the narrator never explicitly claims the ability to manipulate Lilli's consciousness; she figures her into narration instead as a reflective foil for the narrator's own life. She may imagine herself in Lilli's position and even goes so far as to position herself—and, by extension, the reader—formally there, but doing so is always part of an oscillation between her empathetic memories of situations with Lilli and narrative reflections on her own life that clear a path toward future action by the narrator.

In the case of Paul, the function of intermental thought becomes particularly interesting because the narrator's desires for shared thinking, though disappointed, allow her to establish a subjective location within a dialogic structure that will be crucial to navigating social alienation. As the narrator remarks in the quotation above, the possibility that Paul can read the narrator's thoughts exists—and is even desired—but cannot be guaranteed: „Wenn Paul nicht sieht, was ich denke, sieht er es schon längst nicht mehr."[58] Paul is one of the few figures in the novel with whom the narrator affiliates herself through the use of the first-person plural pronoun '*wir*.' When she first creates her typology of possible lives, for example, she hopes for the best for herself and Paul as her second husband, repeating proudly "Ich hatte…die beste Möglichkeit für uns gefunden: Wir beide werden nicht irr."[59] Despite Paul's alcoholism and occasional violent outbursts, he is the single living person whom the narrator feels she can trust (the other, Lilli, is dead). This trust is severed at the end of the novel when the tram driver stops unexpectedly and

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possibility of a stable relationship between narrator and narrated text (that would legitimate an autobiography, for example) sought after by hermeneutic procedures and works instead by way of constantly shifting relationships among textual elements. See "Fluchtlinien der erfundenen Wahrnehmung. Strategien der Überwachung und minoritäre Schreibformen in Herta Müllers Roman ‚Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet.'" *Text + Kritik* 155 (2002): 49-58. Print.

[58] Müller, *Heute*, 18.

[59] Ibid., 138.

the narrator must walk the final distance to her interrogation appointment, only to see Paul fraternizing with a man who had been suspiciously involved in a motorcycle accident precipitated by the secret police. This episode provokes the narrator's final comment in the novel, "Ha, ha, nicht irr werden," a skeptical injunction that at first glance seems to foreclose any possibility of a future undetermined by the pressures of the regime. I will return to this passage in a moment. First, despite Paul's presumed betrayal—the reader can never be completely sure what the scene that the narrator witnesses actually means—his function as a dialogic partner with whom the narrator comes to terms with her history must not be overlooked. If Lilli has figured into narration as a foil by way of which the narrator can reflect on possible life choices in order to piece out the narrator's own sound judgments about how to act in a world of skewed behaviors without clear-cut ethical categories, Paul helps the narrator negotiate feelings of guilt for her family's involvement in National Socialism and in real existing socialism. As the two describe their family members' involvement with both National Socialism and real existing socialism, they undergo a process of dialogic orientation in their lived and shared historical moment. Paul may prove himself as susceptible to the pressure to conform to the Party as his parents, but the effect of their dialogue—a process in which the narrator transforms the feeling of personal guilt for the death of her grandfather into the statement "Was in meinem Opa bohrt, ist nicht unsere Schuld"[60]—does not disappear with her trust. Instead, it provides the intersubjective and narrative point of reference she needs to function alone.

Prior to Paul's betrayal and after meeting at a flea market where Paul helps the narrator sell her old wedding ring at a fair price, the two stay up most of the night talking about their families: „Am ersten Morgen im verrutschten Turmblock hatten Paul und ich so viel geredet, bis die Sonne im Mittag stand. Mich wunderte schon, wieweit man zu Müttern und Vätern

[60] Ibid., 194.

zurückdenken muß, nur um zu sagen, woher der eine von uns zum anderen kommt."[61] The narrator relates her grandfather's prejudices as he had expressed them during her first marriage. Her first husband's father, '*der Parfümkommunist*,' was an activist in the Romanian Communist Party involved in the dispossession, deportation, and persecution of "Germans" after World War II who were deemed guilty by association with Nazi Germany. At her first wedding, her grandfather recognizes the man—now his son-in-law—as the person who had appropriated his vineyard in 1951. Her grandfather recalls in graphic detail being deported to work camps in the Romanian Băragăn with his wife, who dies there.[62] The narrator's story prompts Paul to share his own: the son of two members of the Communist Party who had joined for what they considered pragmatic reasons—money and social standing—he ironically refers to himself as part of the first generation of true Communists:

> Ein Parfümkommunist, wie kann es das geben, fragte ich Paul. Was ist eigentlich ein Kommunist.
>
> Ich, sagte Paul...Ich war stolz auf mich, begann mich zu rasieren und ging in die Partei, für meinen Vater gehörte das zusammen. Er sagte, er sei vor der Zeit geboren und könne nur mit ihr gehen. Zuerst Faschist, dann Illegalist. Aber ich sei in die Zeit hineingeboren und müsse ihr voraus sein.[63]

Paul goes on to detail his father's pride at being recognized as a "Best Worker," his hypocritical expectations for his son that ignore his conformist tendencies, and his disappointment at the development of so-called capitalist tendencies when Paul sells radio antennas on the black market. In the course of the stories the narrator draws comparisons between her ex-father-in-law and Paul's father: "Der eine am Hochofen in der Stadt, der andere mit glänzenden Reiterstiefeln durch Dorfstraßen. Einer schuftet und hält den glühenden Stahl höher als seinen Verstand, der

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[61] Ibid., 213.
[62] For an excellent summary of the history of the Banat-Swabian population in present-day Romania from their colonization in 1721, see Valentina Glajar's "Politics and Dictatorship in Müller's *Herztier*." *The German Legacy in East Central Europe: As Recorded in Recent German-Language Literature*. Rochester: Camden House, 2004. Print. 115-160.
[63] Ibid., 202.

andere reitet, treibt Leute in die Enge und riecht nach Parfüm."[64] A far cry from Paul's father's attempt to justify his own opportunistic turns from Nazi to member of the Communist Party as a path of least resistance through financial and political concerns, the narrator's conversation with Paul serves to compare, contrast and evaluate the motivations of specific individuals situated at particular historical intersections. This growing historical awareness, developed most significantly in her conversations with Paul, demonstrates the narrator's transformed critical capacity, which allows her to recognize her own status of involvement in history neither as a passive victim of the times—Paul's father's self-designation—nor as a guilty heir of her grandparents' NS involvement or her youth that allowed her to dance while others died.

In "Tabus der Wahrnehmung: Reflexionen und Geschichte in Herta Müllers Prosa," Karin Bauer has argued that figures in Müller's works can resist their socio-historical constraints temporarily at best, eventually reproducing the norms they wish to critique.[65] Turning to one of Müller's early novels, *Reisende auf einem Bein* (1989), a story of immigration from unnamed, but recognizable Romania to West Germany, for example, Bauer underscores the protagonist Irene's inability to break out of the ahistorical ideological discourses constraining her. According to Bauer, the third-person narrating subject is unable and unwilling to develop a historical consciousness through self-reflection. Instead, she invents a mode of perception similar to what Müller has termed '*erfundene Wahrnehmung*'—a conceptual touchstone often used to connect her literature to her reflective essays. This form of perception facilitates an imaginative space under her control despite oppressive surroundings. Because this discursive space is ahistorical

[64] Ibid., 192-3.
[65] Bauer, Karin. "Tabus der Wahrnehmung: Reflexion und Geschichte in Herta Müllers Prosa." *German Studies Review*. 12.2 (May 1996): 257-278. Print. Bauer advances a similar argument about *Niederungen* and *Der Mensch ist ein großer Fasan auf der Welt* in "Patterns of Consciousness and Cycles of Self-Destruction: Nation, Ethnicity, and Gender in Herta Müller's Prose." *Gender and Germanness: Cultural Productions of Nation.* Ed. Patricia Herminghouse and Magda Mueller. Providence: Berghahn Books, 1997. Print. 263-275.

and decontextualized, according to Bauer, this form of perception only serves to alienate Irene further. Irene's non-identity with herself in the present moment after immigrating to Germany thus severs rather than integrates her relationship to her own past in real existing socialism. Incapable of developing a critical relationship to her socio-historical conditions, Irene's writing reproduces and perpetuates the norms she seeks to resist in Bauer's assessment.

My approach to narrative structures of temporality and subjectivity in *Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet* leads to radically different conclusions. Although the first-person narrator is indeed subject to the socio-historical constraints of her time, she develops what I would call a strong historical consciousness as she establishes and reworks narrative, subjective, and temporal relationships to the figures and objects in her surroundings. The intermental units she forms with Paul and Lilli and those she refuses to form with Major Albu allow her to recognize the past that has shaped her present and rearticulate it in a manner that steers away from undesirable future possibilities according to how she has seen them play out in the past. Whereas her conversation with Paul establishes the pasts the figures have inherited from their families, the typological structure of possible ways to become fed up with the world—a typology with which the narrator reinforces her own agency—is articulated in emphatically relational terms developed by referencing figures in her current social milieu: her neighbors, community members about whom she has heard rumors, Paul, and Lilli. The resulting form of subjectivity is therefore neither a gap at the interface of past and future horizons, nor a traumatic void that exists in a homogenous, universalized or ahistorical present, but rather an active organizing function serving the disarticulation and rearticulation of the narrator's discursive surroundings. The narrator does not reproduce historical norms; she rather reveals them and demystifies them, opening them to critique and resignifying them to allow for alternatives.

When the narrator sees her husband laughing with a man she suspects has been spying on them, she severely doubts the notion of not being driven crazy by the State surveillance mechanism that penetrate her intimacy with Paul: "Ha, ha, nicht irr werden."[66] Dismal as it may sound, this statement both conditions a future and resists reproducing the context that has given rise to it. At first glance the absence of a grammatical subject might suggest the speaker's disappearance into a discursive matrix with no vocabulary for her self-expression. I read it instead as the resistance to reproduce precisely such discourse. First, beyond the deep skepticism suggested by "*ha, ha*," the narrating subject states a *directive* to not become crazy in the imperative formulation "*nicht irr werden*." Furthermore, her statement recalls the terms of her typology. She can therefore still recognize the scene before her in structural terms of her own making, although the possibility she had desired for herself and for Paul—"bestellt und nie irr werden"—seems even less feasible as one outcome of a future yet to be told. The statement, though not tagged with a verb of locution and pronoun such as "*ich sagte*," implies a speaking subject without needing to attribute it to a grammatical subject. The narrator's words are marked by particular meanings and constellations attributed to them in the course of narration as categories of her narratively established typology. The absence of the grammatical subject is thus a formal shift in emphasis: no subject is necessary because the words—uniquely defined in the context of the novel as categories of her typology—speak for themselves, as it were. If we do not assume this moment indicates the discursive erasure of the narrating subject, but instead consider the novel's evolving mutual implication of language and subjectivity, the moment foregrounds the narrator's agential capacity for resignification by appropriating the passive fates of being summoned and going crazy and recasting them in terms of an imperative command to

[66]Ibid., 240.

do the opposite.[67] Having established the terms of her typology in the course of narration, she now can depend on these words of injunction even in the absence of those dialogic figures she had needed to reflectively establish them. As an active organizing function that dis- and rearticulates its discursive surroundings, the narrator does not reproduce historical norms, she reveals them, opening them to critique and resignifying them to condition alternatives.

IV. Alternative Conditional Prognoses & Future Possibility

But what does it mean for me to claim that this conditions a future? Historian Reinhart Koselleck's discussion of future prognoses will be helpful here, if only as a negative counterpoint for understanding how the narrator's typology might affect events left undetermined at the end of the novel. In "The Unknown Future and the Art of Prognosis," which Koselleck wrote in 1984, the historian lays out three different ways in which one may foresee the future: wishful prognoses, compulsatory prognoses, and alternative conditional prognoses. Far from different-but-equal alternatives, these prognostic modes are derived in Koselleck's analysis from specific historical examples that reveal the shortcomings of some historiographical methods and the strengths of others. Success in prognosis, according to Koselleck, depends on the formal repeatability of history and what he calls the multilayeredness of historical time. His three categorical modes of prognosis differ largely in the extent to which they acknowledge historical

[67]Paolo Bozzi also accords Müller's works a resignifying capacity in *Der fremde Blick*: *Zum Werk Herta Müllers.* Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005. Print. 11. Bozzi reads Müller through the lens of postcolonial, cultural and feminist theory to show how Müller's work confounds paradigms of stable national and gender identities. Bozzi's reading emphasizes the performative dimension of Müller's writing that allows the author to show the unrepresentable. Müller's prose, according to Bozzi, foregrounds the gap between signifier and signified in linguistic representation to demonstrate both the dialogic nature of language as well as its iterative, citational quality. Bozzi's insistence on the performative is geared toward claims about the effect the text has on a (largely German) readership that is confronted with another perspective ('fremder Blick') able to estrange dominant discourses on German-Romanian history. Bozzi's reading, however, focuses largely on Müller's novels in the context of National Socialist history, addressing 1989 only to the extent that German reunification challenged conservative notions of 'Heimat.'

precedent in formal repetition. A wishful prognosis is simply a statement about a desired future that has little to no grounding in historical precedent. Here Koselleck refers to Czechoslovakian president Edvard Beneš's 1937 statement that World War II would not occur. A statement based solely on Beneš' optimism and individual belief—"I stalwartly believe that we will preserve freedom. I do not believe that a war in Europe is possible within the foreseeable future…I do not fear a thing for Czechoslovakia."[68]—this prediction is not grounded in any sort of identifiable historical progression and therefore fails.

By contrast, a compulsatory prognosis projects a future that bears resemblance to a historical precedent, but does so in a linear fashion that cannot take into account factors that are not yet present at the time of prediction. This form of 'prognosis' does not predict but dictates; it insists, like a legal precedent, that what happened in one context must or will happen in another. For an example, Koselleck turns to Hitler's 1937 declaration in Augsburg: "It is truly something when destiny has chosen human beings to be able to champion the cause of our people. Today, new tasks are in store for us. For the lebensraum [sic] of our people is too cramped. One day the world will have to consider our demands."[69] Here Hitler refers to historical progression but in the form of the expansionist program he has already set forth. This compulsatory prognosis is successful in the short term only because it self-referentially grounds itself in previous dictates. In the long term, Koselleck shows, this sort of "autosuggestion" will and does fail because it does not take the specificity of coming historical moments into account.

The final mode of prognosis, most successful as prognosis, is something like Churchill's 1932 announcement in the House of Commons: "It would be in our better interest to newly

[68] Reinhart Koselleck. "The Unknown Future and the Art of Prognosis." *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*. Trans. Todd Samuel Presner and Others. Foreword by Hayden White. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002. Print. 141.
[69] Ibid., 141.

revisit the Danzig question and that of the Polish Corridor in a cool and deliberate atmosphere…while the victorious powers still hold onto their wide superiority, instead of watching and waiting…until a great confrontation mounts."[70] This is an alternative conditional prognosis in which Churchill refers to past historical progression (World War I) in order to avoid a similar conflict in the future, but he also puts forth multiple possibilities—rational discussion among the Allies as well as world war—in order to steer his audience toward the more desirable option. This is the projection of neither an individual's wish nor an ultimatum addressed to a collective that may or may not agree, but rather a rationally argued expression of a desirable course of action that includes and acknowledges less desirable possibilities as well. Koselleck writes: "it was not a question of a linear projection of an inescapable future; rather this projection posited a condition of possible repetition, precisely in order to fight against it in actuality. The correctness of Churchill's prognosis was thus based on the employment of instructions for acting in several vertical historical dimensions, whose combination brought about such accuracy."[71]

Koselleck's tripartite discussion of future prognosis reminds his readers that alternative concepts of futurity exist, and that multiple worlds of social time are possible. Forecasting is thus a matter of formulating possibilities and actualizing them in a preferred manner. An alternative conditional future prognosis entails both possibilities to be actualized and to be avoided: this outlines a future that can develop in multiple directions and suggests the direction desired. To return to discussion of Müller's novel, initially the narrator had set out a future in which both she and Paul would not go crazy: "Wir beide werden nicht irr."[72] After seeing Paul doing business with figures she assumes are part of the state surveillance apparatus, the narrator's original desired future is no longer in reach. When she rearticulates the possibility of

[70] Ibid., 142.
[71] Ibid., 143.
[72] Müller, *Heute*, 138.

not going mad at the end of the novel as "Ha, ha, nicht irr werden," without a pronoun, she grammatically and syntactically erases the intermental unit she had constructed with Paul. Erasing the first-person collective pronoun severs her connection to a figure willing to be complicit with the real existing socialist Romanian state in ways that she is not. Whether or not her intended course of action (not going mad under the conditions of real existing socialism) is more or less likely may be left in the air, but it remains open as a real possibility.

By recognizing and marking structural repetition in the lifestyles she observes, the narrator equips herself with narrative tools that suggest she may indeed be able to maintain mental composure and ethical action despite the betrayal and death of Paul and Lilli respectively, trusted companions who thematically, figurally and intermentally undergird her narration. The non-autonomous forms of subjectivity constructed through relationships between the narrator and the figures in her past and present thus rely on the novel's processual narration (motifs acquire meaning from repetition in shifting contexts), multilayered temporality (for the narrator, each figure is composed of a unique mixture of past, present, and future associations) and structural repetition (the figures can be grouped according to shared behaviors and characteristics). The function of these groupings from and through the narrating subject's perspective is two-fold: first, these groupings are less a matter of identificatory labels that foster a sense of belonging, and much more a method for dealing with uncertainty, alienation, and individual decision. The point is not whether the narrating subject's narrative orientation allows her to become an ethical person by aligning with other ethical people, but rather how it equips her to recognize and judge ethical actions. This capacity for judgment positions her to act in a moment of heightened uncertainty when she realizes her husband is likely associating with the secret police. The novel ends on the cusp of action: poised in the moment when Paul sees her,

the narrator (and, by extension, the reader) is positioned effectively by the structural repetitions the narrator has already marked in epistemological terms of her typology. Understood now as an alternative conditional prognosis in Koselleck's sense, the final line of the novel laughs at the possibility of not going crazy under such circumstances in order not to forget that not going crazy is possible despite the revelation of betrayal. Whereas previously the narrator has hoped that both Paul and she together could avoid going crazy, now she sees that she has no control over his actions or future. The intermental unit, the '*wir*' by way of which she had projected a possible future ("Wir beide werden nicht irr") may no longer be valid, but the possibility of a different future—one in which she would not go crazy—remains open. When the narrative emphasis is shifted to the subjective use of this statement, its ambiguity formally and effectively presses the reader to decide in which direction to take it. What sort of subjectivity might resist the social and political pressures alienating the narrator in the storyworld? And what sort of real actions might distinguish the intersubjective figure in the extratextual world (i.e. the reader) who picks up where the narrator leaves off?

V. Conclusion

Although the final lines of the novel resonate somewhat dismally, the narrative form they take posits a standpoint open to the experience of what otherwise seems impossible. Contemporary philosopher and cultural critic Ovidiu Ţichindeleanu refers to a related impossibility in a recent discussion of postcommunism. At the end of his call for a critical theory that considers lessons learned from real existing socialism and postcommunism in Romania in "Towards a critical theory of postcommunism? Beyond anticommunism in Romania," Ţichindeleanu writes,

> What stands out two decades after the fall of the Eastern Bloc is the actuality of communism as horizon of thought: not as an abstract idea, but as an epistemic standpoint that allows the intersection not integration of subjects and discourses. Beyond condemnations, critiques and nostalgia, actually existing socialism seems actually to provide the form of what Derrida once called 'the experience of the impossible.' More precisely, as it unfolds its own field of immanence, the study of postcommunism vacillates between the impossibility of pronouncing communism dead and the impossibility of its return.[73]

Ţichindeleanu's larger concern in his article, as his title suggests, is for continued critical engagement with communism and the political and social development of former Soviet Bloc countries after 1989. This critical stance cannot simply be anticommunist, condemning the actions of fallen dictatorships to distract from social continuity that extends into contemporary life in Europe. Instead, he calls for engagement with the intersubjective legacies that remain, for better and for worse, despite changes in political structures that often are nominal at best.

Herta Müller's *Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet* can provide one such standpoint for ongoing critical engagement with the historical and social legacies of real existing socialism in Europe. Müller's narrative engagement with such legacies exposes a site where subjects intersect in intermental and ongoing knowledge production. On one level, the novel locates the reader inside real existing socialist Romania with its first-person homodiegetic perspective. On another level, the novel articulates and disarticulates intermental units of narration to reveal the sometimes desired, but often problematic assumptions made when collectivities are formed. Collective thinking must be chosen, not simply pronounced from above or unreflectedly assumed, and it always entails differential perspectives. The intermental units in Müller's novel work by way of multiple figures in dialogic relation articulating complex forms of subjectivity

[73]Ovidiu Ţichindeleanu. "Towards a critical theory of postcommunism?: Beyond anticommunism in Romania." *Radical Philosophy* 159 (Jan/Feb 2010): 26-32. Print. 32. Ţichindeleanu's reference to Derrida can be found in Chapter 3, "Wears and Tears" of Jacques Derrida. *Specters of Marx*: *The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning & the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. Intro. Berd Magnus & Stephen Cullenberg. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print. 42.

that exceed individual autonomy without erasing individual difference. They can facilitate the articulation of alternative conditional futures and the establishment of a critical gaze that compares and contrasts social behaviors to reflect on commonalities, but the erasure of individuality as posited by a dictatorial collective 'we' is undercut by Müller's processual narrative. Contrasting assertions of 'we' that are foregrounded in the novel are products of imagined perspectives that must be checked and not assumed, as the narrative continually reminds us. Major Albu's 'we' is not the narrator's, and the narrator's 'we' with Paul turns out to be a wishful assumption. Lilli remains a reflective foil for the narrator, a trusted friend who figures into narration long after death. The future conditional form of subjectivity articulated in Müller's novel opens a significant perspective onto the real existing socialist past in Europe that, by leaving its readers on the cusp of an as yet undetermined future, compels them to ask what ethics might produce the future as well as the 'we' that wants to see it. Beyond traumatic repetition and beyond autobiographical recapitulation, *Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet* thus provides both an important reminder of the pitfalls of the history or real existing socialism as well as a powerful narrative tool for configuring historically-conscious perspectives resistant to social conformity and open to alternative political forms as postcommunist Europe develops toward futures yet to be seen.

CHAPTER TWO

ZEITRECHNUNG:
NON-CANONICAL EVENTS IN ZSUZSA BÁNK'S *DER SCHWIMMER* (2002)

> The Namesti,
> the square that bears your name,
> bore the names of soldiers
> of the young Red Army—until nineteen
> eighty-nine, the year no one had to die,
> not God nor Kafka, for *whom the fire*
> *to warm the icy world* was words.[1]

I. Postcommunism and History

Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 an eruption of public events commemorated what had come to represent the end of real existing socialism in Europe. At one such event, an interdisciplinary and international conference titled "Re-Imagining the Nation? Transformations of German Cultural Identity since 1989" held in Dublin in October 2009, scholars from around the world gathered to wrestle with the cultural legacy of the historical rupture marked by the end of the Cold War. Asking how 1989, as a crucial date for orienting history, reshuffles prior orientations of German history toward significant years such as 1789, 1914, and 1945, historian Peter Fritzsche focused his presentation,"1989 and the Chronological Imagination," on the near-simultaneity of revolutionary events spread over central and eastern Europe:

> The events of 1989 followed in rapid order. Only nine months separated the fall of the Berlin Wall in November from the beginning of Poland's roundtable talks in the previous February. The pace of events produced two opposite effects. First, surprise: the daisy chain of revolutions was completely unexpected. They were not chaperoned by academic or journalistic predictions…1989 indicated the historical and basically impermanent, even unstable nature of all social and political constructions. The events of 1989 restored the role of surprise to history and underscored the role of contingency…The second

[1] Stanley Plumly, "For Jan Palach, A Name Drawn by Lot, on the Anniversary of his Death the Third Day after Attempted Self-Immolation in Protest of Communist Czechoslovakia, January 19, 1969." *Old Heart: Poems*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2007. Print. 53.

> effect of the speed of events was the retrospective illusion of their inevitability; everything seemed to fall into more agreeable place as one revolution spilled over to another from Warsaw to Budapest, and from Berlin to Prague and Bucharest.[2]

Contemplating the importance of 1989 in connection to the 1917 October Revolution in Russia and the 1968 Prague Spring, Fritzsche calls for a careful evaluation of how 1989 changes our understanding of other influential dates in master narratives of twentieth-century history, as well as the idea of dating systems all together. To focus on the speed and remember the feeling of contingency associated with events composing 1989, Fritzsche shows in his professional capacity as a historian, is to open 1989 as an otherwise monolithic marker of endings into a multiplicity of processes: "Thinking about the speed and surprise of 1989 makes us aware of history and historicity – not just the transience of a system, or the mortality of a period, but also the internal logic of past systems, which is difficult to conjure up after the past has revealed its pastness."[3]

Yet who is the 'us' to whom Fritzsche refers? And how does the past achieve the agency that Fritzsche seems to ascribe to it when he speaks of the past revealing itself as such? Fritzsche's analysis focuses on "the master dating system of the modern West" and its periodization based on significant years marking ruptures in the fabric of history.[4] Invoking Francis Fukuyama's 1989 article "The End of History" and Samuel Huntington's 1993 article "The Clash of Civilizations," Fritzsche shows how these contemporary political scientists regard the collapse of real existing socialism in Europe as proof that state socialism is an unviable political alternative to liberal democratic capitalism. However, Fritzsche argues, part of the so-called incommensurability of real existing socialism and History is the result of a Western

[2] Peter Fritzsche, "1989 and the Chronological Imagination" in *Debating German Cultural Identity since 1989*. Anne Fuchs, et al., eds. Rochester: Camden House, 2011. Print. 18.
[3] Ibid., 25.
[4] Ibid., 17.

perspective that privileges a notion of progress understood as the development of nation states. As a transnational movement based on a shared vision of a utopian future, communism confounds historical analyses like Huntington's and Fukuyama's because it cannot be relegated solely to ethnic and national markers of identity. [5] Ill-suited for a nation-based model of history-telling, the end of real existing socialism is therefore understood as the return of "real" history in the form of underlying national and ethnic continuities that are regarded as supposedly more valid categories of identification and belonging. In this view, communist history from the 1917 October Revolution to the 1989 border openings is merely a superficial distraction from or caesura in the operations of nation-states, and real existing socialism, always already determined to fail as proven retrospectively by 1989, is relegated, once and for all, to the past.

Yet the recognition of 1989 as a significant event periodizing Western history also works across Cold War binaries of East and West, calling to attention more complex resonances and relationships among previously divided timelines. It belongs, for example, to a family of dates that characteristically mark World War I and II (1918, 1933 and 1945) and to the series of revolutions in Russia, Hungary and Prague (1917, 1956 and 1968 respectively). As a historian, Fritzsche uses the historiographical issues that 1989 raises to call for "history in the grey zone": a practice of history that emphasizes empathy with past historical actors in order to more precisely assess their role in a present time that no longer includes the political systems to which they were formerly subject.[6] Yet Fritzsche's reevaluation of periodization raises even more questions

[5] See Boris Groys' discussion of the postnational project of real existing socialism and its political vision in „Die postkommunistische Situation." *Zurück aus der Zukunft: Osteuropäische Kulturen im Zeitalter des Postkommunismus*. Ibid, et al. Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 2005. 36-48. Print.

[6] Ibid., 27. Importantly, Fritzsche develops this notion in conjunction with literary experience. He attributes the term "grey zone" to Primo Levi's *The Drowned and the Saved* and invokes novels such as Günter Grass' 2002 *Crabwalk* to suggest the historical and moral complexity of the perspectives that need to guide post-89 historical practice. Scholars such as Dominick LaCapra have, however, criticize this notion of historiography for a tendency toward radical complicity in which all historical actors are recognized merely in terms of perpetrators and victims.

about the categorical construction of history that require exploration: what happens when certain dates become privileged markers of change and others forgotten? How are the contours of history articulated through endings and beginnings, what inclusions and exclusions result, and how might reworking historiography affect its subject?

These questions propel Ágnes Heller's efforts even prior to 1989 in *A Theory of History* (1982) to develop a working vocabulary for describing relations among the past, present, and future. Whereas Fritzsche's "history in the grey zone" proposes empathetic identification with historical actors in order to more carefully reconstruct past actions and more precisely reevaluate and describe the present, Ágnes Heller, a philosopher who studied under Georg Lukács at the University of Budapest, is concerned with the ethics of history as a collective enterprise. Her evaluation and intervention in historiography is therefore not merely a matter of descriptive precision, but also seeks to develop historical consciousness by refining historical analysis. Heller defines historicity as living historical subjects recognized as such, and notes its categorical overlap with history: the "we" that writes, reads, and cares "together." Her "theory of history," in contrast to what she considers mere philosophies of history, posits a historiographical norm called "Togetherness." This norm orients historical reconstruction toward the inclusion of all living subjects and develops nine temporal categories for articulating relations among them. "Togetherness" is an absolute present that is "constituted by those living – living for and against each other."[7] In contrast to this absolute present called "Togetherness," Heller defines the historical present as a "cultural structure" that may include or exclude, and that is subject to reconstruction. Her theoretical project thus aims at the identity of Togetherness and the historical present such that the writing of history asymptotically and ethically approaches inclusion of all

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See chapter three, "Trauma Studies: Its Critics and Vicissitudes," especially footnote 11 on page 113. In: Dominick LaCapra. *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004. Print. 106-143.

[7] Ágnes Heller, *A Theory of History*. London: Routledge, 1982. Print. 41.

of those living in the historical present. This involves theoretically reconstructing a colloquial notion of the present from the standpoint of Togetherness through nine, more refined temporal categories that include "present history, historical present proper, and present age" and their past and future correlates. Heller's project is therefore not merely historical reconstruction, but a "radical hermeneutics" that pivots on a dialogic, interpretive relationship to the past. Her theoretical reconstruction of history both exposes the manner in which temporal structures also mark social belonging and furthermore reforges these relations in the future through a more refined dialogic interpretation of the past.

Heller writes,

> If we regard our present only as the 'historical present' then we abstract from the present history (the constant flow of events) and from the present-present age (from the meaning we attached to objectivations) and, in doing this, we abstract the historical present from *Togetherness*. However, structures only exist as structures for Togetherness (for the living subjects of contemporaneity). On the other hand, should we identify the present with present historical age, the upshot will only be isolated actions of (individual and collective) subjects and the relations between them will be 'before', 'after', and 'simultaneity'. Thus history becomes an uninterrupted chain of events without a world; without the institutions and forms of conduct that any Togetherness needs to appropriate.[8]

Togetherness for Heller is a consciousness of multiple temporalities that are meaningfully interrelated. A historical present that bears no relation to other events and has no meaning is simply a temporal void or empty structure, yet a present unorganized into events and meanings allows only for a bare minimum of formal relations that cannot be said to constitute a world. To paraphrase Heller, though all live to greater and lesser extent in present history, the historical present, and the present-present age, we do not necessarily recognize ourselves as contemporaries. Historical subjects—put simply, people that share the world—may live at the same time, but they do not necessarily recognize this shared world as such. In order to do so,

[8] Ibid., 45.

they must construct relations from within the historical present to pasts and futures that are necessarily shared by other subjects. This de-ideologized dialogue among contemporaries is the ethical imperative driving Heller's "injunction to construct our pasts as *past-present ages* and our future as *future-present ages* from the point of view of *Togetherness* conceived as *absolute present*."[9] This dialogue expands historicity (the subjective form of history) as it articulates the history to which it is subject and thus transforms society through increasing consciousness of the shared pasts (and futures) formerly unintelligible without a common cultural structure. The task therefore falls on living subjects of history to make relevant for their contemporaries the past-present age and, in so doing, construct an historical present in which a form of subjectivity emerges as the subject of its own historiographical creation. Absolute togetherness may only be approached, but aiming for it suggests ethical orientations that move history towards a better future. Togetherness provides a point of orientation for understanding Bánk's narration of Cold War history from the perspectives of subjects of real existing socialism as they come to terms with their present moment in the People's Republic of Hungary. Readers reconstruct this history together with the subjects of postcommunist literature to construct a past-present age out of a past once relegated by Cold War discourses to the other side of a political and imaginary division. In so doing, they negotiate the limits and possibilities of the history of real existing socialism in Hungary.

Before turning to *Der Schwimmer*, I would like to return briefly to the notion of speed that Fritzsche and other scholars commonly invoke to describe late twentieth- and early twentieth-first century culture. Andreas Huyssen, for example, notes an increasing concern with memory and commemoration toward the end of the twentieth century and associates this with speed. For Huyssen, memory "represents the attempt to slow down information processing, to resist the

[9] Ibid., 46.

dissolution of time in the synchronicity of the archive, to recover a mode of contemplation outside the universe of simulation and fast-speed information and cable networks, to claim some anchoring space in a world of puzzling and often threatening heterogeneity, non-synchronicity, and information overload."[10] In his account, a late 20th-century obsession with memory marks a reaction against technological developments that seem to distort human ways of relating to the world. Time seems to disappear in archival "synchronicity" while the media world becomes non-synchronous. This preoccupation with memory suggests in Huyssen's diagnosis attempts to delineate a temporal anchoring that satisfies "the basic human need to live in extended structures of temporality."[11] What is at stake from Huyssen's argument in my own discussion is less increasing or decreasing speed, but rather the need for tools that help negotiate the fundamentally different, extremely heterogeneous temporal structure that Huyssen identifies as it develops into the turn of the twenty-first century.

In what follows I contend that Zsuzsa Bánk's postcommunist novel *Der Schwimmer,* published in 2002, privileges structural aspects of narrative temporality in a way that draws attention to instances of subjective alignment. At certain points in the novel, the narrative form brings figures together within moments of collective comprehension and action. These moments are formally established according to how events become narratively significant. As a homodiegetic narrator[12] positions herself in her family history and a Hungarian People's Republic in the 1950s and 60s that bears only faint traces of historical events usually associated with this time, narrative focalization in this text attributes what I will refer to as either dialogic or

[10] Andreas Huyssen in *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*. New York: Routledge, 1995. Print. 7.
[11] Ibid., 9.
[12]Homodiegetic narration is usually attributed to Gerard Genette, who draws a major distinction between narrators who are also characters in a storyworld (homodiegetic) and those who are located outside the storyworld (heterodiegetic). I do not refer to an autodiegetic narrator because the narrator's largely passive status as a participant in the storyworld—she is of course instrumental in its creation—resists classification as the novel's sole protagonist.

dictated significance to "non-canonical events" that structure and are structured by the story in different ways. After articulating these narrative structures, I will return to Heller's temporal categories of social belonging to show how Bánk's work fosters a collective temporality—or *Zeitrechnung*, to borrow a term from the novel—in what some scholars have deemed a world devoid of social experience after the end of real existing socialism in Europe. [13]

II. Temporal Structures in Der Schwimmer

Zsuzsa Bánk, born in 1965 in Frankfurt am Main, grew up in a bilingual German-Hungarian household as the child of parents who held no German citizenship after fleeing Hungary in the wake of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. As an adult, she quickly received attention in German literary circles with the publication of her debut novel *Der Schwimmer* in 2002. Two years later she was awarded the Adelbert Chamisso Prize for authors writing in German who are not considered native speakers. She later published a collection of short stories *Heißester Sommer* (2005), a second novel, *Die hellen Tage* (2011), and several shorter prose pieces in newspapers and edited volumes, yet no subsequent work has yet surpassed the positive critical reception of *Der Schwimmer*.[14] Written approximately a decade after the so-called fall of real existing

[13]Building on Charity Scribner's *Requiem for Communism* (2003), Boris Buden describes the lack of a specific type of constitutive social experience after 1989 where work is no longer a site of collective and creative experience. At the end of both history and open futures in the sense of alternative visions of social organization, Buden argues that hope and Utopia have shifted from society into culture. See his discussion of "Hoffnung ohne Gesellschaft" and "eine Zukunft ohne Gesellschaft oder eine Gesellschaft ohne Zukunft" in Part III of *Zone des Übergangs: Vom Ende des Postkommunismus*. Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 2009. Print. 161-200.

[14]Though Zsuzsa Bánk has received some scholarly attention for *Der Schwimmer*, no published scholarship on her other works exists to my knowledge to date. Notable scholarship about *Der Schwimmer* includes treatment of motifs of swimming and waiting respectively in Andrea Bartl, "'Der Wechsel von einem vertrauten Element in das andere, fremde': Das Schwimm-Motiv in der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur." *German Life and Letters* 62.4 (2009): 482-495. Print. and Christof Hamann, "'Ich kann warten, ja.' Raum und Zeit in Zsuzsa Bánks Roman *Der Schwimmer*." *Interkulturelles Lernen: Mit Beiträgen zum Deutsch- und DaF-Unterricht, zu 'Migranten'-Bildern in den Medien und zu Texten von Özdamar, Trojanow und Zaimoglu*. Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2009. 19-33. Print. Bánk receives brief treatment under the sign of an 'Eastern European turn' in Birgid Haines, "German-Language Writing from Eastern and Central Europe." *Contemporary German Fiction: Writing in the Berlin Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007. 215-229. Print. A particularly in-depth discussion of translation and intercultural dialogue can be found in

socialism in Europe and the end of the Cold War, *Der Schwimmer* follows a father, Kálmán, and two children, Isti and Kata, through several towns in Hungary as they stay with various members of their family because their mother, Katalin, has left Hungary illegally in 1956. The young daughter Kata narrates the story retrospectively from a perspective positioned sometime not long after January 1969, beginning with memories of her mother spurred by the latter's departure. Kata's narration weaves through other stories that Kata hears other family members recall when she stays with them. Though containing various more and less explicit references to historically important dates for real existing socialist countries in this period—the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961, Stalin's death in 1953, the 1968 Prague Spring, and the 1956 Hungarian uprising—the narration focuses mainly on the daily lives of individuals in smaller towns such as Vát, Szerencs and an unnamed place near Badacsony on Lake Balaton. Remembering these four world historical events, it will turn out, nonetheless proves crucial for understanding the roles they play in the lives of the figures even though in narrative terms these dates appear to play only minor roles. The story told, however, is much more strongly driven by the direct impact of local events on the figures. Furthermore, by ending in 1969, the novel conspicuously ignores the events of 1989, a year that has become a crucial point of orientation for historical accounts of real existing socialism in Europe in the twentieth century.[15] You and I and other readers have likely heard additional stories about how all this turns out, but the figures in Bánk's novel, shortly after a failed revolution in Prague, have yet to question the permanence of the Socialist government in

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Silvia Lengl, *Interkulturelle Frauenfiguren im deutschsprachigen Roman der Gegenwart: Aspekte der interkulturellen Literatur und der Literatur von Frauen in den Werken von Terézia Mora, Zsuzsa Bánk und Aglaja Veteranyi im Vergleich zu den Werken von Nella Larsen und Gloria E. Anyzaldúa.* Dresden: w.e.b. Universitätsverlag & Buchhandel, 2012. Print.

[15] Francis Fukuyama's 1989 article "The End of History" and Samuel Huntington's 1993 article "The Clash of Civilizations" have since become representative of discourses that ascribe communism to a distant past after 1989. Fukuysma and Huntington use the events of 1989 as proof of a teleological historical process with Western-style liberal democracy as its end point. According to their arguments, the collapse of real existing socialism in Europe marks the (pre-destined) failure of the only other significant form of political organization.

Hungary. Marking neither a retrospectively certain happy ending, nor the victory of western-style liberal democracy over its Cold War alternative, Bánk's novel confronts its readers with a still open but also, in the wake of a failed revolution, bleak future. The following analysis of Bánk's literary engagement with postcommunist cultures explores narratological forms as historiographical interventions in order to demonstrate their ethical productivity. The future-oriented mode of historiography enabled by Bánk's novel connects literary subjectivities to futures not yet passed, thus facilitating a mode of historical reflection that demonstrates the necessity of ethical action in the present to form desirable futures.

Though the figures have yet to question the political structures governing their present moment, they do pose other questions. Kata asks why her mother left without saying goodbye; why her brother jumped into a lake in winter; why her father chooses to leave a place at a certain time. She hears her father's cousin Zsófi wonder why the latter's son Jenő leaves at the moment he did, "als hätte es für Jenő einen besseren, einen richtigen Zeitpunkt geben können, um dieses Haus zu verlassen, und mit ihm alles, was Jenő bisher umgeben hatte."[16] These questions share a desire for causal explanation that hinges on the question *Warum jetzt*? (why now?)—that is, a question about time.

Analyzing the temporalities that these questions produce requires a brief foray into classical and postclassical accounts of narrative temporality. In the discussion that follows, I will employ three categories postclassical narratologist David Herman develops to study forms of narration: duration, focalization, and non-canonical event. Duration was one of three terms (including frequency and order) coined by structural narratologist Gérard Genette in his seminal *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1972) to refer to the sense of time produced in literature by way not merely of verb tense, but also by the diegetic relations established among

[16] Zsuzsa Bánk, *Der Schwimmer*. Frankfurt A/M: S. Fischer, 2002. Print. 248.

events and actions in narration. Herman adapts the Genettian sense of duration, how fast or slow an event seems based on the amount of narration devoted to it, to add that it also "constitutes a metric of value or at least attentional prominence: in extended narratives the shift from rapidly surveyed backstory or expositional material to a slower, scenic mode of presentation can signal aspects of the storyworld valued (or at any rate noticed) by a narrator."[17] Duration is therefore not only a temporal matter of speed, but also a narrative technique for establishing value.

Focalization in narrative offers a method for distinguishing different narrational stances and perspectives towards storyworld situations. Genette coined the term in order to avoid the visual biases of traditional ways of talking about narrative such as point-of-view. He therefore refined the coarse distinction between a narrating perspective that sees (focalizer) and a narrating perspective that speaks (narrator), into degrees of external and internal focalization with respect to a focus of narration. David Herman extends Genette's classical account of focalization "to emphasize that stories not only facilitate but also formally encode ways of seeing…[T]o say that an event or object or participant is focalized in a certain manner is to say that it is perspectivally indexed, structured so that it has to be interpreted as refracted through a specific viewpoint and anchored in a particular set of contextual coordinates."[18] Herman's discussion of focalization continues by showing how readers use a wide range of textual cues (such as pronouns, adjectives and syntax) and semantic elements (contextualized meanings) to interpret how narration locates perspectives within storyworlds. These semantic elements will be particularly important for demonstrating how the narrational perspective in Bánk's novel is formally oriented toward a

[17] David Herman, *Basic Elements of Narrative*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. Print. 130. Herman uses the term "storyworld" to refer to how readers reconstruct worlds based on narrative cues. Storyworlds include not only the world presented in the story, but also the various alternative actions and possible worlds readers consider to understand the narrative logic at work. He writes, "storyworlds are mental models of who did what to and with whom, when, where, why, and in what fashion in the world to which recipients relocate…as they work to comprehend a narrative." *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002. Print. 5.

[18] Herman, *Story Logic*, 302-3.

future-present age.

"Non-canonical events" is Herman's term for disruptive moments that mark divergences from the conventions of a literary world, exposing these conventions in so doing: "narratives characteristically concern themselves not just with the processual, but more specifically with disruption – transgressions of the expected or at least normal order of events that might or might not result from time's passing. Noteworthy and thus narratable disruptions, then, are anchored in the contingent rather than the necessary, what might eventuate from a given set of circumstances rather than what is logically entailed by them."[19] Herman emphasizes the implicit quality of canonicity. What is canonical may be articulated in part through descriptions that positively construct the world of a story, but the unexpected nature of its disruption suggests that the canonical becomes clear only in retrospect, after having been disturbed. The contingent aspect of non-canonical events will become important in my argument for the imaginative stretch it can motivate. When canonicity is breached, the figures in the novel seek to understand the disruption and thereby restabilize the storyworld through comprehension.

Two orders of non-canonical events drive narration in *Der Schwimmer*. One punctuates a span of time to become representative of a segment of temporal duration, and the other spurs more extreme changes in the figures' world. The first order of non-canonical events distinguishes a period of time that would otherwise blend together with others in their regularity. Kata remembers her time in Szerencs with her father's cousin Zsófi, for example, as a series of otherwise indistinguishable winters:

> Sie gingen vorbei, diese Winter, ohne daß wir wußten, wann sie anfingen oder aufhörten. In jedem Fall bleiben wir so lange, bis Zsófis Tochter Anikó draußen auf den Feldern mit uns spielen konnte. Vielleicht bringe ich die vielen Winter auch schon durcheinander.

[19] Ibid., *Basic Elements of Narrative*, 135.

> In einem dieser Winter, an einem dieser langen, dunklen Abende fing Jenő an, Isti Lesen und Schreiben beizubringen. Warum er das tat, weiß ich nicht.[20]

Kata remembers experiencing her first stay in Szerencs as multiple years, but also wonders if she has retrospectively conflated it with other winters from later stays in Szerencs. Regardless, in order to center in on the time period she wants to talk about, she invokes a particularly memorable event: the evening that Isti learns to read. Both noteworthy and contingent—or at least following a logic of which Kata is unaware—this non-canonical event marks the span of time she is narrating as significant.

The second order of non-canonical events involves incidents that impact the figures more dramatically, usually by prompting a change of location. After several years of living with their relatives on Lake Balaton, for example, the family goes out dancing one evening. Looking up from the valley to see their house in flames, they rush home. Shortly thereafter, Kata, Isti and Kálmán leave their relatives at the lake. The unannounced and illegal departure of relatives for the west is another unexpected, non-canonical event shaping the narrative. Kata's mother's departure sets the storyworld into motion, for example, and towards the end of the novel, Zsófi's son Jenő leaves for the west in a similarly unexpected fashion. Surprisingly, though some of the major historical events occurring during this period are mentioned, and though these events do have more and less direct consequences for the figures, none are represented as non-canonical events in the novel. When Kata's mother's border-crossing is retold, for instance, the Soviet suppression of the 1956 Hungarian uprising takes the following form: "in Budapest war etwas geschehen, das bis hierher zu spüren war...Köpfe aus Stein hätten sie zerschlagen, die Scherben mit Füßen getreten, Schüsse seien gefallen, zu viele."[21] The non-canonical events driving the narration of *Der Schwimmer* are thus occurrences that strongly affect the family, but do not

[20] Bánk, 46.
[21] Ibid., 129-130.

necessarily make their way into historical accounts of real existing socialism and postcommunism. Events that narratives of twentieth-century history such as Fritzsche's recognize will play a meaningful role, but only after Kata finds a way to reckon with time such that she may grasp her context in the course of and by means of narration.

This constellation of impactful local non-canonical events and Kata's style of narration, to which I turn in greater detail below, foregrounds the manner in which narrative functions and the means it provides for controlling the construction of world. Throughout *Der Schwimmer* figures desire to stop time for various reasons. Though Isti and Kata first have a feeling of time stopping when their mother leaves—"als habe jemand alle Uhren zum Stehen gebracht, als liefe die Zeit für uns nicht weiter"[22]—this initial shock is quickly replaced by an observation of temporal disjuncture with ethical implications. Kata reflects, "Das Komische war: Unser Leben ging weiter, obwohl meine Mutter uns verlassen hatte. Der Morgen kam, es wurde Nacht, und daß es so war, überraschte mich nicht mehr. Wir standen auf, wir setzten uns in Bewegung, wir fluchten, wir beteten, wir aßen, wir stritten miteinander. Mir kam es so vor, als würden wir etwas Unrechtes tun, als dürfte die Zeit nicht vergehen. Nicht so."[23] The time of the storyworld is not behaving as Kata would have it. Its regular cycle of days and nights does not seem fitting in the absence of her mother, yet life goes on and she with it. The figures and the storyworld have returned to normal temporal rhythms after the non-canonical event, but this temporality does not accord with her subjective temporality.

When Kálmán, Kata, and Isti leave Lake Balaton because someone has set fire to their family's vineyards, Isti literally enacts his desire for a world that accords with his wish to stay during his final dinner at home. He uses time as a means to encourage others to resist the

[22] Ibid., 17.
[23] Ibid., 24-25.

movement of the storyworld too:

> Isti verteilte Teller und Besteck, langsamer als sonst, weil er glaubte, noch könne er etwas ändern, noch könne er die Zeit bremsen. Er aß langsamer als sonst, um die Zeit, die gemessene Zeit seiner Geschwindigkeit anzupassen, und Virág und Mihály schauten ihm dabei zu und ahmten es nach, wurden langsam wie er, und nach jedem Bissen sah Isti auf Mihálys Armbanduhr, um zu prüfen, wie die Zeit verging, ob wirklich langsamer, ob sie aussetzte, zögerte wie wir, wenigstens für einen Augenblick, und weil niemand etwas sagte und wir die Messer auf den Tellern hörten, fragte Zoltán, warum seid ihr so still, warum spricht keiner?[24]

Unwilling to leave the lake, Isti attempts to defer departure by slowing his own actions in order to slow time. Doing so does not show signs of affecting the standardized time on his friend Mihály's watch, but it does cause three of the four figures to slow down as well. Although this moment of coordination does not stop clock time, Isti, Mihály and Virág's collective action does cause enough of an interruption to disturb Zoltán and, in so doing, prompt him to wonder about the change. The collective action Isti begins is not as drastic a non-canonical event as Kata's mother's departure, but it functions similarly to interrupt Zoltán's expectations of normality. Furthermore, Isti's actions also influence Kata's narration of the scene. The narrative duration of Kata's description responds to Isti's desires by extending the second sentence in the quoted passage through a series of repetitive clauses that dwell on each of Isti's movements, hesitating like the other figures to come to a conclusion until Zoltán asks about what he sees happening.

Isti's desire to slow time to defer a coming departure finds a narrative correlate in another moment of departure: Kata's recollection of Isti's unwilling and then whole-hearted farewell to their maternal grandmother. Though most of the novel is written in episodes composed of several shorter paragraphs within a page, the narration devoted to this scene spans almost three whole pages. Standardized time still functions normally—the grandmother leaves when her ferry arrives—but the narration of the sequence dwells on the last few moments the figures have

[24] Ibid., 225-226.

together. Recalling narrative duration as a metric of value, I highlight what may seem obvious: this moment clearly calls to be noticed. At the same time that Isti, resentful of his grandmother's stories about his mother's current life without them, tries to avoid saying goodbye, Kata emphasizes the importance of what they learn through prolonged narration. Although the figures within the storyworld can alter their circumstances only to a certain extent—even when acting collectively they cannot bring time to stop—Kata's narration is a formal means by which to mark another sort of time. I will return to this example of narrative duration as an important counterpoint to another temporality structuring collective action later in my discussion.

Why should it matter that narrative may provide resources for a manner of adjusting time? What is at stake in the novel's configuration of temporalities, and how might these collective temporalities figure into a postcommunist present? Perhaps the most relevant answer is to be found in Zsófi's reflection on the public reaction—including her own—to Stalin's death in 1953. Recalling her experience being interrogated for treason when relatives leave for the west, Zsófi says:

> ...niemand hätte über diese Dinge [den Staat zu verlassen] nachgedacht, nicht bevor man auf Wachen bestellt wurde, um zu erklären, wer wo war, ganz gleich, ob man etwas wußte oder nicht. Bevor unsere Mutter gegangen war, hatten sie noch anders darüber gedacht, sagte Zsófi, noch 1953, als es mich schon gab, nach den ersten Wochen des Jahres, als der Winter kaum vorbei war und Zsófi und Kálmán sich an einem kalten, hellen Tag in Budapest getroffen hatten, weil sie beide dort zu tun hatten. Sie waren durch die Stadt gelaufen und irgendwann stehengeblieben, weil man stehenzubleiben hatte in dieser Minute, weil alles und jeder stehenblieb, Bahnen, Busse, Menschen, zu Fuß, auf Fahrrädern, weil es so bestimmt worden war, über Lautsprecher oder Sirenen. Jeder stand und schwieg, nicht nur hier, sondern im ganzen Land, selbst in den Ländern ringsum, im Norden, Osten und Süden, in Fabriken, auf Straßen, in der Stadt, auf dem Land, und dann hatten auch sie gestanden und geschwiegen, Zsófi und Kálmán, wie alle anderen. Etwas war zu Ende gegangen, ein Leben war vorbei und mit ihm eine Zeit, eine Zeitrechnung, und Zsófi und unser Vater hatten etwas gespürt, etwas, das der Trauer ähnlich war, das fast Trauer gewesen war, und erst später, Jahre später, als sie schon mehr wußten, als alle schon mehr wußten, hatten sie sich dafür geschämt, daß sie so etwas hatten empfinden können.[25]

[25] Ibid., 252.

In this narrated moment, Kata and Isti's wish that the world stop at certain moments to recognize something significant seems to come true. Yet this stasis is spurred by an event that has a very different quality from the non-canonical events driving the narration. Whereas the other events are non-canonical due to their unanticipated nature as perceived by the figures, this event is proclaimed. It disrupts, but it also proscribes the reaction that should follow. In fact, the proscription is the interruption itself. As such, the distinction between whether or not this event behaves in accordance with the sort of world the textual cues condition becomes complicated. The event is a dictated non-canonical event: it dictates the canon of which it is a part—the laws declared to govern the figures' actions—such that divergence does not even seem possible.

As a dictated non-canonical event, this proscribed moment of mourning may have disrupted Zsófi´s world in the past, but, in Kata and Zsófi's narration, it loses its former power. Though the proscription resembles a non-canonical event—Zsófi describes having been interrupted—it does not formally disrupt Zsófi's story as Kata recounts it to her family. Instead, Zsófi's story, as focalized through Kata, allows both figures to tell the story and reorient their attitudes toward the event in so doing. Narrative focalization works in Bánk's novel through pronominal forms and proper names that establish narrative connections among some figures and resist others.[26] In this passage, Kata's narration is focalized though Zsófi, who is named as the speaking subject (*sagte Zsófi*). Zsófi's story, however, bears Kata's voice as well in the past perfect subjunctive mood that is used, in German, to suggest quotation by another figure. Their collectively-told story can also be seen in the plural possessive pronouns *unsere Mutter* and

[26] In *Story Logic*, David Herman notes the difficulty narrative perspectives pose for narratologists. In place of traditional terms such as point of view, classical narratologist Gérard Genette coined the term "focalization" to distinguish the focus of narration from the narrator that reports events in narrative. Herman's postclassical developments to this term involve reworking classical distinctions among types of narrating perspectives to address a wider variety of textual and semantic elements used to locate narration. See Herman's chapter on "Perspectives" In: *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. University of Nebraska Press, 2002. Print. 301-330.

unser Vater that refer to Kata and Isti, and Zsófi would not likely refer to herself by her proper name. In narratological terms, the style of narration is thus homodiegetic—the center of narration is located in a figure in the storyworld (Kata)—and focalizes a separate source of narration through Zsófi. In so doing, Zsófi's story as focalized through Kata shifts the significance of what had once been a non-canonical event such that it loses its disruptive power in their narrative.

Zsófi's recollection as narrated by Kata also demonstrates that certain figures in the storyworld literally do control time in a political sense, at least momentarily. Stalin's life marks a period and a chronology: a particular *Zeitrechnung* in the vocabulary of the novel. When Stalin's life ends, the clock stops, and the figures stop to mourn—they are required to do so. This temporality is so influential that Kálmán and Zsófi internalize it and understand the moment of grief it imposes as their own. Only later, upon discussing the reasons for the pause, can the figures evaluate their reactions as an imitation of grief for Stalin. Without an internal *Zeitrechnung* to contest the externally-imposed temporality of Stalin's rule, Kálmán and Zsófi cannot distinguish their feelings toward the dictated non-canonical event, so they behave unquestioningly according to the laws it proscribes. As the figures reorganize the narrative through dialogue, an event that had functioned non-canonically in one narrative no longer disturbs their own.

The final crucial aspect of this passage is the use of *etwas* in the final sentence: "*Etwas* war zu Ende gegangen, ein Leben war vorbei und mit ihm eine Zeit, eine Zeitrechnung, und Zsófi und unser Vater hatten *etwas* gespürt, *etwas*, das der Trauer ähnlich war, das fast Trauer gewesen war, und erst später, Jahre später, als sie schon mehr wußten, als alle schon mehr

wußten, hatten sie sich dafür geschämt, daß sie so etwas hatten empfinden können.“[27] Instead of perpetuating Zsófi and Kálmán’s internalized understanding of their attitude toward the death *as* mourning upon recalling the moment—thereby reproducing the official story about how people should feel—Kata’s narration focalized through Zsófi denies the proper name ‘Stalin’ and the false mourning his regime proscribes. In this narrative, *etwas* marks the current illegibility of an official temporality now recognized as discordant with their temporality, despite having previously determined it. Not only does focalization through Kata collectively reorganize the *Zeitrechnung* of Stalin’s regime, but it also resists perpetuating the dictated ideology by refusing to name it.

In contrast to the *Zeitrechnung* imposed on Kálmán and Zsófi, Kata and Isti develop their own mode of temporal organization while living near Lake Balaton. Their time at the lake bears as few standardized markers for its measurement as the aforementioned many winters Kata designates via Isti’s learning to read: „Wir blieben lange am See, länger als einen Sommer, aber was soll das schon heißen, was soll das schon sein in unserer Zeitrechnung, bei unserer Geschwindigkeit: lange.“[28] Uncontested, their subjective *Zeitrechnung* promises to control the world: „Bewegten wir uns, dann bewegte sich, drehte sich auch unsere Welt weiter, und wir glaubten, sie könne in einem Augenblick zum Stehen kommen, in dem wir es wünschten.“[29] Kata and Isti are a far cry from Stalin to say the least, but their impulse to control the world according only to their desires leaves little room for recognizing temporalities outside their own. In fact, it even compromises their ability to recognize their past selves: “Wir vergaßen sogar, daß es für uns eine Zeit gegeben hatte, in der wir an Zugstationen Zahlenreihen gelesen und uns

[27] Bánk, 252. My emphasis.
[28] Bánk, 101.
[29] Ibid., 102.

gemerkt hatten, im Glauben, es könne uns retten, vor was auch immer."[30] After their mother left abruptly by train, Kata and Isti had memorized the departure and arrival times of trains to and from Budapest. When they establish their *Zeitrechnung* at the lake, however, they forget this previously important mode of orientation, and with it part of their history. Temporally bound to a particular present moment, this *Zeitrechnung* is also spatially bound to the town on the lake. Kata links the sense of stability and certainty it brings to the assumption that she will return to the town on the lake, and Isti becomes fixated on asking "Warum sind wir nicht am See?"[31] This too is a misalignment: the world for Kata and Isti contracts into a point that bears no relation to other places and times, and they are bereft of the ability to relate both to other figures and to their own dynamic subjectivity.

Eventually, and momentarily, Kata senses her alignment with the storyworld:

> Jetzt, wenn wir bei Zsófi saßen, vor dem Ofen, mit Blick auf Jenős Bild, unter uns die weißen Federn, vor uns das Fenster, dahinter der fallende Schnee, Pista, der durch den Garten lief, mit meinem Vater, beide rauchend, wenn sie stehenblieben, redeten, ohne den Schnee zu bemerken, den Rauch in die Luft stießen – dann hatte ich das Gefühl, wir lebten auf einem Kreisel, auf seiner Spitze, dort, wo man ihn dreht und losläßt, und wir, wir drehten uns mit ihm, immer auf der einen Stelle, immer unter demselben Himmel. Es lag nicht daran, daß wir bei Zsófi waren, hier, in ihrer Küche, umgeben von Eis, von Splittermustern darin und von Schnee, der sie bedeckte. Es lag daran, daß Jenő nicht mehr da war und ich auf irgendeine Art wußte, warum.[32]

Finally, after hearing more and more stories from her family members, Kata is able to synthesize enough information about her context to infer why a figure in the storyworld might leave without saying goodbye. The feeling resulting from her understanding of Jenő's absence is not one of stasis, but one of alignment: world and figures turn together. The narrative duration of the scene draws out the moment to linger in description, thus affecting not only the felt sense of time, but also its locative precision. The narration situates each figure that constitutes "we" as exactly as

[30] Ibid., 101.
[31] Ibid., 102.
[32] Ibid., 269-270.

possible in the storyworld in the present time, including the figure that is absent. This moment, approaching Togetherness (in Heller's sense) is not a matter of controlling a world through time, be it an imposed moment of mourning for Stalin or the empowerment Kata and Isti sense at the lake, but rather a moment when Kata understands the relationship between her current state and its situation in a larger context. In this now, world and figures are aligned, and Kata no longer needs to ask why.

Yet the state of comprehension is temporary. The narration continues and other non-canonical events call for additional explanation. This is, however, desirable. The figures' continuing impulse to find reasons for non-canonical events provides the necessary means for establishing subjective *Zeitrechnungen*. These strategies of temporal organization are crucial for alignment among continually shifting relationships in a turning world. I began this discussion by mentioning the figures' tendency to ask *Warum jetzt*? Returning to Zsófi's recollection of the interrogation following her son's escape, she says "niemand hätte über diese Dinge nachgedacht, nicht bevor man auf Wachen bestellt wurde, um zu erklären, wer wo war, ganz gleich, ob man etwas wußte oder nicht"[33] Zsófi's vague reference to *diese Dinge* (these things) points toward other laws operating in her storyworld. When interrogated, she must come up with an explanation for an unexpected event. The experience of interrogation also furnishes Zsófi with the tools she needs to interrogate the grounds of interrogation—to be summoned *auf Wachen* spurs awakening through narrative reflection. The official questions motivate her to bring potentially unanswerable questions of contingency back to her family. She constructs her story and prompts other figures to do the same. As figures situate themselves with respect to one another, they provide the context that enables Kata, in the course of narration, to find at least an answer to 'why,' even if the answer to 'why now' escapes her.

[33] Ibid., 252.

The answer to *Warum jetzt*—if there is one—is less important than the desire for explanation that drives it. In order to comprehend the storyworld after a non-canonical event, figures must reposition themselves together within it by attributing dialogic significance to formerly non-canonical events. This process of narrative reorientation requires recognizing relationships among the multiple, interrelated processes that risk being masked by the contingency, apparent or not, of a non-canonical event. As the figures in Bánk's novel create their narratives, they may re-canonize these events to the extent that they find a sufficiently explanatory logic, and doing so requires a constant attempt at subjective alignment among multiple temporalities. Perhaps Jenő left in winter to avoid leaving his family in a season with a heavier workload. Perhaps something else spurred his departure. Neither Zsófi nor, by extension, the reader can know for sure. Regardless, he also left because of the larger socio-political structures affecting his life. As Kata listens to her family's stories, however, she senses the political gravity of the disturbance in her storyworld: "Es lag daran, daß Jenő nicht mehr da war und ich auf irgendeine Art wußte, warum."[34] 'Now' is also Hungary in the 1960s: a time of enforced modernization through agricultural collectivization and industrialization in the wake of spectacular governmental mass retribution for the 1956 Revolution.[35]

Kata does not recount these major historical events in such terms, but as she narrates her family's accounts of the events that affect their lives, she establishes a collective *Zeitrechnung* that allows her to sense the historical factors motivating Jenő's departure. By telling their own stories about the events that affect their lives, Bánk's figures engage in a narrative ordering of

[34] Ibid., 270.
[35] After Soviet suppression of the 1956 revolution, the incoming government lead by János Kádár began severe persecution of "counterrevolutionaries" through mass internment, brutal interrogations and police surveillance and coercion. These activities continued into the 1960s, when large-scale collectivization of farms and increased factory labor also drastically changed the social landscape in Hungary. For more information on Kádár's martially-imposed, post-revolution government and subsequent political consolidation, see Györgz Gyarmati and Tibor Valuch. *Hungary Under Soviet Domination. 1944-1989.* Trans. Sean Lambert. New York: Columbia UP, 2009. Print.

experience through which they establish their own *Zeitrechnung*. In so doing, they establish collective temporalities able to open the historical present—recalling Heller's terms—to the history of real existing socialism in the People's Republic of Hungary as part of the past-present age. These figures are no longer consigned to a distant historical past irrelevant to the postcommunist present moment, but rather contemporaries whose historical experience provides a meaningful point of orientation to help steer the future. Moments of alignment may be far and few between, but only engaging in narrative makes them possible at all.

III. Narrating a Postcommunist Future

Der Schwimmer ends sometime near January 1969, when word of Jan Palach's self-immolation in Prague to protest Soviet intervention in the potential political reforms of Prague Spring reaches the landing at Lake Balaton. His act of defiance, especially in light of the Soviet troops' spectacular crushing of popular revolts in the summer of 1968, is so incredible that Ági, a superstitious figure with a penchant for fairy tales with happy endings, chalks it up to fiction. Mihály and Virág, however, believe in the rumors they hear at the docks, thus leaving the narrating subject split among beliefs: "An der Anlegestelle erzählen sie, in Prag habe sich jemand angezündet, jetzt, wo alles längst schon vorbei sei, ein halbes Jahr später, und wir, wir wissen nicht, ob wir das glauben sollen. Ági meint, so ein Blödsinn, wer zündet sich an, freiwillig, lebendig, aber Virág hat mir anvertraut, sie glaube es, und Mihály, er glaube es auch."[36] Back at what has become her home at the sea, Kata narrates the final chapter of the novel from a 'now' that occurs in the narrated present time. However, tracing the verb tenses in the previous quotation reveals a temporal disjuncture among the figures. Although Ági, 'we,' and those at the docks are included in the present moment as reflected by verbs in the present

[36] Ibid., 284.

tense (*Ági meint*, *wir wissen*, *sie erzählen*), Virág and, by extension, Mihály, remain in the past (past perfect tense *Virág hat…anvertraut*). This temporal disjuncture figures into the form of subjectivity articulated among the characters as well. Whereas Kata's narration is focalized through Ági in the present so that her statement of surprise at the apparently nonsensical act of self-immolation is formulated as direct speech (*wer zündet sich an*), Virág's belief in Palach's act remains focalized through the first-person narrating subject and related as potentially untrustworthy indirect speech (*sie glaube es*). Bringing this 'we' that does not know what to believe into the temporal and subjective configuration required to acknowledge Palach's self-immolation as a meaningful past event that orients attitudes in the present—the relation to the past that creates, in Heller's terms, a past-present age—takes the form of a narrative shove toward the possibility of a subjectivity to come. Kata's decision to wait at the end of the novel can therefore be understood as the formal construction of a future-present age that takes Palach's ethical appeal into account. Hardly a passive resignation, Kata's final acknowledgement, "Ich kann warten, ja," marks an historical present that connects the communist past—as a meaningful, past-present age—to the postcommunist future.[37]

To articulate the implications of the novel's final three passages, I return to the principles underlying David Herman's postnarratological developments to narrative focalization. In the penultimate chapter of *Story Logic*, "Perspectives," Herman addresses the difficulty structural narratology has faced in accounting for complex modes of narrative focalization that create perspectives using textual cues as diverse as pronouns, articles, verbs and syntactical moods. As Herman shows, readers often understand how they are positioned in narrative by way of

[37] Ibid., 285. Szilvia Lengl argues that this moment implies Kata has applied for the necessary visa that will allow her to travel to her mother in Western Germany and is waiting for official permission to leave. I find Lengl's argument convincing, though it does involve attributing a referent (official authorities) to the pronominal *man* in the passage. My reading asks what the formal stakes might be of leaving this referent unresolved. See Lengl, 195.

semantic processes dependent on interpretation and meaning. Herman thus reconceptualizes structuralist narratological accounts to include referentiality and semantic analysis. From semantic analysis he draws the category of intensional meaning—"meaning is always meaning-within-a-model-of-the-world"[38]—and extends it through a possible worlds framework to argue, "Intensions are thus relativized meanings, that is, meanings-within-some-model-of-the-world."[39] In so doing, Herman acknowledges the relationship between the specific configuration of textual elements at any given point in a narrative, and the contextual referents that have given rise to a particular meaning. In this view, textual elements that have established meanings at one point in a narrative also carry those meanings into other parts of the narrative. Intensional meanings thereby shape the narrative environments that also give rise to them.

This world-making capacity of narration will be crucial in my reading of the conjoined movement of literary subjectivity and narrative temporality in the last three passages of *Der Schwimmer*. Cited at length, these passages read:

> In diesen Tagen ist der Himmel über uns blau, wie selten um diese Jahreszeit. Heute morgen sind zwei Flugzeuge, klein wie Punkte, durch dieses Blau geflogen und haben ein langes weißes X gezeichnet. Ich habe Wein gepflanzt, er wächst die Mauer hoch, nur an wenigen Stellen etwas dichter, und Virág sagt, es wird dauern. Manchmal sitzen wir unten am See, Virág und ich, dort, wo das Wasser an die Steine schlägt, mit Blick auf die erste Sandbank, und sie weiß, daß ich dann an Isti denke, an nichts anderes, an die Sommer mit ihm, an sein Springen ins Wasser, jederzeit und überall.
>
> An der Anlegestelle erzählen sie, in Prag habe sich jemand angezündet, jetzt, wo alles schon vorbei sei, ein halbes Jahr später, und wir, wir wissen nicht, ob wir das glauben sollen. Ági meint, so ein Blödsinn, wer zündet sich an, freiwillig, lebendig, aber Virág hat mir anvertraut, sie glaube es, und Mihály, er glaube es auch.
>
> Mein Vater hat gesagt, wenn du fahren willst, kannst du fahren, schon vor Monaten hat er das gesagt, und seither warte ich darauf, daß man mich läßt. Man hat mir erklärt, es wird dauern, ich werde warten müssen, vielleicht länger, als ich denke, bestimmt länger, und ich habe gesagt, es macht nichts, es macht gar nichts, ich kann warten, und dann habe ich

[38] Herman, *Story Logic*, 324.
[39] Ibid., *Story Logic*, 325.

noch einmal gesagt: Ich kann warten, ja.[40]

In the passage preceding the rumours of Palach's death, Kata relates her first steps toward repairing the damage done to Ági and Zoltán's house on the lake that has since become her home: "Ich habe Wein gepflanzt, er wächst die Mauer hoch, nur an wenigen Stellen etwas dichter, und Virág sagt, es wird dauern. Manchmal sitzen wir unten am See, Virág und ich, dort, wo das Wasser an die Steine schlägt, mit Blick auf die erste Sandbank."[41] I will return to the house in a moment, but first notice that in this passage, the 'we' constituted by Virág and the first-person narrating subject is subjectively and temporally configured in the historical present: both subjects speak directly from a focus of narration located in 'we' and in the present time of narration. This configuration is then distended in the passage discussed above when 'we' does not know what to believe in the present (*wir wissen nicht*) and narration relegates those who believe in the rumors to the past (*Virág hat mir anvertraut, sie glaube es*). The final passage of the novel lacks a 'we' altogether. However, Kata's transposition of Virág's statement "es wird dauern" into the final passage and attributed to a generalized subject (the impersonal pronoun *man*) orients the narration toward a future-present age. Formally, the citation may be understood as a first line cast into the future of the present: an intension to which the narrating subject and her storyworld will catch up.

Kata first acknowledged Virág's statement as true when it referred to thickening vines. The proposition "es wird dauern" then retains Kata's credence when Kata repeats it in a different narrative situation in the final passage. The repetition forms a crossed inversion of narrative temporality and literary subjectivity. Text and context reverse: the 'we' of Viràg and 'I' in which Viràg's statement first garnered truth in the narrative present twists through a 'we' split across

[40] Bánk, 284-5.
[41] Ibid., 284.

time and uncertainty into an embodied statement spoken to 'I' in the past by a subject position yet to be filled. On a formal level, Kata's acceptance that she will have to wait can be understood as an affirmation of the narrative time it will take for the collective 'we' titling the first chapter of the novel to return to the 'Kata' with which it ends through what has been and will be narrated. Although Ági comments on the seeming absurdity of Palach's act in the historical present after the suppression of Prague spring "jetzt, wo alles schon vorbei sei"[42], Kata's "es wird dauern" acknowledges the time it will take to see the future of present actions. Her narration then configures a collective temporality capable of action and sustained by belief in these futures.

The vines Kata plants in the passage above are intended to grow over the charred grounds and summerhouse facade left by a fire that ignites one night while the family is out dancing. When warning bells sound and the family rushes with the rest of the town to put out the flames in the vineyard surrounding their house, Ági would have stayed behind at the establishment had it not been for Kata and Isti's impetus:

> sie[Ági] hielt sich weiter fest an einer Stuhllehne und sagte, daß sie lieber bleiben wolle, lieber bleiben und warten, am Wasser sitzen, bis es vorbei, bis es ausgestanden war, unter diesem grünen Licht, das jetzt greller leuchtete, aber Isti zog sie an beiden Händen über den Kies, über die Holzplatten, hinaus aus dem Lokal, den Weg hoch, und ich drückte meine flachen Hände auf Ágis Rücken und schob sie, weil ich glaubte, so würde sie leichter, schneller laufen, und weiter oben, hinter den letzten hohen Bäumen, dort, wo der Weg hoch in die Hügel führt, konnten wir ein Licht sehen…Isti ließ Ágis Hände los, und Ági legte sie auf ihre Lippen, und so standen wir, bis Ági ihre Hände fallen ließ und sagte, schnell, gehen wir.[43]

The push and pull of subjects through this scene describes a moment of collective action motivated both by relationships among the figures and Kata's narrative duration. Ági, previously instrumental in carrying Isti to the docks despite his resistance to acknowledge his grandmother's

[42] Ibid., 284.
[43] Ibid., 214.

departure, now displays a similar childish refusal to join the rest of her family and the town to save her burning home. Refusing to let Ági passively ignore a crucial moment, Isti pulls her toward the fire. Working in tandem with her brother, Kata both pushes Ági's back and contracts her narration of the scene into short clauses that bring Ági from shore to hilltop in the same breath: "über den Kies, über die Holzplatten, hinaus aus dem Lokal, den Weg hoch."[44] When another moment of stasis is reached as the three stand aghast before the flames on the top of the hill, Ági takes up the speed suggested formally by Kata's punctuated narration in her own articulation that prompts further movement: "so standen wir, bis Ági ihre Hände fallen ließ und sagte, schnell, gehen wir." Figures and narration thus move and are moved in alternation. This occurs thematically through their actions and verbal exchanges and formally through narrative duration. Furthermore, Kata's narration, both constitutive of and respondent to the non-canonical events by way of which it moves, displays the power of narration to establish collective temporalities that work in tandem with its narrating and focalized subjects.

On the docks, Isti's reluctance to participate in his grandmother's departure turns into a wholehearted embrace of his connection to her enabled through physical transposition by Ági as well as Kata's emphatic narrative duration. On the scene of the fire, Ági's initial desire to avoid seeing her home in flames transforms into urgent pragmatic action with the help of Isti and Kata's push as well as Kata's condensed narrative duration. Thus enabled by Kata and Isti, Ági joins her family and the townspeople at the house to take quick command of the situation she had previously wanted to ignore. Exchanging gestural cues with Kálmán she then screams orders to drench the flames: "Im Haus fielen Holz und Putz und Steine von der Decke, und Ági gab meinem Vater Zeichen, und er gab ihr Zeichen, und dann schrie Ági den Männern aus dem Dorf Befehle zu, als könne sie nichts besser als Befehle schreien, als habe sie immer schon das getan

[44] Ibid., 214.

und nichts anderes."[45] The interplay of figures, what they say, what they do, and Kata's narration—a doing in the saying—enables the figures to collectively move their storyworld to a crucial point of action. The subjectivity working in tandem with the temporal structures created by Kata's narrative duration brings the figures of the storyworld together to rescue their home.

This moment thematically forecasts the stakes of Kata's narrative ability to configure subjects in future-oriented temporal structures. In the rumor carried to the docks, not a house, but a body is burning. Recognizing this rumor as true is a matter of seeing both a death and the possibility of subjective resistance, yet at present, only Mihály and Virág believe it.[46] Despite Ági, Míhály, and Virág's various positions on the rumor and its implications, Kata formally posits a coming subjectivity that could react in tandem to the burning body as it did the burning house. By creating a formal link via Virág's proposition, Kata narrates a historical present that links a past-present age formed by shared beliefs about the self-immolation to a future-present age of collective action. As Kata's narration weaves through the subjects of the storyworld, Kata constructs collective temporalities that bring figures together for action in times of need.

Zsuzsa Bánk's novel *Der Schwimmer* ends shortly after a suppression so violent it has the figures questioning whether the rumors of protest they hear wash ashore at the docks are fact or fiction. Published in 2002, Bánk's work returns readers to a moment when the happy ending that would become 1989 was not yet certain. Here we can see the implications of narrating

[45] Ibid., 214-5.

[46] Though unnamed in the novel, Jan Palach, a 21-year old philosophy student at Charles University in Prague, was one of a group of students who made a pact to protest the 1968 Soviet invasion and occupation of Czechoslovakia. As described in letters written shortly before his act, Palach drew straws and volunteered to begin what would become a series of human torches if his demands for the reinstatement of free speech were not met. See Eva Kantůrková, "On the Ethics of Palach's Deed," *Goodbye, Samizdat: Twenty Years of Czechoslovak Underground Writing.* Eds. Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz. With a Forward by Timothy Garten Ash. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1992. Print. 176. Other self-immolations would follow in the wake of Palach's, though their exact relation to Palach's act is disputed. In addition to Palach, only Jan Zajíc's self-immolation on February 25, 1969 has been publicly commemorated in the Czech Republic. See http://www.janpalach.cz/en/default/jan-palach/tradice. (Accessed February 18, 2014).

Togetherness (in Heller's historical sense) in a postcommunist present. Despite public claims that a particular type of social experience has disappeared with the end of real existing socialism and industrial factory labor, [47] Bánk's novel brings readers back to a future not yet past and, by positing it in the present, orients readers through various attitudes about a past-present age of the history of real existing socialism to recognize the necessity of action in the historical present. Such action would make a future-present age worth living. Bánk's novel does not direct attention to real existing socialism in the People's Republic of Hungary in order to mourn the postcommunist absence of collective labor, but rather points toward the ethical possibilities of narration to form postcommunist collectivities in time. When Kata reforges Virag's statement to condition a future-present age, she acknowledges the passage of time necessary to manifest Togetherness and formally begins working toward it. Although past history has proven the dangers of real existing socialism, my reading of *Der Schwimmer* seeks to demonstrate how readers might use the aesthetic dimensions of postcommunist culture that reflects on this history to develop forms of utopian thought oriented toward better futures.

[47] In *Requiem for Communism*, Charity Scribner analyzes aesthetic productions from former communist countries to investigate a dimension of postcommunist culture that historical analyses of socialist legacies tend to overlook. Noting a marked nostalgia for the social experience made possible by collective forms of labor, Scribner focuses on "key texts, artworks, and films which convey the currents of mourning and melancholia that are stirring both sides of Europe today." I share Scribner's interest in evaluating the possibilities of returning to texts concerned with experiences under communism, but wish to push her inquiry of "when…authentic attachment to the past wend[s] into nostalgia" to consider the future-oriented temporal structures in postcommunist culure as well. See *Requiem for Communism*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003. Print. 10.

CHAPTER THREE

SEEING FUTURES PRESENT: CONFIGURING TEMPORALITIES IN TERÉZIA MORA'S *ALLE TAGE* (2004)

> Habe ich nicht manchmal daran gedacht, dass ich, in dem ich die eine Nuance der anderen vorziehe, nachhaltigen oder kurzzeitigen Einfluss auf den Gang der Welt nehmen könnte? Zum Beispiel, in dem ich den Satz nie beende. Einen UNENDLICHEN SATZ sprechen, das wäre gut, aber ist das nicht zu viel für einen einzelnen Menschen?[1]

Terézia Mora's novel *Alle Tage*, published in 2004, follows Abel Nema, a migrating student and translator from an unnamed eastern European town[2], as he travels to and around another unnamed city resembling East Berlin at the turn of the twenty-first century. Though wars and shifting states in (likewise unnamed) former Yugoslavia as well as forceful currents of racism and violence against racialized populations in Germany are deeply significant to Abel's life and relationships, readers must exert considerable effort to recognize them and locate them in the temporality of the novel. Abel and the figures he meets tend to refer to historical events and political tensions obliquely, either in terms of family histories, heated political disputes, or in abbreviated reports from news media that are woven into the storyworld narration. Narrative focalization in the novel moves among a homodiegetic, not quite omniscient narrator to these figures and back to articulate the poles of the storyworld as it weaves figures and history together.

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[1] Terézia Mora, *Alle Tage*. Munich: Luchterhand, 2004. Print. 404.

[2]Names and identities are deeply polarized issues in public, scholarly and literary discourses regarding this region and its history. I take my cues from David Williams' preference for the lowercase term, "eastern Europe," despite its resonance with Cold War binaries that imagine eastern Europe as the deficient partner of a technologically and socially advanced Western Europe. Following Croatian-born author Dubravka Ugrešić, Williams uses the "less contentious" term "in the hope of signifying that 'eastern Europe' is[…]an (approximate) geographical appellation." See *Writing Postcommunism: Towards a Literature of the East European Ruins.* New York: Palgrave, 2013. Print. 20-4. Here 24. For a discussion of the differences among *Mitteleuropa*, Central Europe, Eastern Europe, and East-Central Europe, see John Neubauer. "What's in a Name? *Mitteleuropa*, Central Europe, Eastern Europe, East-Central Europe." *Kakanien Revisited*. Web. 07 May 2003 <http://www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/theorie/JNeubauer1.pdf> Accessed 23 June 2014.

Mora's choice of a former subject of Yugoslavia as protagonist has led Brigid Haines to use *Alle Tage* to mark an "eastern turn" in contemporary German-language literature. According to Haines, an emerging body of work by authors such as Saša Stanišić, Wladimir Kaminer, Ilija Trojanow, Terézia Mora and others born in former Yugoslavia and the countries of the former Soviet bloc shows "that for more than 40 years these diverse countries[…]shared a common history."[3] In Haines' account, these works complement the Turkish turn in contemporary German literature that opens static notions of national identity to the multiplicity of changing perspectives and historical experiences constituting Germany through its literary productions.[4] Haines defines the stylistic qualities of these works through both a set of formal strategies that include an implicitly projected collective subject and a "new readability," as well as themes that reflect the imperial past of Soviet domination and the circulation of national political subjects in a globalizing world.[5] The collective "we" in Haines' reading of these novels is an autobiographical subject united in affects of fear and experiences of collective domination that evidence a longing for a desired Europe that stood in contrast to the real existing socialism of the Soviet bloc. She writes,

> [T]his literature, which tends to be autobiographically based, implicitly projects a collective subject, a 'we' formed by experience in the eastern bloc and united by memories of that time. This is usually not a nostalgic, but a reluctant collectivity. As the Croatian author Slavenka Drakulic puts it, '"We" means fear, resignation,

[3] See "The Eastern Turn in Contemporary German, Swiss and Austrian Literature" *Debatte: Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe.* 16, 2 (August 2008): 135-149. Print. 136 fn 3.

[4] See Leslie A. Adelson's groundbreaking *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Towards a New Critical Grammar of Migration.* New York: Palgrave, 2005. Print. Adelson shows how the "literature of Turkish migration," not necessarily written only by writers who have migrated to Germany, performs imaginative labor that shifts Eurocentric frames of reference to stylistically new, textually specific centers of reference in which "the reworking of cultural matter from which historical narrative is fashioned and forged" occurs (13-4). This imaginative labor both makes previously unrecognized cultural experiences historically accessible and points toward shared future histories.

[5] The new readability, or "neue Lesbarkeit," refers to an accessible prose style that resembles story-telling. Stuart Taberner's discussion of German literature in *German Literature of the 1990s and Beyond: Normalization and the Berlin Republic.* Rochester: Camden House, 2005. Print. and Helmut Gollner's discussion of Austrian literature in *Die Wahrheit lügen. Die Renaissance des Erzählens in der jungen österreichischen Literatur*. Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2005. Print. The new readability does not describe Mora's intricate prose in *Alle Tage*.

> submissiveness, a warm crowd and somebody else deciding your destiny. […] a common denominator is still discernible, and still connects us all, often against our will. It is not only our communist past, but also the way we would like to escape from it, the direction in which we want to go. It's our longing for Europe and all that it stands for. Or, rather, what we imagine Europe stands for. [6]

The growing concern with historical experience in the former eastern Bloc as it becomes visible through the eastern turn in contemporary German-language literature calls attention to changes in the notion of Europe after 1989. These literary works call attention to subjectivities that seem to be erased by political discourses concerned with mapping teleologies of postcommunist transition onto countries that lay behind the Iron Curtain. Furthermore, as Drakulic's quotation suggests, the notion of collectivity itself has been compromised by the collectives formed under real existing socialism due to the erasure of individual difference within a faceless mass. Yet in Mora's novel, a new form of subjectivity appears. In my account, this subjectivity does not elide narrating subjects, but rather moves among them, connecting them across temporal structures in which they cannot collapse into a single identity. As grammatical subjectivity articulates collectivities in narration, it orients readers through narrative form to open a future that seems to have collapsed into a present moment in which collectivity has failed. The collective subjectivity that results—and interpellates readers into the postcommunist history articulated in storyworlds of which they become a part—moves beyond mere longing to form new collectives. These collectives do not seek an escape from the real existing socialist past by consigning it to the inert cultural structures of Heller's historical past that no longer influence the present, but rather return to this past through subjectivities that connect it with a present of Togetherness. Whereas Haines' focus on memories of experiences with real existing socialism that eastern European authors bring to a new readership in the West leads her to read *Alle Tage* as a novel that demonstrates the trauma and shame of Abel's migration that rob him of his ability to use his

[6] Haines, 138.

linguistic genius effectively, I focus instead on the social manner in which Abel becomes visible.[7] This exceeds the mere representation of traumatic experience to actively configure collectives in narration.

The form of collective narration that Mora favors in this novel configures the past as a past-present age, Agnes Heller's term for a subjective temporal orientation that reconstructs selected elements of the past in view of a collective future. Favoring the form of requests, demands, and statements articulated in imperative and subjunctive moods, Mora's literary figures establish temporalities according to a range of orientations toward an imagined future. As they articulate varying versions of the past and various visions for the future, they thematically come to terms with their present. While so doing, they configure temporality in a collective subjectivity that makes futurity visible by interpellating readers into the novel's form of narration, as I will show. Mora's formal technique in this novel employs a variety of literary strategies to posit multiple temporal layers of both virtual and actual events and uses pronouns that refer simultaneously to readers and storyworld figures. Readers are thereby located both in present moments narrated anachronistically and by textual cues that establish subjective centers of reference in storyworld figures. Narration focalized through multiple figures undoes notions of linear or sequential temporality, while weaving figures together across time. This combines storyworld participants through grammatical subjectivities that do not efface their individual difference. Piecing together stories narrated in this vein against a postcommunist landscape otherwise marked by supposed economic success and social disintegration is a matter of learning to read the historical locations of these figures through the shifting deictic relationships they have

[7] Haines notes the critical import of Mora's novel as a reminder of the Yugoslav wars, but argues that this world historical conflict dictates his identity too. She writes "Abel Nema, traumatized by events in Yugoslavia, cannot profit from his unusual gift of being able to absorb languages, for he has nothing to say. His main feeling is shame." 141. In my reading of the novel, the shifts in narrating subjects do allow Abel to have a voice, and formally resist collapsing his narration into any identity determined completely by traumatic events.

to one another and their world. The collectivity that results uses a story about a seemingly futureless present moment of postcommunist transition to allow a future to emerge in narration. The futurity of this moment requires readers to reflect on political postcommunism not as a simple teleology that progresses toward capitalist liberal democracy, but rather as a multiplicity of particular attitudes toward the future through which alternative futures emerge. Mora's postcommunist novel weaves together multiple stories that share the postcommunist present through subjective temporalities formally interrelated through stylistically new ways of shifting among grammatical subjects. The storyworld that results transforms readers' attitudes toward political postcommunism to make them construct multiple futures through narrative form. This example of postcommunist literature therefore critiques discourses about postcommunist transition to a known political future by rewriting them in a collective form of narration that opens a supposedly known future to additional virtual futures, too.

The narrative temporality of Mora's novel moves polychronically through scenes that readers are required to navigate by way of deictic markers[8] that help them work out multiple temporal sequences. These temporalities are not merely a matter of simultaneous but different chronologies that accrue to separate characters who share the storyworld. Instead, the temporalities involve constructing mental models of events that occur as actual and virtual in the storyworld and in the realm of possibilities it suggests. This polychronic narration, postclassical narratologist David Herman's term for "narratives that order events in a fuzzy or indeterminate way," relates temporal layers and modes in part by means of textual cues that are not temporal.[9]

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[8] In the field of linguistics, deictic markers are linguistic elements that locate words and expressions in relation to specific contexts of production. David Herman develops the term in postclassical narratology in his work on "contextual anchoring" which outlines "the process whereby a narrative, in a more or less explicit and reflexive way, asks its interpreters to search for analogies between the representations contained within these two classes of mental models [of storyworlds and of the worlds in which readers read]." Ibid., 331.

[9] Herman, *Story Logic*, 212. In indeterminate temporalities, events can only be inexactly temporally located with respect to one another within narration. As compared to anachronic narration, polychronic narration emphasizes the

These non-temporal markers that readers must use to ascertain the relative temporal locations of storyworld figures are especially apparent in the narrative form. As a not-quite omniscient, first-person plural homodiegetic narrator shifts suddenly to focalization through individual figures, it drastically changes and mixes perspectives mid-sentence. Unlike other styles of focalization that move among focalizors to distinguish a narrator from other characters who focalize narration, Mora's narrative style blurs boundaries between an almost omniscient narrator whose omniscience does not claim absolute knowledge of the storyworld, and focalizors who have the narrating capacity to intervene in how the text is narrated. In this chapter, I will analyze how this new style of narration posits textual futures thematically and articulates them formally to show how Mora's novel engages readers to construct a future-present age that allows them to critique the postcommunist moment presented in the novel.

Articulations of and about the future in *Alle Tage* demonstrate the descriptive insufficiency of teleological notions of linear development associated with political discourses about postcommunist transition. When considered through a Cold War perspective that divides the globe into two competing East and West powers or three worlds, postcommunism refers to a political transition from real existing socialism to western-style liberal democracy perceived as the end-goal of sociopolitical development in history.[10] Mora's novel, however, brings the multiple possibilities of collective subjectivities and histories to the fore. Postcommunism as a

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multiplicity of perspectives that may or may not cohere in a storyworld, and demonstrates epistemic limits to the act of narration itself. For a more thorough discussion, see Herman's sixth chapter on "Temporalities" in *Story Logic*, 211-261.

[10] Francis Fukuyama's 1989 article "The End of History?" has become representative of discourses claiming the end of European communism as a victory of western-style liberal democracy. Though Fukuyama's argument has largely been discredited, especially in academic circles, public dismissal of state-sponsored communism due to the failure of communist dictatorships still tends to conflate political and social alternatives with neoliberal visions of reality. Boris Buden has critiqued the sociological discourse of postcommunist transition as a "transitology" that reproduces an Enlightenment discourse of education, which unfortunately fixes subjects of formerly communist states into the position of immature political subjects. Despite these subjects' organization of successful revolutions against communist dictatorships, the discourse casts them as children who must be schooled in the ways of democracy. See Buden's chapter, "Als die Freiheit Kinder brauchte," in *Zone des Übergangs. Vom Ende des Postkommunismus*. Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 2009. Print. 34-52.

literary form thereby reconfigures legacies of the real existing socialist past to make former political subjects visible and open points of postcommunist critique. The historical past of the years after 1989 is articulated in Mora's novel only as a past-present age, with the Yugoslav wars in the background and Western economic prosperity in the fore. In this atmosphere, the possibility of collectively articulating a future-present age seems a long way off. Yet in the course of Abel's story, a dynamic postcommunist subjectivity emerges that is capable of narrating a future-oriented history. This narration does not overlook the continued presence of pasts affected by real existing socialism, but neither does this narration merely recollect those pasts. As this chapter will demonstrate, Mora's formal mode of narration interpellates readers into a literary subjectivity through which they actively reconstruct postcommunist transition by collectively imagining futures through former political subjects of real existing socialist states that political postcommunist discourses forget.

I.1 Terézia Mora's Alle Tage *(2004)*

Alle Tage, Terézia Mora's first novel, appeared in 2004, and confirmed the author's continuing success in Germany after having first attracted critical acclaim for short stories collected in *Seltsame Materie* (1999). Born in Sopron, Hungary in 1971, Mora grew up in a bilingual Hungarian and German household in the village of Petőháza and moved first to Budapest, where she studied Hungarian and German literature, and then to Berlin in 1990, where she completed a master's degree in Hungarian literature and theater at Humboldt University in 1995. Before becoming known for her literary prose, Mora had sought a career in theater and film and worked as a film production assistant while taking courses at the German Film and Theater Academy in Berlin and completing a screenplay degree. Mora's literary career began with "Durst," a short story for which she was awarded the 1997 Open-Mike Prize for Literature,

sponsored by the Berliner LiteraturWERKstatt. In 1999, another short story, "Der Fall Ophelia," was awarded the Ingeborg Bachmann Prize, and Mora published both works later that year in a collection of ten stories titled *Seltsame Materie*, which marked her literary debut in print. To name just a few of her prestigious awards, Mora has received the Adelbert von Chamisso Prize (2009), the Jane Scatcherd Translation Prize (2002), the Franz Nabl Prize (2007) and most recently the German Book Prize (2013). In addition to *Seltsame Materie* and *Alle Tage*, Mora has published the first two installments of what will be a trilogy of novels—*Der einzige Mann auf dem Kontinent* (2009) and *Das Ungeheuer* (2013)—as well as a selection of award-winning theater, radio, screenplays and German translations of Hungarian texts by Péter Esterházy, István Örkény, Péter Zilahy and Lajos Parti Nagy.

Alle Tage recounts Abel Nema's passage from student through multilingual genius to linguistically challenged stepfather with narration that requires readers to negotiate the novel's proleptic, analeptic, and indeterminate temporalities[11] in a multilayered configuration of relationships linking the figures around Abel over thirteen years in the city of B. Abel leaves his hometown of S. in 1990 after finishing his secondary degree (*Abitur*) and being painfully rejected by a childhood lover, Ilia B., and shortly before he can be drafted into the army.[12] On

[11] In classical narratology, analeptic and proleptic narration are Gérard Genette's terms for describing how the order in which events are narrated in a story (narrative order) differs with respect to their chronological order. Analepsis refers to leaps backward in time and prolepsis to leaps forward in time. David Herman elaborates these terms in his postclassical account to include "fuzzy temporal ordering," or narration in which events cannot be exactly located in time or might be located at multiple points in time. See Herman's chapter, "Temporalities," in *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. Nebraska: Lincoln UP, 2002. Print. 211-261. Here 220.

[12] Abel's departure, not explicitly stated in the novel, may be inferred from other textual cues. This occurs in the form of what begins as a repetition of history that brackets his childhood lover's rejection and departure: "Dieses letzte Jahr hatte begonnen wie die Jahre zuvor. Man eröffnete mit Mitteilungen über Preiserhöhungen, denen über die nächsten Monate weitere folgten. Anfang April gab es erste Proteste, wenn auch nicht hier. Man munkelte, wie schon seit Jahren, über eine latente Krise im Land, wenn auch nicht hier. Das Identitätsbewusstsein der Minderheiten regte sich. Ilia und Abel regten sich nicht[…]Das Nächste ist, dass Herbst ist, und Abel flieht. Kurz nach diesem letzten Spaziergang brachen Kämpfe aus, als hätte man nur darauf gewartet, dass endlich Ferien sind" (29-30). The fighting that breaks out shortly after Abel leaves refers to the multiple assaults occurring across the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in conjunction with the first democratic-style federal elections that began in Slovenia and Slobodan Milošević's consolidation of military power after his election to presidency in Serbia in

his way to B., where Abel's mother suggests he stay with a now established, former emigrant from their town, Tibor B., Abel is hospitalized after a gas leak. In the hospital, he wakes up emptied of past and future, and having acquired instead a wondrous capacity for language: "alles, was bis dahin eine Rolle gespielt hatte, das Gewusel von Erinnerung und Projektion, Vergangenheit und Zukunft, das die Gänge verstopfte und in den Zimmern lärmte, irgendwo verstaut war, in geheimen Wandschränken, und er, nun leer, bereit zur Aufnahme einer einzigen Art von Wissen: von Sprache. Dies ist das Wunder, das Abel Nema widerfahren ist."[13] This wondrous skill conditions Abel's further development in the novel—from using Tibor B.'s credence and funding to pursue studies in a language laboratory and a dissertation in comparative linguistics, to tutoring Omar, who will become his stepchild, to translating stories—until a drug-induced delirium leaves him merely his first language in place of the previous ten that he had seemed to master.

The relationship most obviously structuring the novel involves Abel, Mercedes (Tibor B.'s second wife), and Omar (Mercedes' illegitimate child from a relationship before Tibor B.). Tibor B., the professor and former emigrant from S. who helps Abel get his footing upon arrival, dies several years after Abel comes to Berlin, and Abel comes to occupy his position as Mercedes' husband. First Abel does so formally by helping Mercedes in Tibor's name when she is hit by a taxi in which Abel is riding. Later this role manifests narratologically when Mercedes' family interpellates both readers and Abel through forms of second-person address, and eventually the legal status Abel's role as husband affords becomes officially recognized in a

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1989. For a chronology of events associated with the Yugoslav wars from their legal presentation at Milošević's trial (and the multitude of cases compiled therein), see Timothy William Waters, ed. *The Miloševic Trial: An Autopsy*. New York: Oxford UP, 2013. Print. 491-512. Waters' remarkable edition also includes multiple scholarly and professional perspectives on the trial, both as a historical event and with respect to its impact on International Crime Law.

[13] Mora, 75.

Scheinehe. Marriage with Mercedes offers Abel the residential security his expired passport had lacked. The story is hardly told in such a clear manner, however, and the novel engages readers in tracking the various events that bring, and keep, Mercedes and Abel together. As historical references in the story thicken through a narrative configuration that brings a young Roma boy into Abel and Mercedes' relationship by way of Omar, Mora's novel articulates a temporal structure oriented toward the future through what I will term grammatical subjectivity.

I.2 Form of Alle Tage

Alle Tage begins with a brief, italicized preface in which unnamed homodiegetic narration shifts among first-person plural (*wir*) and singular (*ich*) pronouns to address a second-person subject using the ambiguously singular and plural formal pronoun (*Sie*) about the contemporary marketability of miracles, especially stories coming from "die lateinischen Länder[…]Gutes altes Babylon[...]Transsylvanien [und] Der Balkan etcetera." [14] The first section of the novel, titled "O. JETZT" and subtitled "*Wochenende*," opens onto a present time of narration in which Abel hangs from scaffolding in a playground next to a train station in the eastern part of a city. The narration moves from a time and place described as here and now by way of a first-person collective subject—"Nennen wir die Zeit *jetzt*, nennen wir den Ort *hier*. Beschreiben wir beides wie folgt."[15]—through the empty and dilapidated structures of "ein östlicherer Bezirk" of an unnamed city recognizable through its repurposed factories and train

[14] Ibid., 5.
[15] Nathan Taylor takes up the narrator's self-reflexive location of the present moment of narration to characterize Mora's aesthetic strategy as a "Poetik des *hic et nunc*." According to Taylor, the "nennen wir" works in tandem with Mora's avoidance of specific place names and detailed narration to create a new sort of "deiktischer Realismus." Textual ambiguity and indexical reference in *Alle Tage* construct present-ness (*Gegenwärtigkeit*) by continually reasserting multiple present moments instead of belatedly representing a present moment that, once represented, is already past. See "Am Nullpunkt des Realismus: Terézia Moras Poetik des *hic et nunc*." ***Poetiken der Gegenwart: Deutschsprachige Romane nach 2000.*** Eds. Silke Horstkotte and Leonhard Herrmann. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013. 11-28. Print.

tracks as (former) East Berlin.[16] Then narration focalized through Abel's wife, Mercedes, returns to a past moment when the two were marrying, and the episodes that comprise the rest of the novel relate a more distant past through events leading up to Abel's arrival in Berlin and the figures that he meets as he establishes a life there.

After the italicized preface, the novel is divided into ten sections: eight that proceed chronologically from zero to seven, then a chapter titled "Zentrum *Delirium*" with no numerical title, followed by the last chapter, "O. Ausgang *Verwandlung*." Shortly before the end of the novel, the narration proceeds toward the future from the moment when workers unbind Abel from the park scaffolding. In the course of narration, the reader gradually learns that Abel was born in a country that has since broken into three to five new states, that he grew up in a town called S., that his father left when Abel was twelve years old but his mother, a member of an ethnic minority, is denied citizenship when the country dissolves, stayed, and that Abel leaves his hometown of S. when he is nineteen, narrowly avoiding being drafted into the army. Having then left the town of his birth, Abel first visits one of his father's previous lovers, Bora, and eventually travels to B. on his mother's suggestion. Abel then begins establishing a life in B. with the help of Tibor B., a professor his mother knew from S.

Although Abel's family background is crucial to the story in ways that I will further detail, most of the novel focuses on his travels in and around B. and the impressions he makes on the people he meets. Interjections resembling editorial remarks and homodiegetic meta-

[16] Mora, 9. Scholarship on *Alle Tage* usually reads the abbreviation B. as a reference to Berlin, while also noting the stylistic effect of the absence of proper names in general. Rene Kegelmann, for example, discusses Abel's passage as a foreigner through cultural milieux to which Abel, as compared to the other figures, never belongs. In Kegelmann's account, the unnamed locations emphasize the symbolic-metaphoric register of the text, which lends the city an exemplary quality and brings existential aspects of Abel's predicament to the fore: "Viel mehr handelt es sich bei der Stadt B. um eine exemplarische moderne Großstadt, die mit dem Phänomen von Migration konfrontiert ist." See "Ohne Ort: Zur Stadtkonzeption in Terézia Moras *Alle Tage*." *Metropolen als Ort der Begegnung und Isolation: Interkulturelle Perspektiven auf den urbanen Raum als Sujet in Literatur und Film*. Eds. Ernest W. B. Hess-Lüttich et al. Frankfurt a/M: Peter Lang, 2011. 415-424. Print. Here 418.

commentary focalized through a variety of figures often explicitly position readers in both the indeterminate temporality[17] of the events recalled, as well as a future vantage point from which the story is recounted. The multiplicity of narrating voices has compelled some scholars to refer to the polyphonic qualities of the narration as it constructs Abel's identity from a variety of perspectives.[18] These readings tend to focus on Abel's status as an instrumentalized space for the projection of fantasies by other figures and conclude that Abel's inability to define himself authentically demonstrates the failed integration of migrants into mainstream postcommunist society.[19] While these social factors are indeed important, this chapter investigates instead how the configuration of temporalities in the novel by specifically narrative means does result in forms of collective subjectivity. These collective subjects are formed in narration and not by plot structures or figural motifs alone. A specific style of narrative focalization in Mora's novel works on the border between virtual and actual realms in the storyworld, and this mode of

[17] Indeterminate temporalities refer to events that cannot be exactly located with respect to other events in storyworld time. These sequences of events "necessarily appear in time but cannot be located at some definite point along a chain of causes and effects that unfolds linearly in time." This indeterminancy of 'before' and 'after' can also result in a "nonsingular *now*" or storyworld temporalities that operate via analogical, instead of chronological, laws. See Herman, 211-261. Here 257.

[18] Ezster Probszt takes up an opening image of a choir in the novel and classical narratologist Gérard Genette's notion of polymodality to compare the novel's narration to the "constant modulations" of a musical work moving among zero-degree, internal, and external focalization. Probszt argues that meaning is a process of constructing identity and Abel, the locus of this process, is a point in relation to which the figures around him differentiate their own identities. The chorus of voices that constitutes the narration is driven in turn by the incoherence of Abel's identity. See "Identitäts(re)konstruktion im Namen des Vaters und des Sohnes: Terézia Moras *Alle Tage.*" *Be-Deutung und Identität. Zur Konstruktion der Identität in Werken von Agota Kristof und Terézia Mora.* Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2012. 113-136. Print. Here 114. Christian Sieg describes the narration as a "Klangteppich" through which readers construct Abel's story. Readers cannot always locate specific voices within the storyworld time, resulting in a disorienting reading experience that mimics migration. See Christian Sieg, "Deterritorialisierte Räume. Katharina Hackers "Die Halbenichtse" und Terézia Moras "Alle Tage" im Spiegel des Globalisierungsdiskurses." *Weimarer Beiträge* 57.1 (2011): 36-56. Print. Here 51. Though Probszt and Sieg argue insightfully about the form of narration and its thematic configuration of social networks, I seek to trace the influence these networks facilitate as specific linguistic elements circulate among multiple figures, not only with respect to Abel.

[19] Anke Biendarra reads *Alle Tage* as part of a body of "postnational" globalized literature in which "writing and translation are responses to living in a time when the boundaries between and within national cultures are becoming ever more fluid and porous" (48). For Biendarra, Abel's existence as a "transnational migrant" produces an empty social self that integrates "only at the expense of physical integrity, subjectivity, and agency" (57). Anke S. Biendarra, "Terézia Mora, *Alle Tage*: Transnational Traumas." *Emerging German-Language Novelists of the Twenty-First Century*. Eds. Lyn Marven and Stuart Taberner. Rochester: Camden House, 2011. 46-61. Print.

focalization is pointedly temporalized in its structure. In the course of the narrative, events become redefined as they are focalized through various figures, thus locating readers increasingly precisely within seemingly indeterminate temporalities and circumlocuted geographies.[20] Even when narration is not attributed to a particular figure, it bears stylistic and semantic markers of a multiplicity of narrating subjects at varying times. These specific voices become recognizable in italicized phrases for which single figures come to be known in the course of the novel. The narrative thereby implicates readers in a process of deictic orientation and historical reconstruction from the standpoint of Àgnes Heller's Togetherness.

Recalling Heller's terminology for the ethical reconstruction of history as a collective project, Togetherness is the standpoint from which this reconstruction takes place. This reconstruction of history involves reconstructing past history as a past-present age that is meaningful for readers' orientation in the present. Readers must use a variety of textual cues that involve interpreting the multiple temporalities of the storyworld characters relative to one another. The past-present age thus constructed reveals a multiplicity of orientations that result from past events and orient the characters toward different possible futures. Readers use pronominal markers to trace the temporalities as they relate to one another in the storyworld. The shifts among characters and the narrating subject make the location of the present moment the story produces difficult to parse from events internal to the storyworld and its references to an extraliterary world in which the text is produced. The first-, second- and third- forms of narration refer to characters in the storyworld and, as I will show, to readers, too. This style of narration articulates a multiplicity of thematic futures and pasts that make fixing a single future

[20] Circumlocation is Paul Buchholz' term for the text's resistance to positing overly determinate signifiers that have since become symbolic of this time. Buchholz marks a common stylistic feature in twenty-first century literature in which "narrative intrigue is fueled by the continual and nimble avoidance of any proper place-names." See "Bordering on Names: Strategies of Mapping in the Prose of Terézia Mora and Peter Handke." *Transit* 7,1 (2011): 1. Web.

toward which the narration is necessarily headed impossible. Instead, readers derive meaning from Mora's story about postcommunist transition to reconstruct it as a past-present age influencing their attitudes in the extraliterary world. As the story orients them through past and present moments that also play a role in their history, they are involved through uses of the second-person pronoun in the collective literary subjectivity through which they reconstruct the novel's story about Cold War history together.

II. Futures beyond Crisis

The figures in *Alle Tage* are denied social mobility resulting in a feeling perhaps best expressed in a statement about the future formulated by Kinga, the owner of a living community unofficially occupying an apartment (a squat) in which Abel will stay, as follows: "Wir leben hier in einer Enklave, sagte Kinga. Was folgt daraus? Daraus folgt zum einen, dass alles *jetzt* ist. Aussagen, die Zukunft betreffend, können zwar gemacht werden, aber das ist auch nicht mehr als ein Kaffeebohnenorakel."[21] Kinga, an anarchist who ran an underground salon in Berlin during the 1980s, relates her frustration with a present in which the possibility of actualizing future desires seems less feasible than ever. This encompassing present moment makes the future seem like a fantasy entirely subject to chance. The freelance musicians with whom she speaks, some of whom come from Abel's former country, seem about as able to steer their future as a fortune has the chance to come true. Other characters have different orientations toward futures, however, demonstrating thematically the multiplicity of futures that are possible. Depending on a character's relation to the narrating subject, some of these figures are better able to steer their future than others.

[21] Mora, *Alle* Tage, 163.

The range of orientations toward futures and future possibilities that characters display becomes most visible in set of passages titled "Dazwischen: *Krisen*." In this part of the novel, a crisis occurs in which Abel's soon-to-be wife Mercedes recovers from a broken ankle after having been accidentally hit by a distracted taxi driver. When she returns from the hospital, Mercedes is visited by friends and family who share a present moment, but display different attitudes and orientations as they articulate future plans. The futures they discuss are formed through subjunctive, indicative and imperative statements that work in tandem with the characters' needs and desires to formulate futures and future possibilities. The needs and desires suggesting futures that may occur are not articulated in temporal tenses, but rather as verbal moods that take the form of promises and requests. The figures that articulate these futures are also marked by semantic elements that associate them with economic and social issues spurred by postcommunist transition. Omar, Mercedes' son and Abel's student of Russian and then French, has a unique status in the group of figures that come together. Whereas Erik, a figure of Western modernization, declares a present moment dependent on future crisis and Mercedes must find a way to see the future beyond her present crisis, Omar requests that a future involving Abel occur. Omar's desire, it will turn out, is the future that is not only possible, but also realized in the storyworld.

II.1 Erik: Future Crisis, Present Success

Erik, a colleague of Mercedes' who has recently founded a publishing house in B., makes bold statements about future possibilities based on economic prosperity at the end of the 1990s. A character that bears an unwavering faith in economic progress, Erik embodies qualities associated with Western modernism and its legacies that caricature the supposed triumph of

capitalist liberal democracy after 1989. Erik's entrance to Mercedes' apartment, for example, is described as follows:

> Erik, wenn er laut wie ein D-Zug einfährt, um zu verkünden:
> Nie gab es weniger Grund, den Mut sinken zu lassen! Wir strotzen vor Kraft! Am Ende der neunziger Jahre prosperieren wir wie noch nie zuvor! Wahrscheinlich wird das nicht länger als bis zu drei Jahre dauern, dann wird die Blase platzen, und es wird, Zitat, *ein Blutbad geben*, aber bis dahin! Streit gibt es höchstens darüber, ob wir B. bombardieren sollten oder nicht. Jeder, der etwas auf sich hält, ist dafür, wie steht's mit dir?[22]

Erik's appearance on the scene, *wie ein D-Zug*, recalls the interruption of modern industrialization associated with the appearance of trains in rural Germany in the nineteenth century. As though the embodiment of modernity and unavoidable progress, Erik proclaims an economically promising future through bold exclamations that echo the advertisements Abel had first seen upon entering Berlin: "Reklamen, allgegenwärtige Versprechungen. Christus ist mit dir! Besuchen Sie unsere Sprachkurse! Anwälte und Zahnkorrekturen helfen Ihnen bei Ihren Problemen!"[23] Erik's statements about what collective subjects should do and feel are as superficial and persistent as the impersonal, exclaimed promises and superficial solace the advertisements attempt. For Erik, his company's current success is the reason not to worry about what follows the present moment. The company is doing well, so "we" are beaming with pride (*strotzen vor Kraft*). Although the economic potential Erik declares only has a three-year lifespan, Erik depends upon it as a point of orientation and projects the validity of this future through both collective (*wir*) and generic singular (*jeder*) subject statements. Precisely because this present time has such a short term, it would seem, there is all the more reason for not only Erik, but also everyone else, to march militantly into economic collapse. Erik's occupation with the economic success of his present moment depends not on future success, but future disaster. He then projects this crisis-driven temporality through a collective subject that suggests everyone

[22] Ibid., 266.
[23] Ibid., 91.

is monetarily prospering, yet completely ignores other subjectivities and temporalities that share his present moment in very different ways.

Erik excitedly articulates a future in a language of probability from a present determined by economic prosperity. In this present he recapitulates information he has read or heard elsewhere. Erik quotes the violent language of these other, unidentified sources—"a bloodbath"—and his own language thus acquires traces of the violence with which this economically determined temporality moves through the present. The following sentence extends this militant language but ambivalently so: "Streit gibt es höchstens darüber, ob wir B. bombardieren sollten oder nicht."[24] If the B. to which Erik refers is the city in which the figures are located (the antecedent of B. that the text usually implies), then the sentence continues to discuss business-related issues and to describe Erik's plans for the growth of his publishing house by employing military metaphors. Company conversations become struggles (*Streit*) and the question of how present economic success should influence Erik's company's development in Berlin becomes an act of bombardment (*bombardieren*). Yet, as Maria Mayr argues, in this scene B. can (and, according to Mayr, should) be understood as a reference to Belgrade, in which case "bombardieren" would refer to Germany's involvement in NATO discussions about military intervention in Serbia at the end of the 1990s.[25] This referential ambiguity occurs because of the collective pronoun that Erik employs indeterminately. If "bombardieren" refers to literal bombing, then the collectivity Erik invokes is the nation-state of Germany, but "wir" may also be the collectivity that he invokes in the accusative "uns" shortly thereafter to discuss his plans for the publishing house: "Im Ernst, sagte Erik, uns geht es im Moment so gut, ich überlege ernsthaft, das bewährte Prinzip der Ausbeutung immer neuer Praktikanten aufzugeben zugunsten

[24] Ibid., 266.
[25] Maria Mayr. "B. as in Balkan: Terézia Mora's Post-Yugoslav Berlin Republic." *German Life and Letters* 67:2 (April 2014): 242-259. Print. 247.

einer Lektoratsstelle."[26] Either way, the collectivities with which Erik identifies inspire him to support risky economic and political ventures alike. After leveraging the authority of a generalized claim that anyone worth his or her salt supports the bombing (*Jeder, der etwas auf sich halt, ist dafür*), Erik proceeds to ask Mercedes what she thinks. His series of emphatic propositions seems both an effort to improve Mercedes' mood after her hospitalization using the economic success that structures his temporality and subjectivity, and the performance of one type of future-oriented temporality embodied in Erik's declared future probabilities.

II.2 Mercedes: Present Crisis, Social Futures

For Mercedes, however, the present moment is not so bright. Whereas Erik declares future probabilities based on assumptions about a coming economic crisis projected through general subjects that claim universality, Mercedes is initially unable to see beyond the present moment in which her ankle is broken. However, she will eventually find a conceptual language through which she articulates a future beyond her present bodily crisis. In contrast to Erik, Mercedes articulates questions that convey her displeasure with the changes she sees in the city being dug up around her as she travels home from the hospital:

> Was ist los? Was ist nur los hier? Als sie hinter der Plane auftauchte, war die Stadt wie umgekrempelt. Gibt es eigentlich eine einzige Ecke in dieser Stadt, an der nicht mit Höllenlärm irgendwelche Gruben ausgehoben werden? Die netten Bäume in ihrer Straße hatten das Laub verloren - Wohin ist der Herbst verschwunden? Wieso muss hier der Sommer neuerdings nahtlos in den Winter übergehen? -, standen da, klappernde Reisigbesen. Ohne Blätter konnte man sehen, wie rabiat sie zurechtgestuzt worden sind, damit sie nicht zu hoch, zu breit, zu rund für diese nette Straße werden. Warum musste mir auch der Schleier von den Augen fallen?[27]

As Mercedes emerges from behind the awning of the hospital window (*hinter der Plane auftauchte*), the view she had seen from her hospital bed is not only turned upside-down and

[26] Mora, 266.
[27] Ibid., 265.

inside-out, but transformed in meaning as well. Whereas from her hospital bed she had seen a construction site through a window with an awning (parenthetically described as a "Baustelle direkt vor dem mit einer Plane verhängten Krankenzimmerfenster"[28]), now she is seen as coming out from behind the awning, and the site of construction is coded more destructively in terms of the dug-up pits (*irgendwelche Gruben* [, die] *ausgehoben werden*) that seem to mark every street corner in the city. The semantic inversion of the scene moves in tandem with the movement of Mercedes' body through narration to and of which she is subject. Narratologically, this moment is largely focalized through Mercedes and Mercedes will eventually formulate her critical reaction directly. However, the moment initially locates readers in the street and thus offers a perspective Mercedes as focalizor could not possibly have yet. In this view, Mercedes comes from behind the awning that had once been in front of her, and the verb *auftauchen* suggests the vertical trajectory of her movement as she rises from her bed to leave. As Mercedes moves from down to up and inside to out, the city also turns inside out (*umgekrempelt*) and the trees become upturned brooms, violently crammed together to fit the street. Direct focalization through Mercedes then locates her unsettled feeling in the present moment at the beginning of the passage (*Was ist los?*) and through observations about the external world that result in her realization of how city planning has shaped her street. "Die netten Bäume in ihrer Straße hatten das Laub verloren…Ohne Blätter könnte man sehen, wie rabiat sie zurechtgestutzt worden sind, damit sie nicht zu hoch, zu breit, zu rund für diese nette Straße werden."[29] In Mercedes' negative view of construction, trees are propped up violently in the street in order to guide their growth and limit their futures in particular ways. From Mercedes' disillusioned perspective, marked by the fallen veil of a Romantic, human intervention violently distorts natural growth in order to fit

[28] Ibid., 265.
[29] Ibid., 265.

the city. Her present moment is thus characterized by destruction in place of construction and, in temporal terms, by stunted or constrained futures.

Mercedes' preoccupation with her broken ankle hinders her ability to consider anything beyond the present and gives her a critical eye for the bourgeois niceties of urban planning in the hospital neighborhood. Her pessimistic view makes her incapable of metaphorically buying into the prosperous collectivity that structures Erik's projected plural subject. Instead of accepting this projected plural subject, Mercedes will find a way to articulate a future in conceptual language that allows her to see beyond her present moment, which leads in turn to the temporal realization of Omar's desires.

The short-term success of Erik's company is promising enough that he plans to reduce exploitation in his company by creating a full-time editorial position in place of internships. "Im Ernst, sagte Erik, uns geht es im Moment so gut, ich überlege ernsthaft, das bewährte Prinzip der Ausbeutung immer neuer Praktikanten aufzugeben zugunsten einer Lektoratsstelle, es kostet dich nur ein Wort."[30] Though Mercedes will take Erik up on his offer, as the reader learns, in this moment she cannot respond to the present Erik describes: "Weiß nicht, sagte Mercedes. Keine Ahnung. Mein Leben ist gerade im Begriff zu zersplittern wie ein willkürlich angefahrener Knöchel."[31] Shortly thereafter, she says something similar in response to her mother's advice: "Mein ganzes Leben lang, immerhin dreiundreißig Jahre, war ich ein braver, optimistischer Mensch. Jetzt, da mein Leben zersplittert ist wie ein…"[32] At first Mercedes says she cannot see possibilities for action in her present moment (*Keine Ahnung*) and articulates her life in terms of the recent injury to her ankle, a simile for the existential shattering that leaves her feeling on the brink. When she utters the statement a second time Mercedes' life is not just on the brink of

[30] Ibid., 266.
[31] Ibid., 265.
[32] Ibid., 266.

shattering like her ankle, but *is* shattered *now* (*Jetzt*). The first version of the statement articulates a present moment in terms of a past injury, and formulates a future through a metaphor of conceptualization in which Mercedes' life is about to shatter (*im Begriff zu zersplittern*). In the second version of the statement—"Jetzt, da mein Leben zersplittert ist wie ein..."[33]—the future that Mercedes metaphorically articulates works its way into the verbal temporality of the sentence to substantiate the *now*, with which the sentence begins, with a reason articulated in the present tense (*zersplittert ist*) signaled by the conjunction *da*. Despite Mercedes' stated inability to answer Erik's question, her narration works via engagement with her past to supply a conceptual language, in this case a phrase that posits a future manifesting in her present state. Initially unable to see beyond her present crisis, Mercedes works through language to find a future despite her seemingly all-encompassing present moment.

II.3 Abel: Social Futures, Emerging Past

In Szilvia Lengl's reading of intercultural figures of women in *Alle Tage*, Mercedes embodies mainstream society in Germany. She is the "Kulturinhaberin" whose cultural suitability and belonging are demonstrated by her use of German in a novel narrated largely in German and her marriage to Abel.[34] Abel's integration into German society by way of Mercedes occurs not only thematically, however, but also through narrative elements that hinge both on Mercedes and Abel as focalizors. This future brings Abel's officially unintelligible status as the former citizen

[33] Ibid., 266.

[34] According to Lengl, German is the "'unverborgene', offensichtliche Sprache des Romans," but latent in the text is a multilinguality that forms a cultural memory based on minority populations' shared experiences of domination in Hungary and neighboring countries (110-113). Working at the intersection of cultural and gender analysis, Lengl reads Mercedes' sympathies for Abel as a marginalized social figure and her ability to balance child and career as a revolutionary refiguration of emancipated women in literature by Ingeborg Bachmann who are represented as less attentive to other marginalized populations. See *Interkulturelle Frauenfiguren im deutschsprachigen Roman der Gegenwart: Aspekte der interkulturellen Literatur und der Literatur von Frauen in den Werken von Terézia Mora, Zsuzsa Bánk und Aglaja Veteranyi im Vergleich zu den Werken von Nella Larsen und Gloria E. Anyzaldúa.* Dresden: w.e.b. Universitätsverlag & Buchhandel, 2012. 89-94. Print. Here 90.

of a state that no longer exists into legal view, and will eventually implicate readers in the collective narrative it constructs, too.

Later in the conversation, Abel, Omar's Russian tutor who had stepped in for Mercedes' deceased husband during her accident, calls on the telephone, and Omar appears before her. Having been disappointed by Abel's unexcused disappearance before their last Russian lesson, Omar persistently requests that his mother bring Abel to him. Through a series of questions that hold Mercedes to the dinner invitation she politely extends to Abel, Omar achieves the future he desires. I quote the exchange among the figures below:

> Hier klingelte das Telefon.
> Ja! schrie Mercedes in den Hörer. Ach, Sie sind es ...
> Omar kam aus seinem Zimmer und blieb vor ihr stehen.
> Danke, sagte Mercedes am Telefon. Es geht schon wieder. Nett, dass Sie anrufen. Sie hätte sich schon längst für die Hilfe bedanken wollen, aber wir hatten keine Nummer von Ihnen. Würde er sie diesmal hinterlassen? Sie würde sich gerne revanchieren, irgendwann, wenn es wieder möglich sein wird, ein Abendessen vielleicht.
> Wann kommt er? fragte Omar, nachdem sie aufgelegt hatte.
> Was soll ich helfen? fragte Miriam aus dem Flur.
> Danke, gar nichts, sagte Mercedes.
> Wie wär's nächsten Donnerstag, fragte Omar.
> Hm, sagte Mercedes.
> Um die Wahrheit zu sagen, wollte sie nur höflich sein. Im Moment habe ich keine Luft, Korrektur: Lust auf keinen Menschen.
> Wann? fragte Omar.
> Was wann?
> Wann wirst du soweit sein?
> Stand da, das Weiße seines Glasauges war ähnlich geädert und schimmerte ähnlich wie die Marmorplatte des Tisches. Er ist mit einem Tumor im Auge geboren, da schämte ich mich dann doch ein wenig.
> Bald, sagte sie, bald.[35]

In their exchange, Omar realizes his desired future through a series of questions that work by way of the subjunctive mood, thus verbalizing the form of his mother's conventionally stated desire to return Abel's favors during her hospitalization. Although Mercedes had simply wanted to be polite when suggesting the dinner appointment—"Um die Wahrheit zu sagen, wollte sie

[35] Mora, 267.

nur höflich sein"[36]—Omar presses her to actualize her proposition and proceeds to move her toward a fixed date. Omar first asks about Abel in the present tense *kommt* (*Wann kommt er*?), then posits a future in the subjunctive (*Wie wär's nächsten Donnerstag?*), and asks insistently for Mercedes to posit this future in the indicative (*Wann?...Wann wirst du soweit sein?*). Shortly after this exchange she informs Omar that Abel is coming for dinner, thus turning her plans for the future, initially articulated in the subjunctive mood, into a temporal moment that will be realized in narration.

Although what might have led Mercedes to actualize her son's request goes unspoken, the juxtaposition of propositions in the narration suggests that it has to do with Mercedes' shame about Omar's missing eye—a birth defect that does not seem to bother him at all: "Ein Geburtsfehler. Wenn man man ihn fragt, wo er sein linkes Auge gelassen habe, antwortet er: Ich habe es hingegeben für Weisheit."[37] The narration focalized through Mercedes after Omar's final question in the passage above describes her view of her son standing before her and notes his glass eye in the present time of the narrated moment, and then shifts to first-person narration through Mercedes to remember her reaction to Omar at a previous moment in time. After this move through Mercedes' first-person observations to her past sentiments, the narration returns to third-person narration in the present time of their conversation, and Mercedes posits an approximate future with the adjective "soon." This form of future-oriented narration is configured differently than when Mercedes previously used a past future to address her bodily crisis in the present moment. Previously, narration was focalized through Mercedes as direct

[36] Ibid., 267.
[37] Ibid., 39. Omar seems not to feel ashamed at all, judging by the narrative he proposes in response: an eye in exchange for wisdom. When his peers shine flashlights into his eyes at a boy scout camp, Omar's sense of curiosity and sober recapitulation of facts seem to outweigh the shame Mercedes perceives in his body: "Aber es war auch so sehr interessant. Flora, Fauna, Mensch. Das große Abschiedslagerfeuer ist wegen Waldbrandgefahr ausgefallen, und als sie dachten, ich schlafe, haben einige Jungs meine Augenklappe angehoben und mir mit einer Taschenlampe in die Augenhöhle geleuchtet, weil sie neugierig waren, ob das Gehirn zu sehen ist[...]Es ist nicht leicht, hochbegabt zu sein, sagte Omar und zuckte mit den Achseln" (44).

speech in which she articulated a conceptual language derived from a metaphorical future in her currently broken ankle to grasp a present that had been beyond her comprehension. As Mercedes looks at Omar, however, her past sentiment emerges in the present through narration that is not articulated to the other characters, but rather spurred by the narrator's reference to Omar's glass eye. Prompted both by her son's desire and by the birth defect that reminds her of Omar's past, Mercedes then actualizes Omar's request and opens a path for Abel's future.

Though the main thematic focus of the novel, Abel's speech is not reported directly in the above conversation that leads to his appearance at Mercedes' apartment—an odd moment in a text that critiques violence and bureaucratic measures against emigrants to Germany. Citing an interview with Terézia Mora, Szilvia Lengl reads Abel's silence as the inadequacy of language to formulate his misery: "Diverse Figuren reden über ihn, aber er selbst ist sprachlos, da das Leiden immer sprachlos ist."[38] In Lengl's account, Abel has no voice of his own and is solely the production of the homodiegetic narrator and other figures who speak about him. Yet Abel does focalize narration importantly in certain moments. In conversation with Omar at a previous dinner, for example, Abel explains why he had to miss their Russian lesson:

> Omar hatte das Essen auf zwei tiefe Teller verteilt und sie wortlos auf den Küchentisch gestellt. Sein ehemaliger Russischlehrer nahm ebenso wortlos Platz[...]Es tut mir Leid, sagte schließlich Abel, ich musste zu plötzlich weg, ich konnte mich nicht mehr verabschieden, du hast Recht, ich hätte das tun sollen, das wäre das Mindeste gewesen, zur Strafe habe ich meine Wohnung, meinen Computer und sämtliche meiner Jobs verloren, ich sage das nicht, um Mitleid zu erheischen, verdient ist verdient, ich habe dich enttäuscht, kannst du mir verzeihen?
> Der Junge trank aus einem großen, roten Kristallglas. Das Licht der Küchenlampe in den geschliffenen Flächen und in seinem Glasauge darüber. Er stellte das Glas hin, nahm Löffel und Gabel wieder zur Hand.
> Natürlich *kann* ich das.[39]

[38] Lengl, 109.
[39] Mora, 263.

In this scene, Abel focalizes narration and details the hardships he has faced that seem to him to be caused by missing the tutoring session with Omar. This strange constellation of guilt and apology suggests the systemic problems stemming from Abel's political illegibility. Omar's own interest in Abel's presence derives largely from his demand for Abel to apologize for having skipped their last Russian lesson without notice. Setting their exchange, occurring while Mercedes was still in the hospital, in its proper context requires readers to compare it to the next dinner that occurs in Mercedes' presence as well. Whereas in this final retelling the homodiegetic narrator translates Abel's apology into political terms and indirect speech, in the scene above, Omar is the silent figure and Abel is the focalizor of his apology for missing their tutoring lesson. While Omar looks at Abel over the *roten Kristallglas* and other accoutrements of his bourgeois lifestyle, he presses Abel to beg forgiveness despite the latter's destitution. In this scene a stark contrast between Abel and Omar's respective social standing comes through clearly. While Omar's silence framed by plates and glasses in a home that Abel has lost demands a reason for Abel's disappearance, Abel focalizes narration to relate his troubles and explain why. Abel does not mention that the reason for his missing laptop, dissertation, and apartment is partially due to an even less politically intelligible band of Roma—not divine intervention as his reference to "zur Strafe" might suggest—and is therefore silent about the larger, systemic problems at work in the storyworld. In narratological terms, however, he focalizes the statement of his distress and gives Omar the apology he demands.

This narration will shift narratological and topical registers in the second moment of apology when Mercedes invites Abel to dinner. In this second dinner, Abel apologizes to Mercedes, and then tells Omar more about what led him to leave B. in the first place.

The reasons Abel had previously given—a stolen laptop, jobs and apartment—are translated semantically and formally in this second moment by way of indirect speech that is focalized initially through Abel, and then mostly through the homodiegetic narrator. In this second moment, speech attributed to Abel shifts formally to make Abel the referent of the third-person pronoun *er*. Semantically, Abel's apology to Omar has less to do with his loss of specific objects in the storyworld than it does with his void political subjectivity in the eyes of his former state. The scene appears as follows:

> Die Sache ist simpel, sagte Abel. Der Staat, in dem er geboren worden sei und den er vor fast zehn Jahren verlassen habe, sei in der Zwischenzeit in drei bis fünf neue Staaten gespalten worden. Und keiner dieser drei bis fünf sei der Meinung, jemandem wie ihm eine Staatsbürgerschaft schuldig zu sein. Dasselbe gelte für seine Mutter, die nun zur Minderheit gehöre und ebenfalls keinen Pass bekomme. Er könne hier nicht weg, sie könne von dort nicht weg. Man telefoniere. Einen Vater gäbe es auch, dieser besäße sogar die Bürgerschaft eines sechsten, also unabhängigen Nachbarstaates, allerdings sei er vor nicht ganz zwanzig Jahren verschwunden und sei seitdem unauffindbar. Ach so, und da er selbst einer Einberufung nicht Folge geleistet habe, gelte er bis auf weiteres als Deserteur.
> Oh, sagten Mercedes und Omar. So ist das.
> Ja, sagte er und bat noch einmal um Entschuldigung.[40]

In this passage, Abel finds himself asking forgiveness for his politically unrecognized existence as the former subject of a state that no longer exists. This political status is also what causes Abel to pretend he is Mercedes' husband when she breaks her ankle, though his knowledge of the latter's death when he does so is unclear. Regardless, Abel's seemingly paradoxical subjectivity according to political logics that rob him of a past impinges on Abel's future and Mercedes', too. Though Abel must instrumentalize social relationships in his present and marries Mercedes to establish legal legitimacy in B., the narration offers some hope for a different form of negotiation. In the above moment of apology, the narration, an explanation of Abel's history as a noncitizen in systemic terms, is formulated as indirect speech in the

[40] Ibid., 269.

subjunctive I, a verbal mood that suggests quotation in German. Formally, Abel seems incapable of reporting his political status directly and the narrator seems to step in and shift Abel's previous description semantically as well. Yet this interpretation of the scene is complicated a few lines earlier in the conversation when Omar asks Abel in Russian about his absence. The shift to the subjunctive I likely refers not to Abel's inability to focalize narration, but rather to his use of Russian, which is not assumed to be legible to a German readership. Not only is his political status as the subject of a state that no longer exists impossible according to citizenship laws that neglect his past, but his implied postcommunist readership in the present is marked as Western through its assumed unfamiliarity with Russian. The semantic and formal shifts therefore work in tandem in this moment to simultaneously mark his political unintelligibility according to political discourses, and a social unintelligibility to implied readers who cannot recognize Abel's postcommunist past without the help of the homodiegetic narrator.

Despite Abel's constant movement throughout the novel, he is trapped between a soon-to-come, ill-fitting heterosexual marriage with Mercedes and a politically unrecognized past. Fatima El-Tayeb has referred to the temporality that I show structuring Abel's subjectivity in terms of a paradoxical present moment in which subjects labeled "migrants" in Germany become increasingly trapped the longer they stay by a state discourse that codes them in terms of transience while denying them any actual social mobility. These subjects are thereby located in a constant process of arrival due to a discourse of migration that guarantees their exclusion from European history and national citizenship by articulating a notion of a Western subject that is white, male, Christian and heterosexual. Subjectivities like Abel's that do not accord to the notion of the subject produced by political discourses legitimizing European nation-states thereby become impossible according to these official logics. El-Tayeb writes, "These

populations are perceived as being in transit, coming from elsewhere, momentarily here but without any roots in their so-called host nation…Their discursive framing as eternal migrants, permanently stuck in a temporary condition, justifies and produces the material conditions of their exclusion while preventing the acquisition of rights associated with long-term presence."[41] Paradoxically, these subjects are present and absent. On one hand, they confront dominant official logics with forms of being that cannot be articulated in existing official terms and therefore seem to be absent. On the other hand, they trouble these logics which still acknowledge their presence, yet in the form of operations of exclusion.

Abel's postcommunist subjectivity poses a similar temporal paradox: in his present moment, his political status lies in the past because the state that formerly legitimated his political existence is dissolving into new political entities working to define themselves terms of nation-states that will be acceptable to the (non-socialist) European community. Not only was Abel deemed unfitting in former Yugoslavia because he refused to participate in its officially mandated military service, but his migration to former East Berlin during the Yugoslav wars make him a low priority for consideration of citizenship rights for the new states forming during the 1990s. Furthermore, his historical status confuses European notions of history understood as a naturalized progression through national orders which, after 1989, considered cultural processes developing in formerly real existing socialist nations as needing to "catch-up" with Western progress.[42] Abel's postcommunist subjectivity therefore lacks both political

[41] See Fatima El-Tayeb. "Time Travelers and Queer Heterotopias: Narratives from the Muslim Underground." *The Germanic Review*. 88.3 (2013): 305-319. Print. Here 310. This problem becomes even more pernicious when paired with the concept of generation that reproduces subjectivities increasingly divergent from the life experiences of the people they label.

[42] Jürgen Habermas famously dubbed the eastern European revolutions of 1989 as "eine nachholende Revolution" that finally allows formerly communist countries to make up for lost cultural development that had been halted by the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Habermas' argument not only dismisses the possibility of new social developments that occurred in formerly communist states, but also conflates the specificity of eastern European developments into a chronology dominated by the unification of East and West Germany with fall of the Berlin wall.

representation and evidences a temporality that exceeds chronological accounts of European history.

III. Forming Futures: Hypothetical Narration

Mora's narration makes Abel's postcommunist subjectivity legible for German readers through a narrative form that posits futures in postclassical narratological terms of actual and virtual events in the storyworld. I borrow the distinction between actual and virtual events from David Herman's discussion of hypothetical narration, which refers to forms of indirect and direct narration that posit hypothetical narrators and observers in a storyworld through verbal and lexical cues such as hypothetical statements, subjunctive moods, and deictic shifts.[43] These storyworld features are considered hypothetical because they cannot exist as actual according to the logic of their particular storyworld. Whereas actual events make sense for readers based on their inferences about logical laws according to which a storyworld operates, virtual events breach these laws by either positing narrators that do not have ontological status in a given storyworld (i.e. their presence is not acknowledged as actual), or by exceeding the epistemic limits set for narratorial and figural consciousnesses within the storyworld. These forms of narration exceed classical accounts of narrative focalization that work by way of a basic distinction between who sees (the focalizor) and who speaks (the narrator). These hypothetical forms account for narrative moments in which no entity could be said actually to see or to speak.

See Jürgen Habermas. "Nachholende Revolution und linker Revisionsbedarf. Was heißt Sozialismus heute?" *Zeitdiagnosen. Zwölf Essays*. Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 2003. 124-149. Print.

[43] Deictic shifts refer to two types of relocation in postclassical narratology. The first regards the shift of readers to the spatiotemporal coordinates of storyworlds: "its [narrative's] ability to transport interpreters from the here and now of face-to-face interaction, or the space time coordinates of an encounter with a printed text or cinematic narrative, to the here and now that constitute the deictic center of the world being told about." Herman, 14. The second regards shifts among spaces and times within storyworlds: "story-telling involves a shift of deictic centers, whereby narrators prompt their interlocutors to relocate from the HERE and NOW of the act of narration to other space-time coordinates—namely, those defining the perspectives from which the events of the story are recounted." Herman, *Story Logic*, 271. My discussion focuses on the latter.

In hypothetically-focalized narrative, narrated events are either virtual (i.e., they occur in narrative in the subjunctive verbal mood, and therefore merely hypothetically in the storyworld), or else the narration of the events implies an observing or narrating subject that does not exist according to storyworld laws (i.e., an entity is assumed responsible for the hypothetical thought or observation, but this entity has not been evident before the thought or observation):

> At issue are narratives whose interpretation provokes, in a more or less direct or explicit way, speculation about some non-existent focalizor. At issue, too, are narratives that prompt speculation about focalizing activity that someone who actually exists in the storyworld may or may not have performed…[R]ecipients gain, as it were, illicit access to the aspects of the storyworld—aspects not, in fact, focalized, or not focalizable even in principle, from the perspective encoded as the actual vantage point for narration.[44]

Hypothetical focalization names a range of literary strategies, all of which upset boundaries between virtual and actual in a storyworld.[45] This will be important to my discussion of *Alle Tage* because it articulates the narrative features that relate events constructed in subjunctive modalities of desire to events that belong to the temporalities of the narration.

By marking moments in which the boundaries between virtual and actual are questioned, hypothetical focalization is helpful for describing two turning points in Mora's novel as well as their narratological implications. The first involves a virtual event between Omar and Abel, which posits a hypothetical conversation that does not actually occur between the two figures. The second involves an actual event between Danko—a figure that identifies as Roma and that

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[44] Herman, *Story Logic*. 310.

[45] Herman's concept refers to a set of narratological challenges that he parses over the course of a chapter. Upon introducing hypothetical focalization as an elaboration of Genette's ideas, he annotates: "HF might be construed as a special case of what Genette (1980) terms 'paralepsis,' i.e., 'giving more [information] than is authorized in principle in the code of focalization governing the whole' (195). Genette (1988) later described paralepsis as 'an infraction, intentional or not, of the modal position of the moment' (74-75). My purpose here is to analyze in detail the paraleptic effects of HF specifically—effects that may suggest less the infraction of a code than grounds for rethinking the principles on which the code itself is based." Ibid., 410 fn 7. At stake, it seems to me, is an alternative to the story/discourse divide that postclassical narratology conceptually amends in terms of scale instead of division. In the moment to which Herman refers, narration and figures are bound temporally and subjectively according to more or less implicit formal laws. If these laws are located in narration as distinct from or merely embodied by narrating subjects, subjective agency is replaced by structural codes. Herman's interest in 'rethinking the code of focalization' touches on the distinction between narration and diegesis in my discussion.

steals Abel's means of writing—and Abel in which a new narrational voice appears. In this unique moment, Danko, up to this point simply a focalizor, gains the capacity to dispute the story's diegetic unfolding. The virtual event between Omar and Abel can be termed direct hypothetical focalization (as an event posited by focalizors that actually exist in the storyworld), and the diegetic intervention that occurs during an actual exchange among Abel and Danko can be termed indirect hypothetical focalization (here a focalizor without ontological status in the storyworld appears). As we will see, both Danko and Omar have unique relationships with respect to narrative authority and, although the former disappears and the latter will succeed in Abel's place, the configuration including the two brings into relief social and political limits of their historical moment.

III.1 Omar and Abel – Virtual Event, Direct Hypothetical Focalization

In Mora's novel, Omar demands an apology from Abel, it turns out, because Omar has not had the opportunity to ask some of the questions he has developed for his Russian tutor. When Abel returns to B., however, Omar's planned exchange both does and does not take place. Although the conversation does not actually occur in the storyworld, it does occur virtually in narration that parenthetically details what Omar and Abel could have said if they had met. Set off by parentheses and narrated in the subjunctive tense, the exchange is not explicitly located temporally with respect to the present moment it interrupts. However, the order of narration, inserted precisely when Omar and Abel are next together, both implies an explanation for Omar's cold glare and satisfies his desire for the exchange:

> Omar wartete schon vor der Schule, auf der dritten Treppenstufe, so waren sie gleich groß, Augen auf Augenhöhe, die des Jungen blinkten kalt.
>
> (Und? Hast du ihn gefunden? hätte Omar gefragt.
> Wen? hätte Abel zurückgefragt.

Den Bahnhof.
Po russki, poschalujsta.
Woksal.
Im ganzen Satz bitte.
Ti...
Naschol. Nachadjit, naidtji.
… naschol woksal?
Da.
Willst du verreisen?
Abel hätte den Satz auf Russisch niedergeschrieben und ihn vorgesprochen, Omar hätte ihn wiederholt.
Willst du verreisen?
Njet, ja ne chatschu ujechatj.
Nein, ich will nicht verreisen.
Wolltest du jemanden abholen?
Wolltest du jemanden abholen?
Nein.
Was wolltest du dann dort?
Was wolltest du dann dort?
Ich wohne in der Nähe.
Ich wohne in der Nähe.
Wieso wusstest du dann nicht, wohin du gehen musstest?
Wieso wusstest du dann nicht, wohin du gehen musstest?
Ich hatte mich verirrt.
Ich hatte mich verirrt.
Im Park?
Nein, schon vorher.
Nein, schon vorher.
Das verstehe ich nicht, hätte Omar gesagt. Ja nje panjimaju.)

Jetzt: Hallo, sagte der Erwachsene schüchtern. Ich soll dich abholen.
Ich weiß, sagte das Kind mit dem Charisma seines unbekannten Vaters und der ruhigen Stimme seiner verwundeten Mutter. […] Wozu das Taxi? Es sind nur zwei Bushaltestellen. Was ist los? Bist du noch nie Bus gefahren?
Nein, sagte Abel. Ja njikagda nje jechal n'avtobuse.
Der Junge sah ihn an. Eins: Russisch zu sprechen heißt, an etwas anzuknüpfen, was war, in der Hoffnung, dass es noch da ist.[46]

The parenthetical conversation is, in Herman's terms, a virtual event that precedes the actual event between Abel and Omar in the explicitly cited present time *jetzt*. As such, it can be best described as an instance of direct hypothetical focalization which posits a hypothetical conversation directly focalized through Abel and Omar with verbs in the past tense subjunctive II

[46] Mora, 260-1.

mood (*hätte gefragt / zurückgefragt / niedergeschrieben / vorgesprochen*, etc.). This conversation narratologically marks a thematic turning point in which Omar realizes his former relationship with his teacher is over. The temporal structure that facilitates this transformation in narrative works by way of hypothetical focalization. Hypothetical focalization here posits a virtual past event which, having not taken place as an actual event, is the reason for Omar's disdain in a present moment with Abel. Omar's desire to ask his teacher *in der nächsten Stunde* does not happen as planned, but this desire is realized in the sense that the next time the two meet, their conversation occurs hypothetically. The hypothetical moment opens a subjective temporality that occurs in narration, but does not actually take place as a temporal moment in the narrated time of the storyworld. This virtual event will condition a future by creating a narrative link through Omar's desires that ends one possible future in B. and begins another.

Despite the narrative realization of Omar's desires, which here has a largely explanatory function reminding readers of what might be behind Omar's cold glare, the passage following the parenthetical also notes what consequences result because the conversation remains merely hypothetical. Abel and Omar's previous relationship had presumably ended with Omar's past disappointment that the hypothetical conversation did not take place, and when it does occur in narration as a virtual event, the third-person homodiegetic narrator translates Omar's reaction to Abel as Omar's realization that something has changed: "Der Junge sah ihn an. Eins: Russisch zu sprechen heißt, an etwas anzuknüpfen, was war, in der Hoffnung, dass es noch da ist. Mit anderen Worten: eine klare Anbiederei. Zwei: Musste das Kind jetzt doch schmunzeln, den Kopf schütteln: Wie kann man so ein ... sein. Abgesehen davon blieb es streng."[47] This statement both marks Omar and Abel's status reversal within a pedagogical hierarchy in which Abel had been an authoritative knowledge source, and privileges Omar's perspective in the situation

[47] Ibid., 261.

through focalization that reads his facial expression for the reader as a skeptical reaction to Abel's Russian.

The social reversal between the figures occurs narratologically through descriptive and semantic cues, as well as shifting focalization. In the sentence preceding the hypothetical conversation, Abel meets Omar after Mercedes' accident—the first time the two have seen each other since their missed lesson several months earlier. A moment of social leveling is first implied through their physical and metaphorical location as they look one another in the eye from the same height: "so waren sie gleich groß, Augen auf Augenhöhe."[48] During the parenthetical conversation, the form of narration is directly focalized through both figures and relates a pedagogical situation in which Abel has the knowledge of Russian that Omar is learning, and potentially the answers that Omar seeks about Abel's actions after they had last met. Focalization in the conversation begins through Omar and shifts alternately to Abel, marking the latter as the focalizor by transliterated Russian phrases (*Po russki, poschalujsta.*) and instructions (*Im ganzen Satz bitte.*) Midway through the hypothetical scene, however, Abel begins writing down and speaking Omar's sentence for the latter to repeat, at which point the focalizor is more difficult to identify. Whereas some of the statements, such as the answers to Omar's questions, might be attributed to Abel due to the situation, the alternating pattern breaks down. Furthermore, after the first response in Russian (*Njet, ja ne chatschu ujechatj.*)—presumably Abel's—the sentences are repeated phrases in German. Both the language and the sequence complicate the issue of who might be focalizing, as well as the conversational context that Omar must be imagining in the first place. The result is a general impression in which the two figures stand on the same epistemic ground, until the final two sentences that, written on the

[48] Ibid., 260.

same line instead of on two, suggest formally that Omar is ready to take the place of his teacher (*Das verstehe ich nicht, hätte Omar gesagt. Ja nje panjimaju.*).

For Abel, the narratological turning point that occurs during the hypothetical conversation with Omar marks the end of Abel's possible future establishment in B. through education (because Danko has stolen his laptop) and the beginning of Abel's future political status in B. by way of marriage. The virtual event with Omar thus becomes the narrative foundation of Abel's actual future in B., whereas the event with Danko that actually occurred in the storyworld instead of Omar's conversation renders impossible a future Abel might have had. Abel's integration into Omar's family is first suggested by a particular form of address that marks his entrance into Omar and Mercedes' home after the hypothetical exchange quoted above. This initial integration into the family narrative through narrative form more broadly speaking will pave the way for legal recognition through marriage, which provides the citizenship documents Abel needs for legitimized existence in B..

After Abel and Omar return to Omar's house, Abel calls Mercedes' mother, Miriam, and joins Omar to prepare dinner as told. When Abel hangs up the telephone, third-person narration attributes a peculiar sensation of inexplicable comfort and completion to the scene:

> Es ist etwas unerklärlich Angenehmes an diesem Ganzen. Ach, Sie sind das, nein, wir fahren nicht zuerst ins Krankenhaus, wir nehmen kein Taxi, ich weiß, wer Sie sind, essen Sie mit ihm, hilfst du mir?
> Der Junge mit einer Maisdose und einem Öffner in der Hand. Abel öffnete die erste Maisdose seines Lebens. Butterweiches Metall. Etwas unerklärlich Angenehmes.[49]

The first sentence of the quotation posits a whole by way of the noun *Ganz[e]* and a deictic demonstrative pronoun (*diese[s]*), which takes the sentence that follows as its referent: "Ach, Sie sind das, nein, wir fahren nicht zuerst ins Krankenhaus, wir nehmen kein Taxi, ich weiß, wer Sie

[49] Ibid., 262.

sind, essen Sie mit ihm, hilfst du mir?"[50] Though indirectly focalized, the phrases that compose the second sentence in the quotation contract a sequence of interactions Abel has had with figures in Omar's family since having helped Mercedes from under the taxi that hit her and until arriving with Omar in their home. Mercedes says, "Ach, Sie sind das" when seeing Abel during her accident,[51] Omar refuses to go to the hospital or take a taxi,[52] Miriam interrupts Abel with "Ich weiß, wer Sie sind...dann essen Sie eben mit ihm" when Abel calls to inform her about Mercedes' accident at the latter's request,[53] and the final phrase (*hilfst du mir?*) segues into the present moment of the scene in which Omar asks Abel for help opening a can of corn. *Dieser* thus refers to its grammatical antecedent, which in this case follows it[54]: the whole first posited semantically by the noun *Ganze[s]* through unfocalized third-person narration comes to be fulfilled by a composite of indicative and imperative propositions that implicitly refer to Mercedes, Miriam and Omar's statements, all of which posit Abel in turn as addressee. The structure of temporality in these two sentences works by anticipating an antecedent that the next sentence, a composite of past statements made by other figures, fills. This form of narration thus carves out a place for Abel in the family through a nexus of social obligations and commands—guidelines forming a functional subject position that Abel will officially occupy when he is legally recognized as Mercedes' husband.

[50] Ibid., 262.
[51] Ibid., 259.
[52] Ibid., 261. This phrase is a summary of Omar's previous statements rather than a direct quotation. At the time, Omar says "Ich will nicht ins Krankenhaus, ich will nach Hause. Ich habe Hunger. Danke, ich kann die Tasche selbst tragen. Wozu das Taxi? Es sind nur zwei Bushaltestellen." Here, as elsewhere, the narration posits a first-person plural subject (*wir*) that includes Abel but is focalized through Omar.
[53] Ibid., 262.
[54] The term 'postcedent' does exist in linguistics to refer to antecedents that follow proforms, but this term does not seem to be taken up in literary studies. My emphasis is on the expectant temporality the syntax creates.

As though relieved from fleeing the Roma gang and in anticipation of bureaucratic trouble, Abel admits a readiness to conform to the social codes of Omar's family and to inhabit the subjectivity carved out for him by their forms of address:

> Später geriet die Küchenuhr in Abels Blickfeld, und der Rucksack und die Reisetasche fielen ihm ein[...]sowie de[r] beinahe abgelaufen[e] Reisepass einer untergegangenen Föderation. Darum müsste man sich auch kümmern, andererseits kann man es ebenso gut auch lassen, die Sachen sind futsch, und zwar endgültig, kein Grund mehr zur Eile, er konnte ebenso gut auch hier bleiben und sich den Richtungsanweisungen dieser klaräugigen Familie überlassen.
> Fertig?
> Abel nickte ergeben. Als er dem Jungen die Dose übergab, fiel sein Blick auf die Zahlenreihe, die auf den Deckel gedruckt war: 05.08.2004. Für einen Moment war ihm, als könnte das das heutige Datum sein.[55]

In the above passage, temporality returns thematically after Abel is narratologically integrated in a whole made of Omar's family and modes of address. Abel's relationship with Omar provides a feeling of inexplicable comfort (*etwas unerklärlich Angenehmes*) and articulates roles for Abel, thus offering a momentary caesura from worries about potentially lost belongings and an almost expired passport. Looking at the clock, however, Abel is returned to the time of the storyworld and with it his distress. The third-person narration focalized through Abel then shifts to deliberation about the futility of Abel's situation attributed to a general third-person pronoun *man* (*die Sachen sind futsch, und zwar endgültig*) that decides against continuing to hurry at the behest of political structures slowly shutting him out of a right to exist. Finally, in the last clause, the narration shifts back to the third-person pronoun *er* to articulate another possibility left open to Abel: that of simply resigning to the family's directives. Abel's formal social integration into Omar's family by way of narrative address thus precedes an explicit reflection on the benefits of actually joining the subjectivity narratively configured for him in the time of the storyworld.

[55] Ibid., 262.

When an indirectly focalized "Fertig?" resounds at the conclusion of these narrative deliberations over Abel's future, Abel's resigned nod suggests both that he is ready to conform to Omar's family's requests—the topic of the preceding paragraph to which the order of narration suggests *Fertig* serves as a response—and that he has finished opening the can Omar had handed him. When Abel sees the can's expiration date, yet another temporal layer converges in this significant moment: a direct reference to Abel's appearance in the extratextual world. The date, 05.08.2004, catches both Abel and the reader's eye with good reason. Whereas other dates in the novel will appear only in part—"199x" marking the turn of a New Year,[56] for example, or "am einundzwanzigsten Oktober neunzehnhundert… Am dreiundzwanzigsten" in a fragment of conversation[57]—this date is written in full and corresponds to the date on which Terézia Mora's novel appeared with the Luchterhand Press.[58] Read literally, this temporal marker constructs an interface between the storyworld and the readers' world through an encoded reference to the production history of *Alle Tage*. The date is both an expiration date and the moment that Abel will appear as a finished product to a public readership. It arguably marks Mora's contractual obligation to finish the novel—at which point Abel will be a finalized literary figure—as well as, from the point of view of a manuscript in progress, the future. Whereas other markers of

[56] Ibid., 139. The sentence reads, "Das war in der letzten Nacht des Jahres 199x." After Tibor B. bails Abel out of prison for a drug-related arrest and Abel's shared student apartment (WG) is raided by police, Abel moves to a squat with self-proclaimed anarchist Kinga and a group of musicians. Judging by the duration of Abel's stay in his previous apartment and an exchange he has with Kinga, "Bis nach dem Krieg um sechs!" (137), the date is 1995 when the Bosnian War officially ended and the presidents of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina signed the Dayton Peace Accord under international supervision.

[57] Ibid., 107. These dates are mentioned among older members designated "die alten Partisanen" who attend an academic salon at Tibor B.'s house to which Abel is invited because of his fellowship. The reference is presumably to the Kragujevac massacre in Serbia on October 20-21, 1941 in which Serbian volunteers and National Socialist defense forces killed several thousand Serbs, Jews, and Roma in retaliation for joint resistance by Serbian Chetnik and Communist Partisan forces against Germany under Hitler. Stevan K. Pavlowitsch. *Hitler's New Disorder: The Second World War in Yugoslavia.* London: Hurst & Co, 2008. Print. 62.

[58] See the Luchterhand Publishing House Website for information regarding the first edition: "Terézia Mora Alle Tage. Roman." *Luchterhand*. Random House Verlagsgruppe Bertelsmann. n.d. Web. 17 May 2014. <http://www.randomhouse.de/Buch/Alle-Tage-Roman/Terezia-Mora/e146304.rhd?mid=8&serviceAvailable=true#tabbox>

temporality reported in the novel remain circumlocuted, this date is specific and unique—a contract with the future (at the time of writing) that the book readers hold proves that Mora will keep. The moment thus marks Abel's complete entrance not only to Omar's family, but furthermore also his ties to a German readership that will become occupied with his story. This literary act, at the intersection of temporality (the date of the novel's appearance) and subjectivity (the narrative configuration that forms Abel's familial place through Miriam, Mercedes, and Omar's address in the scene) is a self-reflexive temporal coordinate meaningful not only in the story, but also in the production history of *Alle Tage*. As a practical caesura in the narrator's persistent revision of the story told—the manuscript will be finalized for a time and sent to print—the date suggests both historical limits to and potentialities of its material by way of a future realized by readers: the linguistic refinement that helps Abel and Omar negotiate their historical situations will be taken only so far in the novel as such. The date foregrounds the relationship of the book that readers hold to the storyworld, creating an interface between the extraliterary world and Mora's text. This temporal marker has meaning both in Abel's world and in the extraliterary world. By resonating for readers as both an expiration date and a publication date, it coordinates storyworld temporalities with temporalities meaningful to other aspects of the novel's production not otherwise referenced specifically within the text. Mora's choice of a textual referent with implications both for the storyworld and the extraliterary world that has produced the story told brings Abel's story into the reader's by making the literary temporality of his world have additional meanings in theirs, too.

III.2 Abel and Danko – Actual Event, Indirect Hypothetical Focalization

Although a past future that Omar could have had with Abel (the hypothetical conversation during a tutoring session that never occurs) is posited later in narration as a virtual

event, Omar and Abel's actual relationship will turn out to be crucial for getting Abel the legal status he needs for official recognition through marriage with Mercedes. At the same time, the actual event, Danko's theft of Abel's laptop, that replaces the virtual conversation in the storyworld reality concludes a brief relationship between Abel and Danko, one of the aforementioned band of Roma. While Danko disappears from the story, Omar and forms of narrative address integrate Abel into a family relationship that will later be irreversibly recognized by law. In this moment, Omar's imagined future is virtual, and Omar becomes a means for Abel's actual legal integration in the future.

Danko, however, works against both Abel and the novel's diegesis. During Abel and Danko's exchanges, Danko converses with Abel and explicitly reacts to the diegesis: at these points in the narrative, hypothetically-focalized narration that bears traces of Danko's style appears and rebels against how the story is told. Though Omar has a unique relationship to narrational acts as I will show, Danko figures most completely into the act of narration. These narratological forms become historically significant when readers take into account Danko and Abel's similarities—the two share a common language and ancestry—as well as the former's self-designation as part of a plural Roma subjectivity. Danko's problematic existence in B. works directly against Abel's initial route to a future in B.. When Danko steals Abel's laptop, he also steals the possibility of existence that the latter's education and network facilitated through Tibor B. had offered for a time. Abel still manages to acquire legal status, but only at the cost of being yoked with Mercedes in an ill-fitting marriage. While Abel eventually finds a place in the storyworld, Danko seems to disappear completely. Danko's lasting influence, however, will be visible in a word on which Omar's story turns, as though Danko's unfortunate status would better fit fiction. In narratological terms, the subjectivity configured during the virtual event

between Abel and Omar conditions Abel's future as it will be realized, whereas the actual event between Abel and Danko renders one of Abel's futures impossible.

Danko, a young Roma boy who breaks with his band of peers around the time when he meets Abel, stands out in the social network Abel establishes in the course of the novel as a figure that deeply and obviously influences Abel's life, yet also seems to disappear after having done so. Furthermore, Danko is the only figure who seems to have a mutual conversation with the homodiegetic narrator. Although other figures debate the story's diegesis—such as in the conversation between Omar and the author Alegria to which I will come—Danko's exchange with the narrator is unique. Here Danko debates the diegesis not merely with another storyworld figure, but with the narrator as narrator. Because the narrator is homodiegetic—that is, held to epistemic limits in accordance with the storyworld that it narrates—the unique status of this conversation is in part heuristic. Yet the literary strategies that compose Danko's diegetic intervention are distinct from Omar's discussions about the story with his novelist grandfather. The specificity of literary strategies associated with Danko is most visible in a paradoxical narrative temporality brought into relief through semantic markers that are meaningful only when they refer to diegetic activity as such. These semantic markers establish narrative temporality by emphasizing a temporal difference between some passages and the futures from which they are narrated at other (or indeterminate) times. These markers—possessive pronouns that incite dispute over how figures focalize narration and a nickname that can be traced back to a specific scene in the novel—allow Danko to interrupt and influence the story's narration. Danko thereby becomes invisible in, yet constitutive of, narration.

Language grounded in a relationship narratively established with Danko circulates through the story to become Omar's nickname for his stepfather after Danko disappears as a

figure in the storyworld. I call this language Danko's because its functional role in the novel maintains a deictic center in Danko even when he as a figure is absent. This deictic center is established narratologically through a semantic marker (*Spion*) that connotes a specific relationship between Abel and Danko. While Abel conforms to the subjectivity Omar's family articulates, as I have noted, Danko disappears. Danko's narrative perspective on Abel, however, makes its way through the social networks of the storyworld to become Omar's nickname for Abel. Omar's chosen affiliation with Danko's role in the story configures a narrative structure that connects past to present as, in Heller's words, a past-present age that has become meaningful to readers in the course of the novel. In what follows, I flesh out some of the textual references to relevant historical markers in order to give my own readers a sense of the public discourses circulating about the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the movement of its people during the 1990s. I will then return to Mora's text in order to show how Danko, Abel, and Omar become narratologically connected to each other in relation to these historical markers. This will allow me than to relate the novel's narrative structure to Ágnes Heller's standpoint of Togetherness, an absolute present that allows for the reconstruction of the past as a past-present age.

III. 3 Yugoslavia

Abel and Danko first meet in a park where Abel frequently sits after work and Danko plays soccer with other Roma. Abel's affinity with Danko is first suggested when Abel, hearing yelling "in dem sämtliche seiner Vorfahren und Nachkommen verflucht wurden,"[59] awakens from dozing on a park bench to see a young boy taking cover from apples being thrown by the other Roma. Although Danko's "[d]unkle Haut, Akzent"[60] are distinct from Abel's white skin and accent-free command of languages and prompt Abel to ask about the boy's background, in

[59] Ibid., 184.
[60] Ibid., 185.

the course of their conversation readers learn that the two figures do share a "gemeinsame Muttersprache."[61] This language is never named, but elsewhere in the novel narration focalized through Mercedes and the police characterizes it as "ein Gewaltdialekt."[62] The temporal location of the novel during the Yugoslav Wars and Abel's history of migration suggest that the native language Abel, Danko, and the rest of the Roma share is Serbo-Croatian.[63] The Roma's professed antagonism toward Abel's ancestry, most likely Serbian for reasons to which I come in a moment, underscores divergent attitudes toward communal identities and what grounds them. The characterization of this language as simply a dialect of violence demonstrates the social elision of these differences in Germany. By drawing attention to this ostensibly shared language, the novel prompts readers to consider the discursive contradictions and parallels that accrue around Danko's self-proclaimed identity as Roma, a nation without a state[64] and Abel's unintelligible sociopolitical status in both unified Germany and the former Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia as it breaks into autonomous nation-states.

Let us recall the narrator's explanation for Abel's absence during Omar's last Russian lesson: "Der Staat, in dem er [Abel] geboren worden sei und den er vor fast zehn Jahren verlassen habe, sei in der Zwischenzeit in drei bis fünf neue Staaten gespalten worden. Und

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[61] Ibid., 198.
[62] Ibid., 10.
[63] In English, differences among languages that are called Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian are usually elided into one language called Serbo-Croatian. Though language and its relationship to national belonging were hotly contested issues in former Yugoslavia and during its dissolution, these symbolic differences manifest largely in the scripts used. For example, Cyrillic is usually used for Serbian but never for Croatian. Linguistic differences do not map neatly onto the main nationalities associated with actors in the wars across former Yugoslavia, despite having been used to justify sociopolitical tensions: "Croats, Serbs, and Bosniaks have long spoken (and even now still speak) a mutually intelligible language, with variations in usage and pronunciation that cut across ethnic markers—dialects were regionally marked, and did not correspond with religious, ethnic, or political divisions." Waters, 3-33. Here 8. In an interview, Terézia Mora recalls, "genau, seine Muttersprache wäre Serbisch." See Burka Bianka. *Manifestationen der Mehrsprachigkeit und Ausdrucksformen des ‚Fremden' in deutschsprachigen literarischen Texten. Exemplifiziert am Beispiel von Terézia Moras Werken*. Diss. Pannonischen Universität Vezprém. 2011. Print.
[64] The International Romani Union called for international recognition as a territory-less nation at the Fifth World Romani Congress in July 2000. Sean Nazerali. "The Roma and Democracy: A Nation without a State." *Democracy Unrealized: Documenta11_Platform1*. Okwui Enwezor et all, eds. Kassel: Hatja Cantz, 2002. 133-149. Print. 131.

keiner dieser drei bis fünf sei der Meinung, jemandem wie ihm eine Staatsbürgerschaft schuldig zu sein. Dasselbe gelte für seine Mutter, die nun zur Minderheit gehöre und ebenfalls keinen Pass bekomme."[65] Although Abel's elliptical identity as "jemand[] wie ihm" subverts attempts at social identification, he can be temporally located in official terms within the boundaries of a country that no longer exists. The state to which the narrator refers in this passage is the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), which became the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia[66] in the 1990s as it broke into independent republics and autonomous zones in a series of violent wars and multiparty, democratic-style elections. The Republics of Macedonia, Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina declared independence from Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia officially ceased to exist when Serbia and Montenegro declared a state union in February 2003.[67] One of the most polarizing issues in Socialist Yugoslavia and its postcommunist successor was the political status of nations, nationalities and ethnic minorities. Initially, Communist Party policy in Yugoslavia under Josip Broz Tito took its cues from Joseph Stalin's 1936 constitution of the Soviet Union, which proposed to deemphasize the role of ethnic, religious, and cultural identifications as the bases for determining rights.[68] Tito broke with Stalin in 1948 and, with the League of Communists of

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[65] Ibid., 269.

[66] The state of Yugoslavia was initially founded after World War I as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, a name that marks the three main groups considered nations within its confines. It was shortly thereafter renamed Yugoslavia when it became a royal dictatorship under Regent Paul and, due to the multiplicity of cultural communities within its borders, internal regions were named according to geographical markers to avoid ethnic identifications. After World War II, a second, socialist Yugoslavia was formed under the leadership of Communist partisan Josip Broz Tito and underwent several, shorter-lasting name changes to finally become the Socialist Republic of Federal Yugoslavia in 1963. Waters, 10-11.

[67] Although 2003 marks the official end of Yugoslavia as a state, it is by no means the end of political negotiations regarding state boundaries, war crimes, and restitution. Montenegro and Serbia break up in 2006, Kosovo declares independence in 2008 (and is presently recognized as an autonomous zone), FRY president Slobodan Milošević's trial is prematurely terminated with his death in 2006, and public apologies for war crimes continue today. Waters, 501 and 512.

[68] "Article 13 of the new Yugoslav document guaranteed national minorities 'the right to and protection of their own cultural development and the free use of their own language,' while Article 21 stated that 'all citizens of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia are equal before the law and enjoy equal rights regardless of nationality,

Yugoslavia over which he presided, continued to develop the Yugoslavian constitution to reflect interest in an egalitarian, "Yugoslav" form of government not based on nation-states that could nonetheless be accountable to the heterogeneous composition of its population.[69] By way of this constitution, the centralized Communist government theoretically counterbalanced local governments in each Republic so that ethnic minorities maintained official status regardless of federal practice.[70] Initially, political power in the SFRY was highly centralized in a Party-led People's Assembly in Belgrade and political stability was achieved through political practices of violent oppression and forced assimilation.[71] As local interests in the Republics pushed against the Communist Party, Tito and the League of Communists of Yugoslavia increasingly decentralized power and delegated executive and legislative power to the Republics. This confederate system of governance, also known as a sociopolitical practice of "national communism,"[72] was formalized in the 1974 Constitution of Yugoslavia.

Abel's citizenship difficulties in Germany as a subject of former Yugoslavia are partially due to imposed ethno-national identifications exacerbated by the breakup of Yugoslavia into independent nation-states. After 1946, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia recognized six nations (*narodi*) based on the main communities within its borders: Croats, Macedonians, Serbs, Montenegrins, Slovenes, and after 1968, Bosniaks (or Bosnian Muslims). These six nations were considered "constitutive peoples" and the six Republics forming the Socialist Federation of

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race and creed.'" David M. Crowe. *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia*. 2nd ed. Forward by Andre Liebich. New York: Palgrave, 2007. Print. 222.

[69] Crowe, 223-4.

[70] "Tito designed the new constitution to deemphasize nationality as an active force in the dynamics of the Yugoslav state by limiting the autonomy of the republics through the bicameral national legislature, the Federal Assembly, and depriving the republics of legislative authority 'that was independent and different from the federal organs.'" Crowe, 222.

[71] Waters, 11.

[72] Crowe, 223. Tito's break with Soviet-style Communism inaugurated "a new Marxist approach to socialism. The result was 'national communism,' an independent, experimental path that emphasized decentralized worker control and talked of local administration that conformed 'to the ethnic mosaic of Yugoslavia as well as to its tradition of localism'" Crowe's discussion, focused on the history of Yugoslavia through the legal status of Roma, emphasizes the role of a sense of "Yugoslavness designed to temper ethnic differences" (224).

Yugoslavia were based on them. Members of nations were guaranteed rights and protection from their republics regardless of whether they lived inside or outside their nation's confines. Ten additional communities were recognized as nationalities (*narodnosti*) and were granted specific rights similar to minority rights in other political systems.[73] The rest of the people living in Yugoslavia were considered "Other Nationalities and Ethnic Groups," a category that referred to "Austrians, Greeks, Jews, Germans, Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, Vlachs and others, including those who classified themselves as 'Yugoslavs.'"[74] The Communist distribution of real political power according to criteria other than population size meant that Serbs and Croats, the largest populations across the Federation, had the same rights to representation and protection as smaller nations such as Montenegrians.[75] Roma, a transnational population located throughout Europe and legally recognized as a nationality in Yugoslavia in 1981,[76] enjoyed relatively less persecution in Yugoslavia between 1948 and 1991 than at other points in history because of their support of Tito's Communist partisans against Axis forces during World War II.[77] As the SFRY began breaking into its constituent Republics, however, a combination of economic and political forces lead to increasingly violent wars, genocide, and ethnic cleansing that eventually provoked

[73] Nationalities were defined in the 1974 Yugoslav constitution as "members of nations whose native countries border on Yugoslavia." Gale Stokes. "Independence and the Fate of Minorities, 1991-1992." *Confronting the Yugoslav Controversies: A Scholar's Initiative*. Charles Ingrao and Thomas A. Emmert, eds. West Layfayette: Purdue, 2009. 83-112. Print. 107 fn 3. These groups included "Albanians concentrated in Kosovo (and also Western Macedonia)…Hungarians of he Vojvodina…Bulgarians, Czechs, Roma (since 1981), Italians, Romanians, Ruthenians, Slovaks and Turks." Hugh Poulton. "Linguistic Minorities in the Balkans (Albania, Greece and the Successor States of Former Yugoslavia)." *Linguistic Minorities in Central and Eastern Europe*. Christina Bratt Paulston and Donald Peckham, eds. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998. *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*. Web. 18 July 2014. 42.

[74] Poulton, 42.

[75] Stokes, 83. "Serbs, constituting between 35 and 40 percent of the country's population, were considered formally equal to the Montenegrins, at less than 3 percent."

[76] Crowe, 227-8. Though the Yugoslav constitution recognized Roma as nationalities, they were not equally recognized throughout the republics. Except for the constitutions of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia, the constitutions of most Republics continued to categorize Roma as ethnic minorities.

[77] Crowe mentions that "Tito gave brief consideration to the creation of 'a Gypsy autonomous area in Macedonia.'" For a summary of damage to Roma communities during World War II (known as the Pořajmos or Roma Holocaust) concentrated in Serbia and Macedonia largely by Nazi-affiliated Serbian Četniks and Croatian Ustaša see Crowe, 218-222.

foreign military intervention in 1994. Massive waves of populations living in the SFRY left before and during this time. In late 1992 estimates of refugees and displaced persons from former Yugoslavia ranged from 1.428 million to 2.75.[78] Mora's novel occurs against the backdrop of these conflicts.

Abel's departure from his hometown of S., though not explicitly dated in the novel, coincides with fighting that breaks out in 1990 after democratic-style elections in April brought nationalist interests in individual Republics to the fore over representatives from the League of Communists of Yugoslavia:

> Anfang April gab es erste Proteste, wenn auch nicht hier. Man munkelte, wie schon seit Jahren, über eine latente Krise im Land, wenn auch nicht hier. Das Identitätsbewusstsein der Minderheiten regte sich[…]Das Nächste ist, dass Herbst ist, und Abel flieht. Kurz nach diesem letzten Spaziergang [im Sommer] brachen Kämpfe aus, als hätte man nur darauf gewartet, dass endlich Ferien sind.[79]

This passage, occurring when Abel leaves S. for B., helps readers locate his birthplace in the SFRY. The descriptions of protests that are "nicht hier" suggest he is not in the Republic of Slovenia, where resistance to the election results first broke out. The growing self-consciousness of minority identities is likely a reference to the non-Serbian interests surfacing in the individual Republics. As previously mentioned, Tito's Communist Yugoslavia attempted to distribute political power among nations regardless of their population size. This measure was taken in order to avoid biasing the Communist government toward the Serbs, one of the three main nations that constituted the first, royal Yugoslavia and the main ethnic opponent to the Communist partisans during World War II.[80] As the decentralizing measures formalized in the

[78] Crowe, 349-50 fn 98. In the same year, 350,000 refugees (of 1,219,348 total admissions) receive "temporary protection" Germany. Deniz Göturk, David Gramling and Anton Kaes, eds. *Germany in Transit: Nation and Migration 1955-2005.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007. Print. 504.
[79] Mora, 29-30.
[80] Waters, 10-1. More Yugoslavs killed one another in what resembled a civil war between Partisans and Serbs than were killed by the German and Italian occupying forces.

1974 Constitution demonstrate, members of the nations of Yugoslavia were weary of the centralized Communist government run out of Belgrade that seemed to reproduce historical impulses toward Serbian domination. When Slobodan Milošević was elected to presidency in Serbia in 1989, he was able to secure these nationalist interests and subordinate the federally-recognized autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina to Serbia, thus taking control of Yugoslavia's political and military structures.[81] The politics associated with Milošević's government therefore tended to mark Serbs as perpetrators, though conflicts across the nations involved various combinations of ethnic- and religiously-identified groups. These modulating conflicts become particularly pointed in Bosnia as the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina forms, where Abel was most likely born.

In addition to the references that protests are taking place elsewhere, another reference to Abel's national status suggests that he is from what will become the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina (present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina). This reference first takes the form of a chronology, but is shortly thereafter translated through an explicitly figured subjectivity that connects readers to Abel's his mother, Mira, whom Abel has left in S. Abel lives with two students when he arrives in B.. One of them, Konstantin, has exchanged writing a dissertation on

[81] The Yugoslav National Army confiscated weapons in Slovenia and Croatia after elections, suggesting plans spearheaded by Milošević to make a greater Serbia out of Yugoslavia. These plans instrumentalized Serbian national interest and served as a basis for fictitious claims that entrenched racial biases among nations in Yugoslavia were to blame for the extremity of the Yugoslav wars. However, though differences and tensions among communities in the area have been documented over time, the intensity and duration of these conflicts is correlated to the rise of ethnic identifications and modern nations: "Although nationalist historians and some Western journalists have painted the region as one of immemorial national struggle, there exists broad consensus that…'[f]or centuries…life in the Balkans was no more violent than elsewhere.'" Waters, 9. Once elected, Milošević worked by way of institutional connections to associate individuals across the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS), the Serbian secret police force (SDB), the Yugoslav national army (JNA), and the Yugoslav military counterintelligence (KOS). For an early study of Serbian experience during the Yugoslav conflicts, see Tim Judah. *The Serbs: History, Myth and the Destruction of Yugoslavia.* New Haven: Yale UP, 1997. Print. Especially 168-190. Judah is openly critical of Milošević's political process of "framing the Serbs" when the already decentralized federation of Republics in Yugoslavia threatened to further offset Communist power centralized in Belgrade. For a helpful chronology of military events leading up to the outbreak of official war declarations across the Republics from a range of perspectives, including those sympathetic to Croatia, see Branka Magaš and Ivo Žanić, eds. *The War in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina 1991-1995.* Foreword by Noel Malcolm. London: Frank Cass, 2001. Print. 346-376.

migration during antiquity for making a space for refugees in B.[82] Narration focalized through Konstantin and the third roommate, Pal, enumerates a series of events in chronological order that collapses three years of Abel's stay in their apartment into a single point in narration. Within this string of events that includes some of the most explicit historical references in the story, a parenthetical congratulation implies Abel's relationship to a recently-recognized independent republic:

> Stand am nicht zu öffnenden Fenster, Gesicht zur Bahn, und *lamentierte* (Kursiv: Pal) *stunden*lang – über einfach alles. Vergangenheit, Gegenwart, Zukunft. *Dieses Jahrhundert, das uns hierher getragen hat*! Sein Atem bildete einen kleinen Nebelkreis an der Fensterscheibe, dort sprach er hinein, sein Mikrophon. Sie hören Radio Konstantin. Politik, Panorama, Wetterbericht. Fünftausend Jahre alten Menschen gefunden, der Schiefe Turm von P. wird immer schiefer, das größte Lebewesen der Welt ist ein 100 Tonnen schwerer Pilz, Waffenstillstand erklärt, Republik gegründet, Barrikaden errichtet, den Priester und den Fahnenträger während einer Hochzeit ermordet, Stern entdeckt, als unabhängiger Staat anerkannt (Gratuliere!), als Geisel genommen, Brücke gesprengt, 427 Jahre Geschichte, verschwunden in den eiskalten, türkisgrünen Fluten der ... Pals Zimmertür ging auf: Könntest du vielleicht mal für eine Minute die Klappe halten, danke! Und schmiss die Tür wieder zu. Plastikmonster, murmelte K.[83]

In this passage, the homodiegetic narrator combines Pal and Konstantin's impressions as the narrator watches Konstantin and mimics his, according to Pal, melodramatic laments. The narration explicitly employs Pal's diction using italics, and then foregrounds a deictic shift to Konstantin by way of third-person narration focalized through a perspective that shares Pal's annoyance, but does not bear the italics that explicitly attribute narration to Pal. This narrator mockingly refers to Konstantin's monologues as "Radio Konstantin" and proceeds to narrate indirectly a series of events either as Konstantin, or in the manner of Konstantin. The narration then shifts to direct focalization through Pal, suggesting that the chronology was not narrated by

[82] Eszter Probszt argues that Konstantin offers Abel a social network that may facilitate the exchange of resources and emotional support, but that Konstantin's attempts to manage Abel and other refugees fail given the "Welttransitstrom" that exceeds his capacity. See Probszt, 116.
[83] Mora, *Alle Tage*, 102.

him after all. Pal's request for Konstantin to shut up replies to the latter's tirade, at which point the indirect focalization seems to become attributable to Konstantin. Yet the temporality of the scene—three years of history squeezed into the moment of Pal and Konstantin's antagonistic exchange—forms a paradoxical moment in time that locates a temporality composed of a series of political and cultural events occurring between 1991 and 1993 in what is presumably an interaction typical of the roommates' relationship. Although no specific dates are given, many of the events are unique so as to allow for precise dating. The narrative order of these events, progressing chronologically from past to future, suggests that less specific references are listed according to this chronology as well. This general pattern helps readers determine a reference to an event in the list, the recognition of an independent state ("als unabhängiger Staat anerkannt"), that could refer to several historical events during the implied timeframe. Identifying the event, and thereby more precisely Abel's birthplace, requires readers to determine the more readily identifiable events which occur between the first and the last events listed: the discovery of the 5,000-year-old "Ötzi the Iceman" in September 1991[84] and the explosion of the Stari Most, an ancient bridge over the Neretva River in Mostar, by the Bosnian Croat Army on November 9, 1993.[85] Three independent states were recognized by the international community during this timeframe: Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Germany recognized the Republics of Croatia and Slovenia in December 1991[86] and the European Commission recognized Bosnian

[84] Helmut and Erika Simon discovered a frozen corpse during a hike in the Öztal Alps between Italy and Austria on September 19, 1991. After the discovery, controversy arose regarding whether the body was located on the Austrian or Italian side of the border. "Ötzi." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia.* Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 16 May 2014. Web. 17 May 2014. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ötzi>

[85] Brendan O'Shea. *The Modern Yugoslav Conflict 1991-1995: Perception, deception and dishonesty.* London: Frank Cass, 2005. Print. 103. O'Shea describes this event as a particularly significant moment in which specific war aims were lost to the aggression of the war: "This was a poignant moment for Muslims and Croats alike, and while this senseless vandalism made it crystal clear to everyone that the values of the past were now well and truly gone it also triggered a reaction from the politicians who at least theoretically were supposed to be in control of their military."

[86] Some emphasize Germany's unique position as the first to push for recognition within incommensurable international discussions about involvement in the break-up of Yugoslavia. Because the UN had declared a policy of

independence on April 6, 1992.[87] The placement of the phrase, "als unabhängiger Staat anerkannt," after a chain of more easily dateable events progressing through 1991 and into 1992 therefore helps readers identify the recognized independence as that of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The other dates in the sequence include a team of botanists' discovery of a 37-acre *Armillaria bulbosa*, deemed to be the largest organism in the world, near Crystal Falls, Michigan on April 2, 1992;[88] the ceasefire between Yugoslavia and Croatia on January 3, 1992; the founding of the Republika srpskog naroda BiH (predecessor of Republika Srpska, loosely translated as the Serbian Republic, in what becomes Bosnia-Herzegovina) on January 9, 1992;[89] and the March 1, 1992 shooting of Nikola Gardović and an Orthodox priest at a Serbian Orthodox wedding in the Baščaršija neighborhood of Sarajevo that is thought to have spurred the war in Bosnia.[90] When the parenthetical interjection "(Gratuliere!)" interrupts the series of scientific discoveries and political events leading up to war in present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina, it creates a specific connection between this event of Bosnian independence and Abel. Although other figures tend to conflate differences among refugees from former Yugoslavia—an elision of cultural difference best captured by the prefacing reference to "Der Balkan etcetera"[91]—Konstantin

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noninterference in 1991, international recognition was necessary for UN forces to intervene. The concerted EC recognition of Slovenia and Croatia occurred in January 1992. Matjaž Klemenčič. "The International Community and the FRY/Belligerents, 1989-1997." *Confronting the Yugoslav Controversies: A Scholar's Initiative*. Eds. Charles Ingrao and Thomas A. Emmert. West Lafayette: Purdue UP, 2009. 152-198. Print.

[87] Waters, 19-20. US recognition followed a day later. Klemenčič, 172.

[88] "Größtes Lebewesen der Erde entdeckt. Das Kalendarblatt: 2. April 1992." Narr. Luise Kinseher. Writ. Christiane Neukirch. Graph. Angela Smets. Ed. Thomas Morawetz. *Bayrischer Rundfunk. Bayern2*. ARD.de. 2 April 2013. Web. 17 May 2014. <http://www.br.de/radio/bayern2/sendungen/kalenderblatt/0204-groesstes-lebewesen-welt-hallimasch-100.html>.

[89] Waters, 495.

[90] The shooting was later read as a symbolic act of aggression by Muslims against the Serbs who had boycotted elections for Bosnian independence. The official declaration of war in Bosnia occurred the next day. Brendan O'Shea, 33. The name of the groom's father is in Judah, 202. In 2007, Ramiz Delalic was killed in Sarajevo after having been charged in 2004 for firing shots at the wedding. The shooter was unidentified at the time. See news coverage from an Austria newspaper at "'Auslöser' des Bosnien-Krieges getötet." *Kronen Zeitung*. Krone Multimedia krone.at. 28 June 2007. Web. 17 May 2014. <http://www.krone.at/Welt/Ausloeser_des_Bosnien-Krieges_getoetet-Unterwelt-Boss-Story-72298.>

[91] Mora, 5.

seems more invested in political developments than Abel, and even implores his roommate, "Wie bringst du es fertig, überhaupt keine Nachrichten zu hören und auch mich nicht zu bitten, sie stündlich zu aktualisieren? Es *kann* dich nicht nicht interessieren, was in der Fremde und zu Hause los ist. Hast du etwa nicht deine Mutter ein ganzes Jahr lang nicht wiedergefunden? Wie geht es ihr?"[92] The narration then shifts to direct focalization through Abel's mother, Mira, who answers Konstantin's final question as though it were addressed directly to her. These narrative cues, located in Konstantin's reference to Abel's birthplace while the two are in B., suggest that Abel was born somewhere in present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina.[93]

Radio Konstantin's chronology, by interspersing scientific discoveries of stars and mushrooms with violent events leading up to the Bosnian War, ridicules the logic of linear time by leveling the significance of these not necessarily thematically-related events through the juxtapositions that occur in chronology. Instead of foregrounding or framing the relation of these phrases, the history reported by Radio Konstantin lists a selection of events in time that progress linearly: the "Vergangenheit, Gegenwart, Zukunft" about which Konstantin laments. As such, the account approaches the identification of present history, in Agnes Heller's sense of a flow of events that inspire fear or hope and have alternative consequences (i.e. might influence action in a meaningful way), with the present historical age, thus producing "isolated actions" that lack the structural relations that would give them meaning.[94] This linear account of history diverges

[92] Ibid., 103.
[93] One strong trend in scholarship on *Alle Tage* focuses on Mora's stylistic omission of place names that, according to the author as well, purposefully obscure overdetermined cultural signifiers and thus encourage readers to draw analogies between the cities described in the text (especially B.) and contemporary urban centers in general. Readings by Andrea Geier and Christian Sieg are exemplary in this respect. I certainly acknowledge this literary strategy as operative in Mora's style. However, these other textual cues suggest to me that efforts to locate Abel, though deeply frustrated, importantly motivate readers to engage with Yugoslav and German history. Maria Mayr also argues that the novel's themes "are specifically German, or more precisely, they are the themes of the Berlin Republic in confrontation with the 1990s wars in former Yugoslavia" in her article, "B. as in Balkan: Terézia Mora's Post-Yugoslav Berlin Republic." *German Life and Letters* 67:2 (April 2014): 242-259. Print. Here 250-1.
[94] Agnes Heller, *A Theory of History*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982. Print. 45.

radically from the intersecting subjectivities and indeterminate temporalities characterizing most of Mora's narration. Narratologically, it offers a series of phrases which lack grammatical subjects, and—aside from the interjected congratulations—it also lacks the structural and subjective organization that confers meaning by configuring a past-present age.

III.4 Spion

In contrast to the linear history of Radio Konstantin, the temporal structure configured by way of semantic deixis through the narration of Abel and Danko brings past and present together in a meaningful way. When Abel and Danko first meet, narration shifts among focalization through Abel, Danko, and a homodiegetic narrator that refers to them as *der Typ* and *der Junge* respectively. By employing the two labels in place of the figures' names, the narration demonstrates the figures' lack of knowledge at this time when they have not yet introduced themselves to each other. When Abel asks Danko where he is from, Danko's directly focalized reply identifies Danko as Roma using the first-person plural pronoun: "Wir sind Rom, sagte er dann." [95] Shortly thereafter, the homodiegetic narrator coins the name *der Spion* for Abel, who spies on the other Roma's activities until they leave so that Danko can come out from hiding: "Spielen weiter, halten an, schauen her, unterhalten sich, gehen, berichtete der Spion."[96] Though speech is focalized through Abel, the form of narration in the quotation also marks Danko's perspective by locating the deictic center of reference in a functional relationship defined semantically. That is, *der Spion* names the role Abel plays for Danko in this scene. *Spion* can be understood as Danko's language to the extent that narrative focalization incorporates Danko's

[95] Mora, 185.
[96] Ibid., 185.

perspective by way of the semantic deixis that marks Abel according to the role he plays for Danko in this moment.[97]

This moment does not strike the reader as particularly significant until two pages later when the narrative temporality and validity of the label *der Spion* is foregrounded and relocated: "Abel, den man später tatsächlich *Spion* nennen wird."[98] This more explicit use of *Spion* in conjunction with Abel's name occurs after Abel has been labeled *Spion* in the scene with Danko, yet it refers to another scene that, though occurring later in the time of the storyworld (as indicated by *später*), precedes it in the order of narration. I will discuss this third use of *Spion* in greater detail, but first note that the given quotation describes it as the actual (*tatsächlich*) moment of naming. This implies that something about the use of *Spion* in the scene with Danko is not actual. Perhaps *tatsächlich* indicates that the focalized scene between Danko and Abel is a virtual event, or perhaps the actuality in question is the action of narration itself. This complication results largely because the distinction among diegetic levels, or the narrator and its focalizors, functions in this novel only to be complicated and reversed. When the homodiegetic narrator calls attention to the act of narration by using the impersonal pronoun *man* and makes a metacomment on the nonactuality of the narrative, the narrator questions to which moment of naming the narration refers. Readers may not remember such a small detail from the scene almost 150 pages earlier that is regarded as actual in this moment, but the reference to actuality at least cues them to disregard some unspecified aspect of Abel and Danko's interaction. The virtuality that results from this will be further extended when I consider the use of *Spion* to which the quotation refers. The other implication of *tatsächlich*—a homodiegetic narrator that

[97] Drawing off of William Frawley's *Linguistic Semantics* (1992), Herman briefly mentions the deictic role of "honorific terms and particles that index interlocutors' social status (*sir, Dr. Herman*)," or "social deixis," but his argument focuses on contextual anchoring and pronominal shifts. *Story Logic*, 332 and 347.
[98] Mora, 191.

undermines its own actuality—suggests that the figures have the actual capacity to name themselves within narration, whereas diegesis is the virtual function. That is, when the homodiegetic narrator dubs Abel *der Spion* as he watches the other Roma for Danko, the name is merely a functional conceit until the focalizors are in a position to actually speak in the storyworld, i.e. to switch places in narration from focalizor to narrator.

In the third use of *Spion*—the first the reader sees according to narrative order—Omar meets Abel in front of the courthouse after Abel and Mercedes' failed divorce. This scene occurs relatively early in the novel and even attentive readers may well forget it by the time the narrator deems it the actual moment of naming over 100 pages later. It is the only other time in the novel that the word *Spion* is used, however, and thus the most likely antecedent of the later scene. Anticipating the divorce, Omar waits outside the courthouse with his mother's friend, Tatjana, to say goodbye. Still married, Abel and Mercedes exit with their lawyer to see Omar and Tatjana and have the following exchange:

> Was macht ihr hier? Mercedes sah Omar an. Das war so nicht verabredet. Dass sie da sein würden, wenn sie herauskommen. Liebes Scheidungspaar, liebe Gäste.
> Als sie ihm sagte, sie würden sich jetzt also scheiden lassen, sah Omar Mercedes nicht an, er sagte nur: Schade.
> Jetzt sah er sie wieder nicht an, er sah zu Abel: Ich wollte mich verabschieden. Aber statt auf Wiedersehen sagte er: Hallo, Spion.
> Wie geht's, Pirat?[99]

When this scene turns out to be the referent of the later quotation ("Abel, den man tatsächlich *Spion* nennen wird"[100]), Omar becomes the antecedent of the generalized pronoun *man*, and the actual use of *Spion* is as Omar's nickname for Abel. By coding this moment as actual in the moment that comes later according to narrative order, the homodiegetic narrator thematizes the events of the storyworld as more actual than its own act of narration. That is, the narrator dubs

[99] Ibid., 50.
[100] Ibid., 191.

direct focalization through Omar actual in comparison to the homodiegetic narration in the scene between Abel and Danko. As a result, Omar is privileged in narration with the actual ability to tell Abel's story, which then becomes a vehicle for both his story and Danko's as well.

The structure of temporality that results from this conversion of actual event and virtual narration works by way of narrative order, chronology, and grammar as seen in the circulation of *Spion* through the text. According to the narrative order, the moment between Abel and Omar precedes the past moment that will become its referent. Considered merely along lines of narrative order and thematic chronology, narrative time seems simply to reverse its arrow, and the past occurs after the future toward which it points. Yet these scenes also occur in keeping with grammatical order: Omar is the antecedent of the general pronoun *man*. When readers consider the narratological configuration of time along with its grammatical subject, the first scene occurs in a present moment oriented toward a future narrative moment in which the antecedent of the first scene appears in a past event. In this narratological configuration, the past of the present moment between Omar and Abel emerges later as a past-present age oriented toward the storyworld future through grammatical subjectivity. Recalling Heller's terms, "[t]he past-present age is an age whose symbols and values have become meaningful for us."[101] When readers apprehend the antecedent scene that defines the meaning of *Spion* later in the story, they participate in a textual configuration of temporality through which textual referents gain specific meanings. In the storyworld, this requires engaging with a figure whose existence in B. is even more problematic than Abel's. Although Danko cannot conform to the storyworld precepts as Abel has been able to, his storyworld presence in the semantic deixis marked by *Spion* conditions a past-present age that brings socially unintelligible figures into view. The postcommunist future temporality configured through *Spion*, which indexes Danko's illegible subjectivity thus places

[101] Heller, 44.

the language that can articulate this subjectivity for readers of German in the future. This future temporality formally orients readers through the implied figure coded as Roma toward a future in which his story may be told, too.

CONCLUSION

The postcommunist literature at the focus of this dissertation engages subjective experiences with real existing socialism in the countries of eastern Europe after 1989 to investigate its legacies. As these narratives grapple with a history that had formerly been ascribed to a homogeneous Eastern Bloc by Cold War discourses, they demonstrate the multiplicity of subjective orientations toward futures and the narrative means by which these futures can be actualized. Attending to the formal narrative features used to articulate temporality and subjectivity in postcommunist culture provides specific insights into how the theoretical project of communism—in its most general sense, a collective orientation toward a better future—remains for implied readers after 1989. This literature demonstrates that the legacies of real existing socialism are not cultural currents that may merely be ascribed to a distant past with the collapse of real exisitng socialist states in 1989. Rather, cultural legacies inspired by social projects dependent on shared futures continue to shape history, even at a time when neoliberal capitalism seems to eclipse social alternatives and market logics are emphasized in a world mapped through globalizing economies. Postcommunist literature insists on continued reflection on what was once considered the main economic and political alternative to liberal democracy for the majority of the twentieth century. The historical rupture marked by 1989 makes continued reflection on real existing socialism more pressing then ever, and postcommunist literature offers a medium through which to reflect with narrating subjects also involved in a cultural field spanning real existing socialism and its demise.

Attending to the narrative structures developed by subjectivities negotiating the historical rupture of 1989 and the cultural legacies running through it demonstrates the need to avoid the teleology of a supposed structural failure of socialist state forms that progressed in Marxist terms

of constitutional development toward a communist society, and the likewise teleological liberal terms of a predetermined progression toward liberal capitalist democracy. Instead, the present dissertation returns to literary temporalities that construct this historical moment and its legacies from a multiplicity of subjective temporalities. Through narratological and cultural analysis of postcommunist texts, I seek to develop a critical vocabulary for articulating the interplay of temporal structures and transforming subjectivities in a postcommunist register coded both in terms of a historical chronology in which 1989 has particular significance as an ending of sorts, as well as in cultural terms constituted by the nexus of processes leading up to 1989 and extending beyond it. At a temporal juncture in which the influence of real existing socialism actively shaping modernity becomes most important—underscored by concomittant public discourses attempting to write it away—these German texts serve as crucial reminders of how the past of real existing socialism continues to influence the cultural construction of a New Europe after 1989.

In Herta Müller's reflections on Romania under the rule of Nicolae Ceaușescu's Communist Party (1965-1989), this takes the form of a narrating subject resistant to the homogeneous temporality imposed by the Romanian *Securitate* and the concomitant historical pressures real existing socialism in Romania place on social collectives. In my reading of Herta Müller's 1997 novel *Heute wär ich mir lieber nicht begegnet*, I have shown how narration allows for the plural subject "wir" to be dis- and rearticulated through a type of social cognition narratologically termed "intermental thought" through which the plural subject "we" is transformed in narration. Intermental thought refers to narration located not within minds, but between them, working by way of external cues to emphasize social cognition through narrative statements not coded in verbal terms. When "we" bears reference to Major Albu, a *Securitate*

officer who constructs a serial temporality which threatens to eclipse the narrator's field of possibilities by fixing them to an appointment for interrogation that may or may not happen at 10 am on any given morning, the narrating subject shifts the referent of "we" to other plural subjects through narrative reflection. As her reflections shift among past memories, present experiences and future anticipations, the narrating subject constructs a temporal structure that exceeds the homogeneous present imposed by the appointments for interrogation. In so doing, she reveals the multiplicity of temporal layers at any given moment, and the impossibility of collapsing them into a single moment bereft of past or future.

Through a final, ambivalent *werden* that suggests a directive to not become crazy despite the pressures of interrogations and rupture of intimate relationships with characters who turn out to be working with the secret police as well, the narrator points implied readers toward an open future that leaves them to decide how the story might continue beyond its ending. This final *werden* also suggests the plural subject with which it has been articulated throughout the story—usually bearing reference to her partner who seems to have betrayed her—but is articulated without any subject at all. Instead, it bears a specific meaning (a directive to not become crazy) she has given it in the context of her narration, which allows her to disarticulate her thoughts from the socially constructed intermental units through which she has formed these thoughts. The result is a subjective structure of narration confined neither to a closed temporal structure fixed to future appointments imposed by Ceaușescu's regime, nor to the plural subjects that try to hold her within this temporality. Müller's narrative thus leaves implied readers on the cusp of an open future neither formally nor thematically prescribed by the narrative structures leading up to it. In the postcommunist moment in which this 1997 novel appears, Müller's story leaves its implied German reader to reflect on how the critical engagement of social pressures in real

existing socialism in Romania might shape the extraliterary world for the better. With a final directive command to not become crazy and a refusal to write the events yet to transpire, the novel motivates implied readers to learn from the real existing socialist past with an eye toward the future.

Zsuzsa Bánk's postcommunist novel *Der Schwimmer* (2002) returns implied readers to the real existing socialist past of Hungary when the revolutions of 1989 seemed farther away than ever. Despite the danger of illegal border crossings and the disappointment of a failed 1968 revolution in Prague, the figures in this novel collectively articulate a hopeful orientation toward a future still undecided in the story. By reconstructing Cold War history from a moment not anchored to 1989, Bánk's novel demonstrates the implications of story-telling for collectively constructing another version of real existing socialism. As the figures in the novel recall being summoned for interrogation in 1953 in front of a first-person narrating subject, they attribute their own dialogic significance to "non-canonical events" in narration and thereby deny the official narrative that dictates mourning Stalin's death. Furthermore, Bánk's narration employs narrative intension—a narrative technique that depends on linguistic semantics in which narrative elements can gain meaning from their location at one point in a narrative and shift this meaning to another—to orient its narrating subject toward a future formally suggested through collective narration as it reconfigures past history. Though this future is configured in seemingly passive terms of waiting, it formally affirms the narrating subject's decision to stay in the People's Republic of Hungary through a utopian attitude ready to work toward a future revolution yet to come.

Terézia Mora's 2004 novel *Alle Tage* inserts implied German readers into the socially constructed storyworld of Abel Nema, a former political subject of Yugoslavia as it is breaking

up during the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. As Abel negotiates his travels to, around and within his postcommunist surroundings in East Berlin, he develops a language in tandem with an almost omniscient narrating voice that weaves his story through the other figures in the storyworld. Whereas Nema is unintelligible as a subject to the official bureaucracies regulating his storyworld, his literary subjectivity works through indeterminate temporalities that narrate a sequence of actual events (occurring in the narrated time of the storyworld) and virtual events (occurring in subjective modalities that do not take place in the narrated time) to open a literary time that makes his postcommunist struggles visible. Mora's unique style of narration shifts among narrating subjects that reference storyworld characters and readers alike through temporal structures that allow events to occur in multiple, interrelated temporalities, thereby opening a future for Abel's subjectivity in postcommunist narrative. As a result, the story integrates Abel's history, marked by his past in former Yugoslavia, into a postcommunist present that critiques the social structures denying migrating subjects a presence in Germany.

Read together, texts by Mora, Müller and Bánk display a variety of biographical relations to real existing socialism. Analytical tools for approaching these works must therefore not restrict their purview to the representation of biographical experience in literature. Similarly, these texts are not merely demonstrative of the tools literature might have for representing a traumatic past. Critical engagement with these works requires moving beyong an analytical fixation on the representation of traumatic experience as that of an individual, and even moving beyond trauma as a rubric for connecting individual trauma with structural historical trauma of collectives. Instead, critical attention to the narration of these works brings the constructive, world-making features of narrative into relief. Postcommunist literature constructs storyworlds in the name of real existing socialism and postcommunist transition that not only press

narratological categories to account for their innovative forms, but that also reconstruct transnational Cold War-inflected histories in German that extend discussions of real existing socialism internal to Germany (between the GDR and the FRG) beyond the borders of Germany.

The close readings that I have detailed here offer promising questions for further analysis. The emerging body of contemporary literature of postcommunism rewrites the contours of German literature in the New Europe by constituting it through a transnational paradigm. The transnational aspects of these texts involve thematic elements that mark subjectivities in terms unintelligible to political discourses of the old Europe as they negotiate national boundaries. These subjectivities, as postcommunist, are produced in part by social and political systems of real existing socialism as practiced in Romania, Hungary and the former Yugoslavia. These systems understood themselves as fundamentally different from the nation-states that mapped one imaginary of (old) Europe. A sustained analysis of postcommunist literature that engages German literature about practices of real existing socialism in other countries would be one useful way of further sharpening the field of postcommunist literature shaping the New Europe.

Furthermore, this dissertation also points toward the need for additional critical work on transnationalism as it affects narrative form. Though the thematic preoccupations of the texts that have been the subject of my analysis here obviously mark them as transnational, the aesthetic forms shaping and being shaped by these transnational referents require closer attention to the ways in which transnationalism is articulated in narrative form. This analysis could be productively approached through an analysis of the "postmonolingual condition"[1] in texts marked by interactions between German and other languages circulating through the New Europe. Müller's texts, for example, draw from idioms translated from Romanian into German,

[1] This is Yasemin Yildiz's term for "a field of tension in which the monolingual paradigm continues to assert itself and multilingual practices persist or reemerge." *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition*. New York: Fordham, 2012. Print. 5.

and Mora's work combines several languages in postcommunist configurations. The interplay of languages constitutive of these transnational texts in a postcommunist register has not yet received the scholarly attention it is due.

Articulating the subjectivities in this literature also provides fruitful models for expanding the notions of subjectivity to which some political models are bound. The plural subjectivities articulated in narration in works by Mora, Müller and Bánk offer modes of social organization that throw the individual subject of liberal democratic theory into a new light and reveal the inadequacy of thinking subjectivity through an autonomous individual subject. The collectivist class subjects of some strains of Marxist theory are also inadequate for accounting for the intersecting historical, socioeconomic and gendered identities that accrue to subjectivities in postcommunist literature. Further analysis of postcommunist literature would also allow for a more refined notion of plural subjectivities in the wake of 1989.

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