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**Author**

Barry, David Lloyd

**Publication Date**

2015

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Unencumbered by History:

Identity, Modernity, and the Holocaust in Günter Grass's *Die Blechtrommel*

and Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster*

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Germanic Languages

by

David Lloyd Barry

2015

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Unencumbered by History:

Identity, Modernity, and the Holocaust in Günter Grass's *Die Blechtrommel*  
and Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster*

by

David Lloyd Barry

Doctor of Philosophy in Germanic Languages

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Todd S. Presner, Chair

In this dissertation I argue that *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* present, comparatively, in relation to their specific authors and societies, fictive counterparts to cultural perspectives on the National Socialist period of German history that have also been developed in the disciplines of history, sociology, and related fields with their grounding constructs. The explicative methodology is freely adapted from ideas by Edward Said into an analytic modality based on the comparison of multiple critical perspectives. I propose that the sense of the works emerges from cultural discourses and narratives of memory involving the relationship between personal subjectivity and German cultural identity. Evaluating claims of history as narrative, also interrogates the roles of individual and collective memory in the construction of those discourses and narratives, as well as analyzing the "legitimizing" narratives of nation states. As

such, the relation of these to concepts of modernity is also an issue for discussion. That these concepts were viewed differently in the Federal Republic of Germany and German Democratic Republic has important consequences for literature produced in those societies, including Grass's and Wolf's works, in terms of narrative viewpoint and overall communicative strategies.

I argue that narratives relating to the unification of the German state reveal a desire to become, in the name of 'normalization', finally unencumbered by a past often considered to be one of *unique* criminality and inhumanity embodied in the Holocaust. I claim that *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* have continuing relevance to contemporary narratives of these problems and to disputes over the continued importance of the Holocaust to historical memory within German culture.

The dissertation of David Lloyd Barry is approved.

Kathleen L. Komar

John A. McCumber

Michael A. North

Todd S. Presner, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2015

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my appreciation to my committee chair, Dr. Todd Presner, for his invaluable advice and guidance for this dissertation. I also offer my sincere thanks to the other members of my doctoral committee, Dr. Kathleen Komar, Dr. John McCumber, and Dr. Michael North for their insights and advice. I thank Dr. Volker Langbehn and Dr. Ilona Vandergriff of San Francisco State University for their encouragement and support.

## **VITA**

### **Education**

B.A. Geography, San Francisco State University, 1985  
M.A. Music, San Francisco State University, 1993  
M.A. German, San Francisco State University, 2008

### **International Study**

Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, 2006 - 2007

### **Conferences and Papers**

2006: Workshop co-presenter on grammatical gender constructs of the German language and their social import. California Language Teachers' Association Convention, Fresno, California.

2011: "Modernity as Narrative in Cold War Era Divided Germany." Columbia University German Graduate Conference, "Modernity at Large" hosted by the Columbia University Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures.

2015: "Transgressing Boundaries: Self, Technology, and Transformation in the Reception of *Der Ackermann aus Böhmen*." Princeton Renaissance and Early Modern Studies Graduate Conference, "Early Modern Print Culture" hosted by the Princeton University Program in Renaissance and Early Modern Studies.

### **Collaborative Publication**

Ilona Vandergriff, David Barry, and Kimberley Mueller, "Authentic Models and Usage Norms? Gender Marking in First Year Text Books," *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German* 41.2 (Fall 2008) 144-150.

### **Multidisciplinary**

Includes commissioned cultural and geographic research, musical compositions, published music reviews, and German translation services.

### **Teaching Assistant for German Language and Literature Courses**

2004: San Francisco State University  
2009 – 2010, 2012 - 2014: University of California, Los Angeles

## 1. Approaching the Texts

### 1.1 Introduction

Günter Grass's *Die Blechtrommel* was published in 1959. The seven hundred and seventy pages of text contained in the third volume of Grass's complete works presents the reader with a story that seems to personalize the National Socialist period in German history. Upon reflection, the unfolding narrative also appears to cast a cynical glance at the society in which it was written, the prosperous Federal Republic of Germany in the 'Cold War' era. Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster*, published in 1976 and occupying the fifth volume of its author's complete works, likewise relates over six hundred twenty-seven pages a personal narrative of life during the 'Third Reich'. As with Grass's novel it seems to embody a certain level of critique of the society in which it was written, that of the communistic German Democratic Republic. Given the complexities of narration and the wide range of issues into which the works seemingly situate themselves -- historiography, personal subjectivity, national identity, even literary analysis itself -- from what perspective(s) might one profitably approach the novels in the twenty-first century?

Questions of whether, how, and with what content a text communicates or 'speaks', constitute the research domain of a varied body of literary theory. Obviously, any reading presupposes a perspective on the work under consideration, which whether realized or not, encodes a certain set of pre-judgments or even philosophical assumptions. Whether read from, for instance, New Critical, structuralist, New Historicist, or a deconstructive perspective, the text is perceived to embody qualities that each perspective, as methodology, may properly recover according to its own principles with assumed epistemological validity. *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* may be and have been subject to very different allocations of sense based on

methodological considerations and the present viewpoint is obviously not exempt from this state of affairs. Exactly what is the point, then, of the endeavor?

## 1.2 A Beginning

Man kann eine Geschichte in der Mitte beginnen und vorwärts wie rückwärts kühn ausschreitend Verwirrung anstiften.<sup>1</sup>

Und wie gewöhnlich wird sich ergeben, was dir weniger unerträglich ist, durch das, was du machst. Was du heute . . . beginnst, indem du, Packen provisorisch beschriebenen Papiers beiseite legend, einen neuen Bogen einspannst, noch einmal mit der Kapitelzahl I anfängst.<sup>2</sup>

These quotes, the first from *Die Blechtrommel*, the second from *Kindheitsmuster*, viewed purely as linguistic examples, appear to insert the process of writing, as a theme, into each work in their respective opening pages. Inspection of the contexts of these passages reveal that each is situated in a larger discourse framing ideas on what it means to be a responsible person, the role of memory in that endeavor, and the urge to communicate these ideas to an audience. The passage from Grass's work appears to speak satirically, that from Wolf's adopts a serious tone. Both explicitly problematize the act of narration and the position of the narrator. This further information, however, rests on inferences about the novels' texts that necessarily become more numerous, abstract, and increasingly decision-based as the reader attempts to glean a larger and more precise sense of the words' import.

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<sup>1</sup> Günter Grass, *Die Blechtrommel* (Göttingen: Steidl, 1959, 1993) 12; *The Tin Drum: a New Translation*, trans. Breon Mitchell (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009) 5. Hereafter B and TD, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> Christa Wolf, *Kindheitsmuster*, (Berlin and Weimar: Aufbau, 1976; Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007) 11; *Patterns of Childhood*. trans. Ursule Molinaro and Hedwig Rappolt (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1980) 3. Hereafter K and PC, respectively.

The manner in which one approaches a text inevitably signals a theoretical orientation and possibly, particular resultant modes of explication. Regarding the quotations from Grass and Wolf above as the starting point for analysis, as givens, entails working with a different set of inferences and applications than beginning with the social relationships with which the novels may be associated. The secondary literature to both novels naturally reflects varied emphases. Early critical work on *Die Blechtrommel*, such as that by William P. Hanson,<sup>3</sup> sometimes operated with textually centered historicist concerns, e.g. the novel's relationship to the *Bildungsroman*. A paradigmatic shift in *Blechtrommel* scholarship occurred in the 1970's with Georg Just's relation of the novel to reception theory. Essentially, for Just, Oskar is a culture-critical figure precisely because his narrative position contradicts the reader's horizon of expectations and invites reflection thereon.<sup>4</sup> With a nod to T. S. Eliot, Just also introduced the concept of 'objective correlates' in relation to *Die Blechtrommel*.<sup>5</sup> The 'postmodern' trend expressed itself in André Fischer's devaluation of previous criticism and insistence on the aesthetic qualities of the novel exclusively, explicating them in terms of playfulness and sexuality, with reference to Bakhtin, and denying connections with extra-textual socio-political referents.<sup>6</sup>

The critical literature to *Kindheitsmuster* runs the gamut from semi-official East German 'Marxist' interpretation to explication in relation to concerns observable in world literature

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<sup>3</sup> William P. Hanson, "Oskar, Rasputin, and Goethe," *Canadian Modern Language Review* 20.1 (1963): 29-32.

<sup>4</sup> Georg Just, *Darstellung und Appell in der Blechtrommel von Günter Grass: Darstellungsästhetik versus Wirkungsästhetik* (Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1972) 69-76.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 112.

<sup>6</sup> André Fischer, "Ludismus und Negativitätserfahrungen in der Blechtrommel," *Inszenierte Naivität Zur ästhetischen Simulation von Geschichte bei Günter Grass, Albert Drach und Walter Kempowski* (Munich: Fink Verlag, 1992) 95-213.

generally. In the 1980's West German critic Margarete Mitscherlich brought psychoanalytic theory to bear on the question of self-portrayal in her comparative treatment of *Kindheitsmuster*.<sup>7</sup> Since the 1990's, engagement with the novel has included approaches such as Lutz Köpnick's situation of the work in relation to concepts from Walter Benjamin,<sup>8</sup> Michael Levine's inquiry into the instability of personal identity within the narrative,<sup>9</sup> and numerous examples of feminist explication.

In the interplay of theory and method discernible in the secondary literature to *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* a short history of initiatives within literary criticism is discernible. The successive issues that have appeared meaningful in reflecting the concerns and values of theorists have often been introduced as oppositional interventions against earlier ideas. As such, each successive initiative, if widely adopted, has also tended to reflect larger intellectual viewpoints apparent across disciplines, although these may be concurrent and possibly conflicting. For instance, emphases that focus on the formal and autonomous characteristics of texts comport well with the idea of discipline specificity and/or analytical perspectives in philosophy. Much criticism, including many structuralist initiatives, extends the broader societal drive to provide a scientific basis for intellectual endeavors. Marxism both benefits from and creates a perspective that sees the so-called objective world as the construction of social forces, particularly class struggle. Deconstructive theories, evincing skepticism towards systematization, the imputation of identities, and the manner in which seeming realities may

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<sup>7</sup> Margarete Mitscherlich, "Die Frage der Selbstdarstellung: Überlegungen zu den Autobiographien von Helene Deutsch, Margaret Mead und Christa Wolf," *Neue Rundschau* 91.2/3 (1980): 291-316.

<sup>8</sup> Lutz Köpnick, "Rettung und Destruktion: Erinnerungsverfahren und Geschichtsbewußtsein in Christa Wolfs *Kindheitsmuster* und Walter Benjamins Spätwerk," *Monatshefte* 84.1 (Spring 1992): 74-90.

<sup>9</sup> Michael G. Levine, "Writing Anxiety: Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster*," *Diacritics* 27.2 (Summer 1997): 106-123.

arise from nothing more than hierarchies of relationships instantiated in language, have initiated debate over the need for caution against overarching theoretization in many disciplines.

Perhaps a common denominator between many literature-theoretical conceptions is the appreciation for the role of language in providing structure to human experience. Theories on the constitution of language have regularly been at the center of debates on analytical modalities. The linguist Dirk Geeraerts, for instance, posits parallels between practices within formal linguistic analysis and those of literary analysis based on formal constructs.<sup>10</sup> The productivity of Saussure's conception of language as a system of signs with emphasis on difference as fundamental discriminant, is of course evident for both structuralist and poststructuralist critique. The conception of language as a constructed medium whose *meanings* reflect various social, political, or economic agencies of power may also appear within or in addition to the linguistic contexts. The descriptors used in literary analysis reflect this process of formation and derive originally from terminological preferences associated with certain critical stances. Terms such as "discourse," "text," "textuality," etc., develop a technical significance beyond a dictionary definition and describe the particular theoretic emphases of Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, or others and are commonly used by those wishing to identify their own analytical constructs with such emphases.

The quotations from *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* above could introduce analyses of the respective novels of widely differing substance and purpose. For Michael Scheffel the passage from Grass and its context signals the fictional nature of the discourse as a

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<sup>10</sup> Dirk Geeraerts, "Decontextualizing and Recontextualizing Tendencies in 20th-century Linguistics and Literary Theory," *Anglistentag 2002 Bayreuth*, eds. Ewald Mengel, Hans-Joerg Schmid, and Michael Steppat (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2003) 369-379.



formal construct.<sup>11</sup> For Eung-Jun Kim the utterance ambiguates the relationship between narrator and author and distances the reader from the narrator's implied views on history.<sup>12</sup> Julia Hell focuses, in passages attending the quotation from *Kindheitsmuster*, above, on the psychological import of a split between the *narrated subject* and the *narrating subject*.<sup>13</sup> Michael Levine's interest in these passages is the performance of self-difference through the substitution of the second person for the first and the further divorce of both from the third personal pronoun creating "the very *différance* of voices."<sup>14</sup> Naturally, literary analysts will explicate texts in terms of those issues that are of compelling interest to them. Surveying literary criticism in general and the secondary literature to *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* in particular one finds not only variant perspectives and methodologies but divergent underlying conceptions of the nature of knowledge and the constitution of the objects of that knowledge as such. Thus, above, Scheffel analyzes from narratological assumptions about the structure of the text, Kim posits both history and literature as a unified entity; Hell bases her literature-theoretical explications on Freudian psychoanalytic theory and Levine proceeds through the use of tropes also associated with Derrida. Not only are the different analyses varied in emphasis but indicate possibly divergent conceptions in textual epistemology and/or ontology.

Terminological distinctions and definitions of those trends considered meaningful or fashionable add a further layer of ambiguity to explicative perspectives. For instance, Ingeborg Hoesterey somewhat whimsically details a debate over considering works by Uwe Johnson as

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<sup>11</sup> Michael Scheffel, *Formen selbstreflexiven Erzählens: eine Typologie and sechs exemplarische Analysen* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1997) 59.

<sup>12</sup> Eung-Jun Kim, *Literatur als Historie. Zeitgeschichte in Thomas Manns "Doktor Faustus" und Günter Grass' "Die Blechtrommel"* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2004) 65-66.

<sup>13</sup> Julia Hell, *Post-Fascist Fantasies: Psychoanalysis, History, and the Literature of East Germany* (Durham, N. C. and London: Duke University, 1997) 200.

<sup>14</sup> Levine 111.

well as the opening passages of *Die Blechtrommel* as examples of German language literary 'modernism' versus an "Amerikanistik" influenced classification of 'postmodernism'.<sup>15</sup> What appears to be a banal truism, that methodology implies a particular view of the nature of writing, might also obscure the extent to which the conception of what writing is -- e.g. author's communication, autonomous art object, "a signifying system constituted by relation and difference,"<sup>16</sup> product of social constructions, all or none of the preceding -- determines analytical methodology. For any given critical orientation one assumes that a text *is* an entity that may be analyzed in a particular manner. In this regard the passages from Grass and Wolf quoted earlier assume a critical character. For, these begin here a critique of literary criticism itself that is not only literal but throughout the novels, also performative. The secondary literature to both *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* has regularly noted the manner in which various literary trends, those that might simplistically and without distinction be categorized as belonging to currents that one might call 'aestheticist', 'modernist', and/or 'socialist realist', are satirized or negatively engaged.<sup>17</sup> Analysis of the novels individually will also show that much in their narrative modes either contradicts or problematizes contemporaneous literary precepts in line with the satirical or actual critique enunciated in the texts.

### **1.3 Texts and Reading Environment**

Among the things that the passages from Grass and Wolf quoted earlier initiate, is (a) to implicitly pose the question in regard to literature-theoretical endeavors in general: what's the

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<sup>15</sup> Ingeborg Hoesterey, "Modern/postmodern: Eine Rezeption der *Jahrestage*, USA 1977," *Johnson Jahrbuch: Band 4/1997*, ed. Ulrich Fries and Holger Helbig (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1997) 48-55; 54.

<sup>16</sup> M. A. R. Habib, *A History of Literary Criticism and Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008) 767.

<sup>17</sup> Nury Kim, *Allegorie oder Authentizität, Zwei ästhetische Modelle der Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit: Günter Grass' Die Blechtrommel und Christa Wolfs Kindheitsmuster* (Frankfurt am Main, New York: Peter Lang, 1995) 16, 18, 242.

point? and (b) to demarcate certain minimal spaces in which that question may be at least tentatively answered. The relationship between (a) and (b) could be regarded as co-dependent. If the passage from *Die Blechtrommel* can be viewed as one that foregrounds the novel's ensuing narrative strategies, in essence a stance that "cannibalizes -- a range of literary, cultural, and religious texts"<sup>18</sup> then (a) above becomes a concomitant of the novel's modes of writing and the narrator(s)' declarations throughout. If the passage from *Kindheitsmuster* highlights the idea that

[. . .] the difficulties that force "you," the writer, to begin again are not simply identifiable or avoidable obstacles in the way of writing but, rather, irreducible and irreducibly conflicted aspects of the writing itself [,]<sup>19</sup>

then the issues surrounding (a) concern the very reasons for writing. In this manner both quotations place themselves within the context of the relation of theory to practice in literary explication. Clearly, they do this both in terms of subject matter and in terms of temporal, i.e. historical placement. The minimal spaces in which the tensions surrounding the topic of writing play out in the novels would appear to be naturally enough, the texts, an assumed reader (otherwise why address?), and the larger environment of both, evident in the novels as discursive historical object and referent.

This 'larger environment' also houses the various critical methodologies: those that find the main interest immanent to the text, those that find this interest in a text's structure and function, in rhetoric, as a function of social forces, as a display of power structures, as reader reception, of difference, and/ or other factors. In *Die Blechtrommel* this larger realm of literary thinking is fantastically suspended between the opposing poles of Goethe and Rasputin; in the

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<sup>18</sup> Sabine Gross, "Narration in the *Tin Drum*: A Quirky Narrator in Search of the Truth," *Approaches to Teaching Grass's The Tin Drum*, ed. Monika Shafi (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2008) 75-89; 76.

<sup>19</sup> Levine 106

end it is possibly a figure of absolute contingency that predominates: *die Schwarze Köchin*. *Kindheitsmuster* operates within a 'realist' literary environment showing some concern for Marxist precepts; yet the fragmentation of the subject and the lack of closure in regard to the stated problematic leads here also to a perception of a subtext in the novel: the paradoxes, if not the outright failure, of theory.

In the world outside the novels, the material world of the reader and the critic, literature-theoretical methodologies can also be seen as products of self-referential paradox. Inasmuch as epistemic validity reflects ontological predilections, that which a theoretical perspective produces as textual explication is an implicit restatement of those basic grounding ideas applied to a text. When Monroe Beardsley treats the aesthetics of a text or considers modes of profitable reading, one discerns a debt to phenomenology and analytical philosophy.<sup>20</sup> Explications by Derrida reveal engagement with Nietzsche and Heidegger in addition to Saussure.<sup>21</sup> Tensions between differing ideas of analysis that often also issue from fundamental differences on the nature of reality and human experience create lively debate between the respective proponents. In some cases critique assumes the form of an attempt to bridge the gap between differing orientations, such as Manfred Frank's initiatives in relation to deconstructive and hermeneutical approaches.<sup>22</sup> The fact that Frank, throughout his works, engages with the thought of German Romantic thinkers, Anglo-American analytic philosophers, and French deconstructionists on an

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<sup>20</sup> Monroe C. Beardsley, "Aesthetic Value in Literature," *Comparative Literature Studies* 18.3 (September 1981) Papers of the Seventh Triennial Meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association: 238-247; 239

<sup>21</sup> Jacques Derrida, "The Supplement of Copula: Philosophy Before Linguistics," *The Georgia Review* 30.3 (Fall 1976): 527-564.

<sup>22</sup> Manfred Frank, *What is Neostructuralism?*, foreword Martin Schwab, trans. Sabine Wilke and Richard Gray (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

apparently equal epistemological basis<sup>23</sup> might seem quixotic and has been criticized as inconsistent,<sup>24</sup> but testifies to an ongoing desire to find intellectual unity in a world of fragmented perspectives.

*Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* are not only situated in a larger environment conceptually but also physically in one of time and space: the former in the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1950s for the latter in the German Democratic Republic of the 1970s. The reader, of necessity situated outside these spaces, may bring very different expectations to the texts of the novels than those assumed at the times and places of writing. Engagement with the novels situates the reader into a 'world' exterior to the novels and herself -- whether conceived as an objective reality, Kantian relationship, or cognitive construct -- in the guise of history: both socio-political and for present purposes, literature-theoretical. Concurrent with the subject matters and production histories of Grass's and Wolf's works cultural critics have found to be meaningful, a partially successive and partially overlapping series of critical movements grouped perhaps simplistically as New Criticism, Marxist approaches, psychoanalytic critique, structuralism, reader response theory, discourse analysis, deconstruction, New Historicism, and media studies/ 'cyber-criticism'. Techniques associated with some of these have also been utilized in *newer* critical emphases: feminist, gender, and post-colonial theory. Considering that, as mentioned earlier, the theory underpinning many of these movements encode sometimes mutually exclusive philosophical fundamentals, and successive initiatives often claim relevance as more sufficient, alternative, or counter explications in relation to predecessors, where does this leave the reader searching for methodological cogency in the year 2015? Which perspectives

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<sup>23</sup> Manfred Frank, *Ansichten der Subjektivität* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012).

<sup>24</sup> Elías Palti, " 'Return of the Subject' as a Historico-Intellectual Problem," *History and Theory* 43.1 (February 2004): 57-82; 81.

can be said to speak most coherently to the cognitive and social conditions of the twenty-first century?

This dissertation suggests that an appropriate answer to the above is: all and none. Implicit in this formulation is the position that all coherently crafted theories contribute something of value about texts, on the basis of their underlying assumptions. However, this latter qualification disqualifies any one perspective from exercising sufficiency in textual explication. The historical situation of the reader in relation to methodological claims will also partially determine what is valuable in any individual case. If the questions above were asked at the time of *Die Blechtrommel's* and *Kindheitsmuster's* respective publications, the list of perspectives considered compelling by the majority of critics would be, of course, different. The time period between the two novels, to the extent one may generalize, witnessed several main trends in critical discourse: a Eurocentric engagement with form and structure, Marxist analyses, debate over the role of the sciences including skepticism of its pretensions and the pretensions of systematization in general. These played out against the socio-political background of the Cold War, civil rights movements, women's movement, and youth rebellion. Philosophical currents were typified by Sartre, Quine, Lacan, the Frankfurt School, re-appreciation of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein, and beginning engagement with Julia Kristeva, Foucault, and Derrida. It is instructive to note that Edward Said, only several years after the publication of *Kindheitsmuster* lists the "progenitors" of contemporary literary theory as Saussure, Lukacs, Bataille, Lévi-Strauss, Freud, Nietzsche, and Marx. Among those practitioners Said considers noteworthy, not without critique, are Derrida, Foucault, and Hayden White.<sup>25</sup> Among a great number of authors and literary figures, from Swift through Beckett, Said also finds the critics

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<sup>25</sup> Edward Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983) 3-4.

Harold Bloom, Northrop Frye, Paul Ricoeur, and Michael Riffaterre significant enough for engagement.

If one considers the enumerations from Said as a possible 'baseline' description of critical currents at the beginning of the Reagan-Thatcher era, incorporating many of the still noteworthy emphases of at least twenty years previous to the writing, how might such a landscape of cultural and literary criticism appear in the second decade of the twenty-first century? The political scene in Europe and the United States has witnessed the end of the East-West Cold War, the collapse of most communist governments, generally conservative governance in Europe and the United States, the rise of computer technologies, economic boom and collapse, and since the year 2001 the threat of 'terrorism', and continuous warfare between the United States, its NATO allies and various nations and groups of insurgents in the Middle East. This period has also seen greater awareness of environmental issues and the drive for equality for women and minority populations in many countries. Global consciousness both economically and sociologically is somewhat in evidence and countries that were plundered in the age of European colonialism have attained a degree of autonomous economic success, particularly in Asia. Multiculturalism coexists with xenophobia; liberation movements with autocracy. Critical emphases for this period could be those mentioned several paragraphs earlier, with the primary exception of New Criticism.

It would be hazardous indeed to attempt a sufficient list of intellectual figures that have contributed to cultural criticism in the last thirty years. Without distinguishing between 'philosophers' and 'theorists' one could no doubt subtract several of the older theorists (those indebted to positivist or behaviorist analysis) mentioned earlier, move Foucault and Derrida into Said's 'progenitors' list along with Walter Benjamin, M. M. Bakhtin, and Jacques Lacan, add to

the list of noteworthy practitioners names like Lyotard, Deleuze, and Judith Butler, and to the list of important contemporary theorists at least a dozen names from Agamben to Žižek. In addition to the above, theorists that surface consistently in German critical surveys include Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hans Blumenberg, Wolfgang Iser, Karlheinz Stierle, Niklas Luhmann, Manfred Frank, and Peter Sloterdijk. German critics took notice of French cultural theory, early popularized in the United States, relatively late in the twentieth century and considered the ideas treated more consistently as issues of hermeneutics, rather than deconstruction.

The reader of *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* at this historical juncture thus finds herself in a critical milieu that arose predominantly within the previous thirty to forty years as supplement, corrective, or oppositional initiative to various formalist and Eurocentrically oriented viewpoints. On the basis of works by those mentioned one can describe the concerns evinced, often referred to as *postmodernist*, or even in the twenty-first century, "post-theoretical,"<sup>26</sup> as the result of a long line of skepticism in reaction to the apparent failures, paradoxes, and aporias of rationalist endeavors to formalize the semantic content of natural language evident in the work of Frege, Russell, and Wittgenstein, for instance. Yet subsequent 'corrective' theorizations are also not unproblematic. Critical emphases such as structuralism and deconstruction have been criticized for reducing their objects of explication to abstractions within self-contained systems;<sup>27</sup> essentially, as characterized earlier, enactments of self-referential paradox. In one summary of the contemporary situation,

[e]ven the concept of "reality" . . . is now viewed as not only as an intellectual but also an ideological construct, serving to privilege certain ways of viewing the world. In a strange historical development, we have come full circle . . . we recognize not only the

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<sup>26</sup> Habib 772.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 648, 665.



constitution of our perceptual and conceptual capacity by language but also the constitutive role of the linguistic situation itself [. . .]<sup>28</sup>

The purportedly liberating power of technology must deal with the circumstance that as the "digital revolution" has "pushed us to the brink of a great age of editorial and archival scholarship"<sup>29</sup> it is also one's digitalized individual identities that are being edited and archived, not by scholars but by corporate and governmental entities.

The 'baseline' intellectual orientation of early twenty-first century society might be seen as one that not only unmask the apparent contradictions of general theories and rejects meta-narratives but also accepts the co-existence of diverse and sometimes opposing views and supports their integration into hybrid forms so far as possible, a trend productively seen in post-colonial literature and analyses.<sup>30</sup> If these are the contemporary conventions, what would be the contextual nature of supplemental, corrective, and oppositional initiatives? Perhaps emblematic of the time is that figure of popular culture fascination, the zombie: that which is neither dead nor alive, neither one nor the other, the undecidable. In this connection it could be argued that *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* attain contemporary relevance as examinations of the undecidables of authenticity and subjectivity. Yet this would require a theoretical perspective through which to judge the meaning or cognitive import of the texts. In this intellectual climate and referring back to the initial quotations from Grass's and Wolf's novels, what is the point? Through which perspective(s), then, may one profitably engage with a novel offering meta-commentary on German history in the guise of a satire on specific forms of literary production and another that searches for subjective unity in relation to that same history within a no longer

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 772-773.

<sup>29</sup> Jerome McGann, *Radiant Textuality* (New York: Palgrave, 2001) 18.

<sup>30</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) 41.

existing society, the ideals of which the author ostensibly supported but from which she also dissented?

#### **1.4 Discourse and Narrative**

If self-referentiality dooms all literature-theoretical methodologies to inadequacy, wherein, then, lies the sense of a text; how does one locate *meaning*? Among the many conjectural answers possible, several intriguing ideas emerge that demonstrate the connection between textual ontology and explicative methodology. These will not be attributed to particular critics since that would involve an extended discussion of the adequacy of attribution in each case. In the following broadly construed alternatives, the sense of a text:

- (1) resides in the text itself, either in terms of semantic, symbolic, semiotic,  
or performative constructs,
- (2) follows from the analysis of the text's significations within a finitely structured  
framework,
- (3) lies in the text's *situation* in the world, incorporating the circumstances of both its  
production and reception,
- (4) issues from pertinent negotiations of historical, cultural, and literary interrelationships  
made evident through either an ideological or non-ideological evaluative schema,
- (5) consists in the interplay and potentially limitless interrelation of the series of  
significations that, from this perspective, actually comprise a text.

Evaluation of these options might produce the following observations. (1) attempts to correct overly subjective and specious interpretations of texts and works but tends to make of these autonomous objects that somehow exist in isolation from social forces. (2) locates the relevant information communicated through literature as functions within the structures of

language but relies on the acceptance of that systematization for critical relevance. (3) will be discussed shortly. (4) offers the more or less complete range of culture and perhaps especially the intersection of institutions and local influences as pertinent background for understanding the production of literature and its communicative valence, militating against the unwarranted imputation of abstract identities that are separate from material contexts. Yet, as with other emphases, either the theoretical basis requires justification or the methodology must be attributed to analytical choice within a purely pragmatic critical stance. (5) above, ultimately interrogates the foundations of Western thought across almost all disciplines. The various initiatives that are congruent with this perspective allow neither unchallenged assumptions nor the imputation of realities to mere verbal constructs, and question the concept of meaning itself. Ironically, this system of differential and deferred meaning could be viewed as the very *absolute*, the possibility of which, it programmatically denies. Of course a rebuttal to this objection is that this perspective cognitively opens a text to the future by preventing any final closure of interpretation. Others could argue against this, that the contingencies inherent in the sense imparting situation of innumerable readers with innumerably diverse cognitive precepts approaching the text within the context of the myriad circumstances of an exterior world necessarily prevents that closure. Others could argue that it is in the nature of a text to effect at least a quasi-closure, as Edward Said's story of Zahirite interpretation suggests.<sup>31</sup> It is evident that possibilities (1), (2), (4), and (5) actually imply positions on the nature of texts, works, and perhaps 'reality' in general that require philosophical evaluation more than pragmatic comparison.

With option (3) a name will be associated: Edward Said. Said, in *The World, the Text*,

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<sup>31</sup> Said 39.

*and the Critic* describes texts as situating themselves "in the world" on the basis of interpretive "constraints" enacted by the texts themselves.<sup>32</sup> His concern is the state of affairs in literary criticism as he perceived it in the early 1980s, positioning himself in relation to Derrida and Foucault.<sup>33</sup> Said's perspective, closer to the latter than the former, as he understood both at this time, pugnaciously emphasizes the connection of the text with the "wordly" circumstances of its production<sup>34</sup> to combat what he believed to be the looming cultural and political irrelevance of literary criticism as a Eurocentric discipline of abstract methodology.<sup>35</sup> He therefore posits the relation of literary production to reception "supported by a discursive situation"<sup>36</sup> as the placement of the text in the world, as opposed to "an emphasis on the limitlessness of interpretation."<sup>37</sup> At first glance, Said appears to work within the philosophical bounds of a naive realism but a close reading of his texts as well as his later works demonstrates the extent to which Said's realities rest on the creative and signifying powers of critical discourse.<sup>38</sup> This is the point that interests us here. If literature-theoretical perspectives offer textual epistemologies that need to be debated at the level of ontology to weigh their relative merits, exactly what do these viewpoints present? Said speaks of criticism in general as a "distance" [from the text] born of "circumstance and distinction."<sup>39</sup> Inseparable from these is the "discursive situation"<sup>40</sup> of the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 40.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 3, 47.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 39-40.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 25.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 40.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 39.

<sup>38</sup> Stathis Gourgouris, "Transformation, Not Transcendence," *boundary 2* 31.2 (Summer 2004): 55-79; 65.

<sup>39</sup> Said 15.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 40.

text, which is made present in criticism.<sup>41</sup> Said does not go this far, but considering the limitations of theorizing, it should not be incredible to view critical perspectives themselves as discourses rather than scientifically or philosophically chartered world-disclosing gateways to some deeper reality, at least not without debate in those terms.

Of the many definitions of and analyses attendant upon the concept of 'discourse' Said follows Foucault to the greatest extent, viewing the term as denoting statements of what a particular society or intellectual discipline considers meaningful at a particular time incorporating "a systematic conversion of the power relationship between controller and controlled"<sup>42</sup> into words. A more neutral general definition might be "a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)" [emphasis removed].<sup>43</sup> Heidegger explicates the term from Aristotle's definitions, thus.

In discourse . . . so far as it is genuine, *what* is said [*was geredet ist*] is drawn *from* what we talk about, so that discursive communication, in what it says [in ihrem Gesagten], makes manifest what it is talking about, and thus makes this accessible to the other party.<sup>44</sup>

Yet discourses do not arise fully formed and may be analyzed through many different theoretical analyses exactly as literature itself. The particular way of talking evinced by a discourse can be decomposed into the manner in which and the assumptions behind the relating of facts, purported causations, and explanatory theories. The units into which discourse may be analyzed will be

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 51.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 47.

<sup>43</sup> Marianne Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London: Sage, 2002) 1.

<sup>44</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962, 2008) 56.

designated *narratives*, since they comprise a *telling*. Even if structured by rules of a logic, the telling or narrative of how all elements of a situation fit together is primary and pre-discursive since this 'original telling' will also define the terms and cognitive framework through which a matter is perceived and considered.

Narrative, by its nature situates, in a multiple sense. Whether one fits together the elements of a crime scene, a laboratory experiment, or a birthday party these exist as sites of containment for those elements. Yet these elements and sites are processed and constructed in the mind of the beholder so that cognition also becomes a site of interaction for the elemental 'facts' involved. If a literary text is the material site of presentation, the reader's cognition becomes the site of reception and transformation, and the larger world (however constituted) is that site from which original allusions were in most cases incorporated into the text and against which the reader measures her understanding of the reading. From that understanding issues a relation of the basic elements which may be built into a larger discourse both about the material read and ultimately about optimal ways of reading, viz. a methodological perspective. In this way discourse becomes both constitutive of and constituted by that entity considered 'world' rather than being wholly determined by either possibility.<sup>45</sup>

In extrapolation from the above, a literature-theoretical perspective, resolved into its own discourse(s), and analyzed into formative elements, becomes also the *narrative* of the process by which validity claims are made on its behalf. Considering the importance of Foucault for standard theories of discourse, it may be asked on what basis the concept of narrative is deployed, in distinction to linguistic "rules of formation,"<sup>46</sup> in discursive constitution. It

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<sup>45</sup> Jørgensen and Phillips 19.

<sup>46</sup> Michel Foucault, "Politics and the Study of Discourse," *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, eds. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of

becomes evident on reflection that the objects of human consciousness, whether deemed material or cognitive, exist, through movement, in space and time. The observations of such movement are then relatable as sets of orderings and emphases constituting narratives. Fredric Jameson, in explicating Ricoeur, makes a similar observation, tracing the epistemic validity of narrative to the Cartesian *cogito*, by way of Kant.<sup>47</sup> Any methodology associated with a particular viewpoint becomes akin to a tool for telling a story of the text's relationships and its theoretical support becomes akin to narrative employment. The resulting textual explication, if germane to that text, acts as a filter by which the relation of the text to the emplotted worldview, thrown into relief, informs the recoverable information that constitutes the analysis. Put simply, every critique is itself the result of a relatable history of ideas and applies as well to Jacques Derrida's or Edward Said's formulations as to those of this dissertation. In Chapter 4 of the dissertation the realization of a material reality in time, as history, will be explored in its relation to discourse and narrative for situating *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* into discussions of historiographic theorizations.

If every methodology comprises, or results from discourse(s) supported by narrative, i.e. a relating of elements, their pronouncements become incommensurable with each other except in relation to those underlying narratives or insofar as each initiative is congruent with the others within a larger conceptual context or discourse. This is not to say that the methodological narratives are fictions -- only that they are extant as particular arrangements of validity claims with particular emphases. Within this orientation one may nevertheless utilize a number of explicative tools yielding a multiperspectival textual analysis, subject of course to compatibility

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Chicago Press, 1991) 53-72; 54

<sup>47</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (London and Brooklyn: Verso, 2010) 497, 551-552.

with the underlying conceptual orientation and in accord with principles of non-contradiction. Even in this latter case however, the *inter-discursive* comparison of viewpoints not necessarily deemed compatible might serve as meta-commentary itself, through the tensions embodied in paradox. In this manner, one might analyze a text and a work through 'all and none' of the serviceable perspectives, emphasizing diversity in relation to a specific philosophy but interrogating sufficiency of explication on that level primarily. The absence of certainty would be viewed as the presence of possibility and forms the conceptual juncture at which Edward Said's orientation interests us methodologically. Said's emphases provide an exemplary instance, of, in the words of Stathis Gourgouris,

[. . .] a transformative process whereby the metaphysical void is elaborated as an actual condition in the world with definitive consequences.<sup>48</sup>

### **1.5 *The World, the Text, and the Critic*: Methodological Adaptation**

In the essays that comprise *The World, the Text, and the Critic* Edward Said elaborates views that illustrate Gourgouris' observation on later work. Said's first named concern, the world, is perhaps the most philosophically problematic. As with text and reader the term denotes different aspects of a related complex of designations. On one level it is the material incorporation of " 'real' history," although not directly apprehensible apart from mediation.<sup>49</sup> On another level it is a process embodying "the existential actualities of human life, politics, societies, and events."<sup>50</sup> Both text and reader become situated in this external medium, but unless one is willing to argue the existence of the world as an absolutely autonomous reality it should be apparent that it reciprocally resides in the text as reference and in the reader as life

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<sup>48</sup> Gourgouris 65.

<sup>49</sup> Said 4.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 5.



experience and social cognition. The situation of the world in the text may also be effected by inclusion of intertexts. Additionally, the material artifacts of the world may be *read* as texts, even as narratives. In this sense, the world is not to be wholly identified with the physical reality of scientific theory, which may or may not be absolutely autonomous, depending on one's philosophical orientation.

Overall, Said's concept of the world is not stated directly but is implicitly recoverable from the relationship between that entity and both text and critic. The world is not disclosed as "textuality," yet may form the sole mediation for the apprehension of the "real," and, incorporating the realia of human existence, links texts with readers and critics.<sup>51</sup> The world is the site at which the interrelationship of textual production and reception is located, the supportive medium for human agency in the temporal and historical production of literature.<sup>52</sup>

The text, Said's second titular concern projects and is situated in "materiality."<sup>53</sup> It is also a discursive entity. At the outset he privileges the spatial; texts *place* themselves and in so doing constrain the sense that may be given them. The relation of production to reception is the manner in which they place themselves, they are essentially products of power discourses, and ultimately derive from the "realities"<sup>54</sup> of human life. The text is thus the site of a certain ambivalence and even ambiguity. What Said has to say about professional criticism, the titular stated concern, is often transposed onto the concept of textual reception as such. The "critical consciousness" is part of the surrounding social realities and capable of exerting influence.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 3-5.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 152.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 150.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 5.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 24-26.

Criticism is situated in the world but also constitutes a "cognitive activity."<sup>56</sup> The 'reader', here under the guise of 'critic' participates in giving sense to the text. Perhaps Said's most succinct pronouncement on the relation of text to reader requires one

[. . .] to view the text as a dynamic field . . . [which] has a certain range of reference, a system of tentacles (which I have been calling affiliative) partly potential, partly actual: to the author, to the reader, to a historical situation, to other texts, to the past and present.<sup>57</sup>

The third concern of *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, is that of the professional critic at the beginning of the decade of the 1980s. Said compares his prescriptions for theorization, which he believes will re-invigorate the complacent field of professional criticism, to those of other critics and theorists, indicating his agreements, disagreements, and points of (dis)similarity. Considering the historical setting there are, not surprisingly, comparisons with New Critics such as Northrop Frye, some with Marxist critics, e.g. Gramsci and Lukács, and a very sizable amount with Derrida and Foucault. It is, of course, Foucault's discourse-analytical formulations that frequently serve as rationales for Said's observations on situating the text.

Edward Said's approach to criticism is referenced here precisely because there appear points of contact between his concerns and those perceivable in the novels of Grass and Wolf and their further relation to contemporary problematics. Chief among these is the recognition (a) of the social dimension of literary production and communication, (b) of the relative degrees of independence and interdependence of world, text, and critic, (c) of the role of discourse in shaping critique, and (d) of the oppositional nature of such explications.<sup>58</sup> There are also aspects

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 224.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 157.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid 29.

of critique in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* that do not appear applicable to the present enterprise. Said's signature emphasis on post-colonial theory will receive less attention due to the nature of this work. Deficiencies in Said's early work, from a twenty-first century perspective also include lack of definitional specificity and, perhaps as an artifact of its time, lack of the appreciation of the role of gender in the formation of "critical consciousness."

If one were to find continuing relevance in Said's sober assessment of the theoretical issues of thirty years ago, in what way could his observations be applied to explications of *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*? To begin with, considering the imaginative nature and broad allusive scope of the novels, their 'situating' properties might be said to consist in establishing the "priority"<sup>59</sup> of how the text or work defines itself as a "field of sense"<sup>60</sup> more than establishing restraints. Factors establishing this definition (or definitions) may be judged on the basis of the myriad references to: (1) historical events, e.g. the defeat of France by the German forces in 1940 (*Die Blechtrommel*),<sup>61</sup> (2) memory, for instance its relation to documentation (*Kindheitsmuster*),<sup>62</sup> (3) narrative relations in both novels on the basis of the unusual position of the narrators as well as direct treatment of the subject, e.g. Oskar's prologue,<sup>63</sup> and (4) concern for the sociological basis of fascism as evidenced by the placement and description of formative events in both works within a particular stratum of society.

Passages like these, as well as implied appeals to the reader and the large corpus of

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<sup>59</sup> Compare: Karlheinz Stierle, "Werk und Intertextualität," *Dialog der Texte*, eds. Wolf Schmidt and Wolf-Dieter Stempel (Vienna: Institut für Slawistik der Universität Wien, 1983) 7-26; 15.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> B 345/TD 249.

<sup>62</sup> K 512/ PC 329.

<sup>63</sup> B 12/TD 5.

intertextual associations would, in their "interplay"<sup>64</sup> to use Said's term, seem to extend the concept of situating somewhat beyond his parameters of the relation of speech to text. Yet it is plain that Said's concern is with the relation of production to reception and the ability of that discursive relationship to place the text in the world.<sup>65</sup> Taken metaphorically one might consider Said's title to refer to a complex consisting of an external world, the text in production, and the 'critical' reader and take the interrelationship of these, from the foregoing, as the novels' own sense allocating categories. Of necessity, the placement of the texts in the world also involves assessment of the "world's attention,"<sup>66</sup> that is, of the discourses in which Grass's and Wolf's novels may be found within the major critical literature.<sup>67</sup>

### **1.6 An Experimental Perspective**

A perspective may now be enunciated, that to be sure is not Said's, but which will be developed as elaboration of referenced interests in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* on the basis of perceived congruence with ideas in *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*. Said's title is adapted into a triple interpretive schematization, the elements of which consist of that which is external to the text, that which pertains to the text, and that which pertains to the 'critical' reader. One then explores the qualities within this relationship that mutually situates each element relative to the others. Re-arranging Said's order and beginning with the text, as that which is the given for inspection, one interrogates this as terminological construct, the product, itself, of a literature-theoretical discourse. This discourse naturally has its own history and variant developments each of which voices sometimes complementary and sometimes contradictory

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<sup>64</sup> Said 40.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. 40.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. 40.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 50.

assumptions on the constitution of its object of enunciation. Terms involved thus require definition in regard to their actual usages. The locus for this process would be an inspection of the assumptions about language as medium for the work, the writing, or the text, depending on one's terminological preference in this regard.

The various critical perspectives, projected methodologies, and supporting philosophies alluded to earlier are, according to Said a part of an "actual social world."<sup>68</sup> In that sense, one concludes that they too incorporate the tensions and formative power relationships of that world and make claims for validity also as discursive constructions as their situating property therein. These constitutive tensions, contexts, and cultural conventions may be analyzed as sites of ideological negotiation, not necessarily equally between the parties,<sup>69</sup> effectively bracketing the oppositional elements involved.

In adapting and extending Said's ideas one can list the following as elements with which broad agreement is registered. From his remarks the text may be considered a continuum of levels of cognition. At one extreme it is material, tangibly embodied, possibly recognizable through its paratexts: it is the work itself whether manufactured or conveyed electronically. At the other extreme it is a conceptual abstraction, a cognitive construction consisting in semantics, semiotics, aesthetic qualities, and perceived discourse(s): in other words that which is properly designated *text*. Alongside these also lie the actual and potential ranges of reference, to use Said's terms, that, in interplay with reception, situates the text in an external reality. It is within this continuum [perhaps the better analogy would be, from mathematics, the complex number: the sum of both a real and an imaginary part] that sense-allocating priorities are set in cooperation with the critical reader. While the text situates itself in the world the relationship

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 16.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 45.

should be viewed as reciprocal, an idea not developed by Said whose point of departure appears as the "location" of culture.<sup>70</sup> However, since the social dimension in which the text situates itself is by that process incorporated into the text, it becomes also a site for emplacement of worldly concerns. Citing Foucault, he tacitly admits as much.<sup>71</sup> Despite the privileging of the spatial dimension in conceptualizing the literary work, the text is also an "event,"<sup>72</sup> a spatio-temporal entity whose emplacement can never be static as both its material and cognitive dimensions change in both production and reception. Said, again citing Foucault, sees the text's discourse as a power relationship, that of controller to controlled,<sup>73</sup> the history, or formative dynamics of which presents an implied narrative, subject always to re-contextualization, as the ultimate controller for any discourse.

For Said, professional criticism is skeptical, secular, and self-critical. The same assumptions may not be made of the reader at large. The situation of the reader in relation to text will vary according to one's situation in the world and the part that plays in forming one's "horizon of expectations,"<sup>74</sup> to use Jauß's term, with which one confronts the text. It might be problematic to insist that these expectations will exclude extraneous psychological factors in favor of literature-theoretical categories as Jauß seems to believe,<sup>75</sup> unless one assumes, similar to Said, the ideal reader to be the literary historian, bound by the canonical procedures of the discipline. This objection could be rebutted by the claim that the 'reader' is also a collective

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 8.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 215.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 47.

<sup>74</sup> Hans Robert Jauß, "Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft," *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970) 144-207; 169.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 173.

term, situated in the society the literary history of which produced the work in question. The point here is not to argue an orthodox position but to explore alternative theoretical discourses from the history of criticism that might prove compatible, even in their difference, with Said's. The purpose here is to recover from Said's disquisition, in comparison with other theorists, some ideas on the reception process for literature, valid not only for a specialist but also for that person termed the critical reader. A figure wholly missing from *The World, the Text, and the Critic* is Mikhail Bakhtin. Yet it could be claimed that Bakhtin is present through a negative reading inasmuch as *dialogism* offers another mode of situating a text in the world<sup>76</sup> and as incorporated into reception theory,<sup>77</sup> a means to emplace also the critic and ordinary reader into a relationship with text and world. The reader may be considered as receptive counterpart to the text, compounded also of materiality and abstraction, both situated and situating (in this sense also productive) in relation to text and world.

How, then, does one elucidate and make evident the above relationships as they appear within and are perceived as pertinent to Grass's and Wolf's novels? Obviously, analysis of these works could consist of a number of critically attested procedures: the explication of textual themes and structures, semiotic relationships, or the identification of various cultural emphases. From this viewpoint, the works are regarded as the localization of an interaction of texts, their historical and material referents and allusions, and the understanding of the recipient, such that a process of continuous discussion about the interrelation and sense of each comprises the analysis. Viewing explicative procedures as integrative processes of allocating information affirms the

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<sup>76</sup> Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, "The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis," *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee, eds. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986) 103-131; 125-126.

<sup>77</sup> Jauß 169.

compatibility of diverse forms of analysis as alternative facets of a multidimensional whole. The rationale for this approach is the recognition that any methodology situates analysis into a universe of cognitively contingent relationships in the guise of linguistically and culturally constituted categorizations. In this sense the methodology becomes experimental in the interdiscursivity -- the articulation of different and not obviously compatible viewpoints. Thus, as noted by Julia Hell, an important passage in *Kindheitsmuster* may be analyzed in terms of narrative "voice"<sup>78</sup> but the family tensions so signified communicate the relevant information regarding understanding of Nelly's psychological development. The function of critique then is, borrowing a phrase from Jerome McGann, "not to define a meaning or a state of the system as such . . . but to create conditions for further dynamic change,"<sup>79</sup> in this case, between the textual, receptive and referential/signifying elements (also regarded as 'text') of the explicative apparatus.

Approaching *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* in this manner presents a special relationship between perspective and theoretical constructs. Against the materiality of the works the intellect applies the abstract typological categorization of narrative structure as one possibility. Narrative has, in the most general sense, often been defined as "story." On the one hand the dissertation's perspective resolves both critical methodology and the sense of a text recovered as dependent on a particular discourse and ultimately an underlying narrative that validates that discourse for the critic. On the other hand, the objects of analysis in this case are also seen as either wholly or partially "narrative" texts.

### **1.7 Narratology and Explication**

Classical narratology views texts as structures that may be analyzed formally and 'scientifically'. In recent years some practitioners have sought to incorporate the insights of post-

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<sup>78</sup> Hell 202.

<sup>79</sup> McGann 218.



structuralist thought into narratological analysis. Validity claims for structural analysis of texts need to be debated in terms of the underlying assumptions that yield such a discourse. For us, the terminology of narratology provides only a set of definitions for reference. Among narratologists, Mieke Bal defines a narrative text as one in which an "agent or subject" conveys a story to a reader in "language, imagery, sound, buildings, or a combination thereof."<sup>80</sup> Gérard Genette distinguishes between storytelling or the discourse that relates the evental material, its content or the discursive subjects, and the act of narrating.<sup>81</sup> Franz Stanzel's point of departure is the "gestaltete Mittelbarkeit" of the material of which a narrative is formed.<sup>82</sup> All three work within the limits of narratology and their explications are discourses that reveal the structuralist bases of how they relate textual relationships and the way in which they define narrative itself.

Bal focuses on the text as a sign system, the narrator as a function, focalization and foregrounding, and the speech varieties (direct, indirect) of levels of narration. Other important considerations are the timings, sequential orderings, narrative spaces, and character construction within the related story, as well as the functions of constituent elements (fabulae, actants, etc.) Genette discusses narrative, including Bal's concerns as functions of temporality: ordering, duration, frequency, mood and voice. A particular emphasis concerns the temporality of written text as conditional, existing only in space, its temporality being a metonymic construction of the traversal of that space in reading. Stanzel covers the material with reference to mediation as a function of narrative, the relationships between narrators and characters, and different levels of

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<sup>80</sup> Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 3rd. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009) 5.

<sup>81</sup> Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans, Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980) 25-26.

<sup>82</sup> Franz K. Stanzel, *Theorie des Erzählens*, 8th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008) 17.

perspective (inner/outer). The desire for a "narratology of culture"<sup>83</sup> or a "socionarratology"<sup>84</sup> supplemental to the structuralist roots of such analysis and broadened to include the "narratives" of material culture, has also been articulated in a number of writings. Throughout the dissertation "narratological" terms may be used for clarity without imputing further validity to these or any particular theory of narrative analysis. A fuller discussion of narrative within *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* in relation to non-fiction concerns will be undertaken in Chapter 4 of this dissertation. The interest for this type of narrative resides in its ability not to fictionalize but to attain coherence through emphasis, ordering, and de- and re-contextualizing commonly accepted factual elements.

To explicate *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* as narrative historical fiction, a cultural narrative analysis derived from the foregoing discussion will be employed. The analytical constructs will be regarded as contingent relationships, however, rather than scientific structures, or even functions, in 'dialogic' relation to the reader and to other disciplines implied by the text [primarily history and sociology], and to the memory of experiences and material artifacts of culture that underlie the constructs of historical narratives.<sup>85</sup> Narrative is not regarded as an exclusively textual phenomenon but inheres also in all media through which the human mind constructs stories. This materialist and cultural orientation allows, on the basis of the contingent nature of the narrative relationships, an openness of literary explication in distilling a sense of the text. Thus, the constellation of all elements are mutually and recursively informing, negotiating new relationships with the remembered experiences at the root of any

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<sup>83</sup> Wolfgang Müller-Funk, "On a Narratology of Cultural and Collective Memory," *Journal of Narrative Theory* 33.2 (Summer 2003): 207-227.

<sup>84</sup> David Herman, "Toward a Socionarratology," *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis*, ed. David Herman (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999) 218-246.

<sup>85</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Samuel Presner et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002) 56.

configuration of these.<sup>86</sup>

A superficial example of this theoretical perspective in practice might allow the account of a Holocaust survivor's experience<sup>87</sup> to be given sense in terms of the obvious distanciation from the story by the third person narrator compared to the harrowing experience of the survivor. The passage might be further considered, through the secondary literature, in terms of, on one account, the inability of the non-Jewish German narrator to approach the subject with any resource except irony.<sup>88</sup> This contrasts with the idea from a different perspective, namely that such grotesquerie actually "probes the limits of representation . . . in order to present the grim reality."<sup>89</sup> The tension between these two views also informs the reception. Additionally, a counter or elucidating narrative might be revealed through cultural memory in the witness of a Holocaust survivor with experience relevant to the fictive account, such as depicted in Claude Lanzmann's film *Shoah*.<sup>90</sup> Finally, the reader in reception of the text might re-configure any of these narrative elements on the basis of individual apprehension and experience. The relationships and significations of all may be continually shifting in newly created hybrid semantic fields in a mutually informing dialogue of all elements. Of significance here, is the manner in which the narrative defines the situation, prioritizes the events as a relationship between fiction and a presumed facticity accessed by the reader either in memory or education

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<sup>86</sup> Stierle 7.

<sup>87</sup> B 543/TD 394.

<sup>88</sup> Hamida Bosmajian, "German Literature about the Holocaust: a Literature of Limitations," *Modern Language Studies* 16.1 (Winter 1986): 51-61; 57.

<sup>89</sup> Peter Arnds, "On the Awful German Fairy Tale: Breaking Taboos in Representations of Nazi Euthanasia and the Holocaust in Günter Grass' *Die Blechtrommel*, Edgar Hilsenrath's *Der Nazi und der Friseur*, and Anselm Kiefer's Visual Art," *The German Quarterly* 75. 4 (Autumn 2002): 422-439; 425.

<sup>90</sup> Claude Lanzmann, *Shoah: The Complete Text of the Film*, trans. A. Whitelaw and W. Byron (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985) 111ff.

and thus sets boundaries for the operation of any meta-commentary derivable from the text.

### 1.8 Further Remarks

In the transformation of Said's ideas in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* into world, text, and 'critical reader' there may appear to be correspondences with established literature-theoretical emphases. What is distinctive in this approach is the uniting of aspects of these emphases on the basis of their constitution as discourse composed of narratives, effecting the complementation of one theoretical direction by the others. Yet world, text, and reader retain their own characteristics and set the priority of their characteristics against each, as demarcation of discourse boundaries, on the basis of predominate influence in any given situation, building on Said's ideas of textual *constraint*. The positing of such interrelationships may seem like Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenological considerations of the epistemological "pseudoproblem"<sup>91</sup> of object autonomy, the problem since Kant, of the unknowability of the *thing-in-itself*, or even its essential inexistence, *pace* Derrida, outside a "chain of differences."<sup>92</sup> The point being that nothing is knowable except in interrelation since one can neither step outside thought nor withdraw from that which thought posits as exterior.

But if meaning is only constituted by a "system of differences and metaphors"<sup>93</sup> then interrelationship indeed dissolves into endless difference and in so doing loses the specificity through which differentiation is even possible. In another context, if one thinks oneself in relation to the 'other', be it person, text, or world, without imputing autonomy at some level to that other, then one thinks only oneself in relation to oneself, de-defining the concept of otherness. In both cases a conceptual impasse arises through self-contradiction. However, if one

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<sup>91</sup> Heidegger 50, 91-92.

<sup>92</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) 49, 90.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* 89.

views this impasse as arising from, in Said's terms, a "telling"<sup>94</sup> that relates details in a particular manner, then that narrative constrains both the interrelationships and the degrees of autonomy of the involved elements (world, text, reader) to that which is narrativizable. Narrative as the invariant relationship becomes the initiator of interdiscursive comparison, the platform for discussion of philosophical consistency or paraconsistency in textual explication. In other words, dialogicity extends also to a work's explications, as elements of the work's extended narrative within the material world. It will be argued in Chapter 3 that the resultant explicative polyvocality and polysemy may also be viewed dialectically as alternatives to be resolved or accepted in paradox by the reader.

In practice, if passages from *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* are explicated in relation to the situational concerns of Said and the narratological concerns of Bal or Genette, the interest becomes the narrative of how these emphases supplement, complement, contrast with or contaminate each other or discovery of the extent to which both are consonant with a third concern. In the case of these two examples one could remark that the ideas of Said constitute the larger, more general framework; those of narratologists the more specific, typologically oriented structuring. Said actually indicates interest in just this form of analysis although pointing out that it is not his.<sup>95</sup> Criticism at the time of Said's initial writing found its problematics in the consideration of hybridity, intertextuality, and the way discourses both hide and allocate hierarchies of power in relation to older dynamics of authenticity, interpretation and meaning, objectivity, subjectivity, and the constitution of narrative and historical reflection on history within literature. The methodology of this dissertation asks the place, if any, of these latter concerns in relation to the former as the *established* emphases in literary and cultural criticism,

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<sup>94</sup> Said 41.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. 130.

as does a growing body of twenty-first century criticism and philosophy.

One may object that traditional discourse theory does not envision its composition by narratives, i.e. arrangements of materials susceptible to variant orderings under various presentations. Yet a discourse is by its nature an attempt at enacting a teleology, the antecedents of which need to give an account of themselves for the discursive goal to make sense. One may also object that the idea of placement or situation lacks dynamism or critical force. There are at least two rejoinders to this objection: one formal and one substantive. Formally, the tools of logic and rhetoric that are supposed to provide critical qualities are themselves derivative of the spatial metaphor: Greek *thésis*, from *tithénai*, to place, Latin *propositio*, from *propōnere* to place before, etc. Substantively, the identification of sites at which such rhetoric occurs, viz. the world, the text, the critical reader, together with the implied corollary that all discourse is *situated*, actually displaces metaphor in favor of specific emplacement(s) of communicative elements. To the extent that any of these sites incorporate a physical presence, the resultant discourses necessarily locate themselves materially therein.

The dissertation attempts to synthesize Edward Said's insights with a larger body of criticism and (a) posits the reciprocal emplacement of world, text, and critical reader, (b) distinguishes degrees of objectivity/subjectivity for the elements of critique, (c) appreciates the narrative and contingent construction of discourses, and (d) makes clear the oppositional stance of the texts, their ability to set priorities through decontextualization and recontextualization within the reader's *horizon of expectations*. It is not intended to adopt *Said's* perspective, but rather invoke his example in placing the elements listed above in relation to a wider range of perspectives. Such secondary viewpoints will be regarded as akin to filters through which to view the texts, realizing that they recover only such information as allowed by their underlying

assumptions. Even in this capacity they are necessarily part of the social situation of the texts and novels with importance for the reader's horizon of expectations thereby.

In plain language, the work is analyzed in relation to its contexts, its structures, semantics, and significations, and its cognitive processing by a reader, emphasizing the mutual influence of each on the other. Demarcation of discursive limits, choice of explicative tools, and relative weighting turns the situation of world, text, and reader into a sense-imparting critical apparatus for any given set of contingent configurations that allows a text truly to 'speak' of the material relations referenced by its linguistic embodiment. The perspective employed seeks to locate Grass's and Wolf's novels in relation to variant methodologies and modes of reception by comparing compatibilities but finding, amidst the undecidable issues and the great diversity of possibilities, greater explicative potential in probing the apparent contradictions. If by one analysis *Die Blechtrommel* is an exemplary exercise in *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and by another the novel is a purely aesthetic construct without social implications, the measure of the distance between these and their underlying assumptions becomes the most potentially revealing narrative element in the discourse of the work's modes of communication. In this view, whatever answers literature and its analysis provide comes by a questioning that situates the materials into a variety of contexts in order to elicit and structure debate over the possibilities involved.

## 2. Background: Works and Settings

### 2.1 Background

Günter Grass's *Die Blechtrommel* brought immediate fame and in some quarters, notoriety, to its thirty-one year old author.<sup>1</sup> Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster* added to the reputation of an author who had shown some independence from official policies of the GDR.<sup>2</sup> Grass's novel appeared near the beginning of a "critical reevaluation of the Nazi past"<sup>3</sup> in the FRG. A similar project of reevaluation, almost twenty years later in the GDR and guided by official interpretations, forms the immediate backdrop to Wolf's book.<sup>4</sup>

In Grass's case, biographical details situate the reader of the *Die Blechtrommel* not only into the social milieus of its narrative descriptions but also places one into contact with aspects of controversy. Biographies and analyses of Grass's works written before 2006 have usually related his youth in Danzig, wartime experiences, and those in the early years of the Federal Republic of Germany as key determinants of the *Blechtrommel's* ultimate enframing. Preece, for example, begins under the byline of "Biographies real and imagined"<sup>5</sup> with the observation that although the Nazi period determined the engagement of his writing, Grass belonged to a generation too young to be held accountable for its crimes. Preece then presents the particulars of Grass's biography: birth in Danzig, present Gdańsk, in 1927, member of the *Jungvolk* and *Hitlerjugend*, wartime activity as *Luftwaffenhelfer*, in the *Arbeitsdienst*, and references Grass's

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<sup>1</sup> Julian Preece, *The Life and Work of Günter Grass* (New York: Palgrave, 2001) 34-35.

<sup>2</sup> Annette Firsching, *Kontinuität und Wandel im Werk von Christa Wolf* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1996, Würzburger Beiträge zur deutschen Philologie, Band 16) 70.

<sup>3</sup> Jürgen Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship in Modern German Society* (Hanover and London: Brandeis University Press, Historical Society of Israel, University Press of New England, 2010) 77.

<sup>4</sup> Firsching 70fn.

<sup>5</sup> Preece 1.



own description of brief military service in a tank division near the end of the war in 1945.<sup>6</sup> That this service is ultimately acknowledged for the first time in Grass's *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* as transpiring in a unit of the *Waffen-SS*<sup>7</sup> places Preece's opening evaluations and Grass's admission of childhood peccadilloes under Nazism,<sup>8</sup> into a far more nuanced and controversial discussion of responsibility and the right to judge.<sup>9</sup> The irony is only heightened by the observation that Grass regarded the biographies of those who lived through the Nazi years, and their understanding of these, as a measure of their character.<sup>10</sup>

The postwar biography of Grass, up to the time of the writing of the *Blechtrommel* finds him in Düsseldorf, in the new West Germany, working as stonemason and sculptor, attempting to find a place as artist, poet, or playwright. He also attended meetings of the *Gruppe 47*, coming into contact with later notables of the German literary world: Ingeborg Bachmann, Heinrich Böll, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Marcel Reich-Ranicki, and Martin Walser. After the modest reception of a volume of poetry and drawings, the production of several plays, and mention in a few journals, *Die Blechtrommel* became Grass's first critical success.<sup>11</sup>

Christa Wolf's life story preceding the publication of *Kindheitsmuster* also orientates the reader to material counterparts of, the at least generationally descriptive, if not completely autobiographical,<sup>12</sup> novel's fictive landscapes and their inhabitants. Born Christa Ihlenfeld in

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Günter Grass, *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* (Göttingen: Steidl Verlag, 2006) 126ff.

<sup>8</sup> Preece 5.

<sup>9</sup> "Ein globaler Schock," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Feuilleton*, eds. Werner Dinka, Berthold Kohler, Günther Nonnenmacher, Frank Schirmacher, and Holger Steltzner, 13 August 2006. Web.

<sup>10</sup> Preece 17.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 19-23.

<sup>12</sup> Firsching 71.

Landsberg an der Warthe, today's Gorzów Wielkopolski in Poland in 1929, Wolf's childhood was also, similarly to Grass's, marked by a National Socialist education, membership in the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (BDM), belief in the certainty of German victory in World War Two, and saw Wolf relocate with her family to Bad Frankenhausen in Thuringia, commence studies in Marxist theory, and participate in the communist *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (FDJ) youth organization. In early 1949, she joined the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED), the Communist Party within the Soviet Occupation Zone, which on 7 October of that year became the German Democratic Republic.<sup>13</sup>

In the ensuing years Wolf continued her education in Weimar and Leipzig, married, her husband Gerhard being also a Party member, and began a career as literary critic with a position in the official East German *Schriftstellerverband*. Here she made the acquaintance of prominent older writers, returned from exile, such as Anna Seghers.<sup>14</sup> From the middle 1950's she held editorial positions with publishing houses and the literary journal *Neue deutsche Literatur*. Her first published work of fiction, *Moskauer Novelle* [*Moscow Novella*] appeared in 1961.<sup>15</sup> *Der geteilte Himmel* [*Divided Heaven*] in 1963, along with a filmed version, and *Nachdenken über Christa T.* [*The Quest for Christa T.*] in 1968 brought critical notice and readership outside the GDR. Both of these works have been analyzed as projecting, in differing ways, an authorial focus on the individual in relation to socialist society, and in the case of the latter,<sup>16</sup> somewhat at odds with it. Wolf's incorporation of reflection and life experience finds its next major expression in 1976 with *Kindheitsmuster*.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 40-44.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 45-63.

<sup>15</sup> Firsching 19.

<sup>16</sup> Anna Katharina Kuhn, *Christa Wolf's Utopian Vision: from Marxism to Feminism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 17-18, 80.

The publication of both *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* correlate chronologically with trends in the FRG and GDR respectively, to begin the inspection of the Nazi era and its relationship to postwar society. The historian Jürgen Kocka lists Grass's novel among literary works that typified the initiation of examination of guilt and responsibility in West Germany, the tangible expression of which included the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials in 1963.<sup>17</sup> It is in relation to uncovering latent fascist associations in the Federal Republic that Grass's previously cited interest in his contemporaries' life histories is situated. For, one of the earmarks of the trend toward introspection that also coincides with Grass's political activity in support of social democracy, was the questioning of the propriety of maintaining administrators with National Socialist Party backgrounds in West German government positions, including that of the nation's chancellor, Kurt Georg Kiesinger in 1965.<sup>18</sup>

Kocka also remarks that no such trend of disclosure occurred at this time in the GDR. Considering the differing constitutions of the two Germanys this could hardly have been otherwise as the East reacted to the perceived threats of Cold War tensions and accelerated flight of citizenry westward by the consolidation of SED power structures behind the Berlin Wall after 1961.<sup>19</sup> It is thus later, in the 1970's that the official idea of citizens of the GDR having overcome fascism as "Sieger der Geschichte"<sup>20</sup> gave way in literature to an examination of that which had been repressed,<sup>21</sup> namely one's own memory of the Nazi era including one's place within it. To a limited extent, this also included recognition of authoritarian continuities in the

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<sup>17</sup> Kocka 77.

<sup>18</sup> Preece 17.

<sup>19</sup> Wolfgang Emmerich, *Kleine Literatur Geschichte der DDR*, expanded edition (Leipzig: Kiepenheuer Verlag, 1996) 176.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 318.

<sup>21</sup> Firsching 70.

postwar world, particularly evident in works of figures such as Heiner Müller.<sup>22</sup> Ironically, Wolf and other East German intellectuals would face a moral challenge in relation to these continuities during the year of *Kindheitsmuster's* publication, through the regime's forced expatriation of Wolf Biermann.

## 2.2 The Cultures

Before the establishment of either the Federal Republic or the German Democratic Republic a post-World War Two cultural scene existed already in occupied Germany. The framework for critical evaluation of production and reception in the arts and literature has shifted between competing paradigms over the years. At first, one spoke of a *Stunde Null* or 'zero hour' of German culture,<sup>23</sup> a time to discard past, morally compromised aesthetics and to create with new sensibilities freed from tradition. Recent explications of this time period have questioned and largely abandoned this conceptual framework, yet it cannot be denied that artistic emphases underwent "significant modification"<sup>24</sup> at the end of the war, however continuous with the past the substance may have been. This is also not to deny that after 1949, in the West German literary world, there existed among younger writers a "Stunde-Null-Bewußtsein"<sup>25</sup> or zero-hour-consciousness without concrete manifestation in the society as a whole.

In the immediate postwar years cultural production was subject to differing degrees of censorship and support within the respective allied occupation zones. Popular authors included

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<sup>22</sup> Emmerich 318.

<sup>23</sup> Sabine Eckmann, "Ruptures and Continuities: Modern German Art in between the Third Reich and the Cold War," *Art of Two Germanys*, eds. Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann (New York: Abrams, in association with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2009) 49-63; 49.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Nury Kim, *Allegorie oder Authentizität, Zwei ästhetische Modelle der Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit: Günter Grass' Die Blechtrommel und Christa Wolfs Kindheitsmuster* (Frankfurt am Main, New York: Peter Lang, 1995) 29.

those who had published in Germany before and during the Nazi years such as Gottfried Benn, Werner Bergengrün, Hans Fallada, Ernst Kreuder, or Ernst Wiechert. Many of these claimed moral earnestness as representatives of an 'inner emigration' by having refused support or worked against the regime at an intellectual level. Ernst Jünger, forbidden to publish after the war through his identification with militarist themes, was nevertheless published abroad and retained a presence within the German literary world. Authors of the exile literature, among them Alfred Döblin and Thomas Mann produced critically acclaimed works but encountered difficulties and controversy in public reception. Thomas Mann's famous remark concerning works published in Germany during the Nazi era as "weniger als wertlos und nicht gut in die Hand zu nehmen"<sup>26</sup> is indicative of the cleft between positions.

Yet there were also younger, more experimental writers, and changes of emphasis. The first postwar writers congress in 1947 issued a declaration acknowledging a responsibility for truth and educational goals in writing. Wolfgang Borchert's enigmatic play *Draußen vor der Tür* (1947) suited the immediate postwar mood of disillusionment, a feeling, as Borchert put it, of being a 'lost generation'. The writer Alfred Andersch tried to bridge the gap between the authors of exile and those of the inner emigration and gave voice to the outlook of Borchert's generation, of which Günter Grass might be also counted a younger member, in his essays and as member of the editorial staff of the journal *Der Ruf*, in the American occupation zone.<sup>27</sup> Andersch and others associated with the journal would be instrumental in forming the *Gruppe 47*.

A notable feature of the post-World War Two period was the exercise of cultural politics

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<sup>26</sup> Thomas Mann, "Offener Brief für Deutschland," quoted in Klaus Wagenbach et al., eds., *Vaterland, Muttersprache. Deutsche Schriftsteller und ihr Staat von 1945 bis heute* (Berlin: Wagenbach Verlag, 1979) 48.

<sup>27</sup> Eva Kolinsky and Wilfried van der Will, "In Search of German Culture: an Introduction," *The Cambridge Companion to Modern German Culture*, eds. Eva Kolinsky and Wilfried van der Will (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 1-19; 11-13.

by the Allied nations to promote German reception of either capitalist or socialist culture. This enterprise continued even after the creation of the respective client states, West and East Germany, and places the further inspection of contemporaneous cultural developments within the paradigm of Cold War tensions.<sup>28</sup> In the western zones the project of 're-education', of changing what was felt to be the German national character, formed a part of the campaign to instill an appreciation for democratic values. Methods employed in this undertaking included the licensing of publications, some reputedly CIA funded, censorship of undesirable ideas in the media, both fascist and communist, and promotion of Western, particularly American, cultural products, although not always work by those deemed suspect in the McCarthy era, such as the playwright Arthur Miller.<sup>29</sup> In the eastern, Soviet zone, the watchword was "ant-fascist -- democratic renewal."<sup>30</sup> Goals included the denazification of the society, partial consolidation of industrial production under state control, land redistribution, and promotion of socialist values. The drivers of this cultural change included the Soviet military, the SED (after 1946), and returning communist intellectuals and administrators who had found refuge in the Soviet Union during the Hitler years. Some, such as Johannes R. Becher, were acclaimed authors during the years of the Weimar Republic. In the immediate postwar atmosphere, these returning exiles initially re-established relationships with previous colleagues, even in the West, such as Erich Kästner and Ernst Wiechert, accepting their contributions to newly founded eastern zone

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<sup>28</sup> Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht, "How Good Are We? Culture and the Cold War," *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-1960*, eds. Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003) 269-282; 274.

<sup>29</sup> Wolfgang Beutin, Klaus Ehlert, Wolfgang Emmerich, Christine Kanz, et al., *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte: von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart, Weimar: J. B. Metzler Verlag, 2001) 488.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 486.

journals.<sup>31</sup>

In the *Bundesrepublik* or Federal Republic of Germany, established officially in May 1949, cultural life proceeded in both traditional and experimental directions. In the fine arts there existed a "spectrum of artistic possibilities"<sup>32</sup> between older and newer forms of expression. The form of choice in critical circles quickly became the 'internationalist' style of abstract expressionism, exemplified in West Germany by the works of Fritz Winter. Abstract expressionism's non-ideological constitution, an idea that has been questioned as an implicit anti-communist ideology itself, could be seen as German acceptance of internationalism and a turn away from totalitarianism, as evinced by both fascist and socialist realisms.<sup>33</sup> Beginning in the 1960's Josef Beuys, proponent of 'social sculpture', the artist as shaman, environmental consciousness, and direct democracy, gained fame internationally as representative of new and experimental West German art. In the music world, audiences attended classical concerts; Wagnerites from around the globe once again flocked to Bayreuth. Composers whose works had been debuted during the national socialist years, like Carl Orff, continued to be performed. In experimental circles, the emerging engagement in Western countries with *total serialism* found its leading West German proponent, and ultimately seminal figure of electro-acoustic music, in Karlheinz Stockhausen.<sup>34</sup>

The literary scene of the developing West Germany exhibited similar tendencies towards division as the other arts. On the one hand, authors produced works of inwardness, of seeking

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Susanne Leeb, "Abstraction as International Language," *Art of Two Germanys*, 119-133; 119.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 120-128.

<sup>34</sup> Erik Levi, "Music in Modern German Culture," *The Cambridge Companion to Modern German Culture*, 233-255; 251-252.

the spirit, and of a new Goethean classicism.<sup>35</sup> On the other, were writers who at least called for a new beginning and a reckoning with recent German history in terms of responsibility. Among those were authors of the exile who found little real acceptance in the FRG. Reflecting political trends that emphasized conservative polity under the Adenauer administration and even legitimized a re-constituted 'national socialist' political party, the *Sozialistische Reichspartei*,<sup>36</sup> Alfred Döblin commented in 1951 that there had never been such a nationalistic and reactionary situation in Germany.<sup>37</sup> Whether one could credit that opinion literally or not, tensions in the world of letters may be illustrated by considering some authors as examples.

Gottfried Benn, the expressionist poet and essayist whose volume *Morgue and Other Poems* (1912) shocked his contemporaries, pursued an artistic credo of personal aestheticism and social pessimism. His initial enthusiasm for and disillusionment with Hitler<sup>38</sup> imparted a complexity to his literary reception that did not prevent the awarding of the Federal Republic's highest literary honor, the Büchner Prize, in 1951. Ernst Jünger, the author of *In Stahlgewittern* [*In Storms of Steel*], the laudatory novel of World War One, whose work tended "to glorify an ethos of strenuousness . . . and aesthetic transcendence"<sup>39</sup> privileging a *vitalist* and heroic outlook, also found continued acceptance within West German literary circles. The interest in the canonical rehabilitation of writers such as Benn and Jünger lies in the *Blechtrommel's* critique of the tone of aestheticism, escapism, and denial of socio-political realities imparted

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<sup>35</sup> Kim 29.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Wulf, "Deutschland nach 1945," *Deutsche Geschichte: von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, 3rd ed., ed. Martin Vogt (Stuttgart and Weimar: J. B. Metzler Verlag, 2006) 776-887; 819.

<sup>37</sup> Alfred Döblin, *Briefe*, ed. Heinz Graber (Freiburg: Olten, 1970) 429.

<sup>38</sup> Karen Leeder, "Modern German Poetry," *The Cambridge Companion to Modern German Culture*, 193-212; 201.

<sup>39</sup> Martin Swales, "The Development of German Prose Fiction," *The Cambridge Companion to Modern German Culture*, 172-192; 186.



thereby to the cultural sensibility of the early Federal Republic,<sup>40</sup> and the manner in which *Die Blechtrommel* becomes a site for engagement with this state of affairs.

Younger writers of various artistic and political stances, e.g. Wolfgang Koeppen and Arno Schmidt, also produced work. These included those associated with the *Gruppe 47*: Alfred Andersch, Ingeborg Bachmann, Heinrich Böll, Max Frisch, Uwe Johnson, Marcel Reich-Ranicki, Hans Werner Richter, Martin Walser, and many others in its twenty year history. Günter Grass first met with the group in 1955, encountering individuals with whom he would become friends and in some cases rivals.<sup>41</sup> Much of the work produced by these authors pointed to the perceived hypocrisies of the society of the *Wirtschaftswunder*, or even the other Germany, the GDR.<sup>42</sup> Many concentrated on new formal possibilities. A brief look at several of these will assist in locating Grass's work within the context of his contemporaries.

Arguably symptomatic of the position of women in West German society, Ingeborg Bachmann was viewed primarily as a poet of language until the publication of her short stories in 1961, *Das Dreißigste Jahr* [*The Thirtieth Year*]. These, which foreground the sensibility of the feminine, required the later engagement of feminist critique to be widely appreciated.<sup>43</sup> With the benefit of more critical analysis it is possible to see Bachmann's works from the 1950's as also socio-politically engaged, perhaps bearing some affinity with the aesthetics of Brecht.<sup>44</sup> Heinrich Böll, emerging after the war as a writer of so-called *Trümmerliteratur*, or literature of the rubble, such as *Wanderer kommst du nach Spa . . .* , as well as several early novels,

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<sup>40</sup> Kim 37.

<sup>41</sup> Preece 21.

<sup>42</sup> Swales 187.

<sup>43</sup> Sara Lennox, "The Feminist Reception of Ingeborg Bachmann," *Women in German Yearbook* 8 (1992): 73-111; 73.

<sup>44</sup> Karen Achberger, "'Kunst als Veränderndes': Bachmann and Brecht," *Monatshefte* 83.1 (Spring 1991): 7-16; 7-9.

thematized the evils of militarism and the propensity of society to shirk moral responsibility, from the perspective of a Christian humanist of leftist political orientation. *Billard um halbzehn* [*Billiards at Half-past Nine*], published in 1959, the same year as *Die Blechtrommel*, chronicles a family's disintegration under the impact of and parallel to, Germany's recent history. His later call for a fair trial for Ulrike Meinhof and other 'terrorists,' along with his associated writings, outraged many West Germans in the 1970's. Martin Walser's *Ehen in Philippsburg* [*Marriages in Philippsburg*] (1957) critiques the hypocrisies of middle class life amid West Germany's postwar prosperity and is stylistically notable for complex narrative perspective that becomes more highly developed in succeeding works. In later years Walser's engagement with the topic of German guilt led to a degree of public controversy, discussed in Chapter 7 of this dissertation. Through the above associations, then, *Die Blechtrommel* as text, may be located among works, by authors of relatively close association, some of which may display thematic similarities and others not.

Cultural life in the German Democratic Republic was designed to edify the citizen in her self-discovery as a fellow builder of the socialist community -- constituted by the antifascist state.<sup>45</sup> It is interesting to note that in this society of censorship and self-censorship, the enthusiasm of building a socialist society could convert both those activities into simply the perception of benign guidance by critics, such as the young Christa Wolf.<sup>46</sup> Most of the leftist artists and writers who fled Germany before World War Two returned to the Soviet occupation zone or later, to the GDR. Many had been influenced by the debates over expressionism versus realism of the 1930s but by the time of the founding of East Germany Soviet approved socialist

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<sup>45</sup> Julia Hell, *Post-Fascist Fantasies: Psychoanalysis, History, and the Literature of East Germany* (Durham, N. C. and London: Duke University, 1997) 17.

<sup>46</sup> Magenau 64-65.

realism formed the official aesthetic option, although work was sometimes produced outside this stricture.<sup>47</sup> Outwardly, cultural life followed a pattern of conformity to official policies, interrupted by some amelioration then renewed controls, after Stalin's death in 1953, after the New Economic Course in 1963, and again after Erich Honecker's ascendancy to power in 1971. Along the way, artistic discussion moved between orthodox socialist realism, Lukács' later theories and modifications<sup>48</sup> to, by 1989, an uneasy tension between officialdom and aspects of modernism within various artistic subcultures.<sup>49</sup>

Visual artists who returned to the GDR rather than the FRG included Hans and Lea Grundig, John Heartfield, and Horst Stempel. Both Grundigs had been in concentration camps, were able to emigrate and returned to their home city of Dresden with art professorships in the local academy. Heartfield, a founding member of the German Communist Party and early opponent of Nazism, was denied membership in the SED for internal political reasons. Stempel was at first acclaimed in the East, then looked upon with suspicion; he fled to the West in 1953.<sup>50</sup> Over the years a number of younger artists attained recognition and some, like Gerhard Richter, ultimately emigrated to the West. In music, the composers Paul Dessau and Hanns Eisler returned from the United States, Eisler having been expelled from the country after testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee investigating communist affiliations. Literary personages returning from abroad and taking up residence in the East include Bertolt

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<sup>47</sup> Ursula Peters and Roland Prügel, "The Legacy of Critical Realism in East and West," *Art of Two Germanys*, 65-83; 65-66.

<sup>48</sup> Lukács was effectively 'excommunicated' from GDR culture over his role in the 1956 Hungarian uprising and purported East German associates investigated and tried for attempted liberalization of socialist realist aesthetics; cf. Emmerich 126.

<sup>49</sup> Peters and Prügel 66-73.

<sup>50</sup> Eckhart Gillen, "Scenes from the Theater of the Cold War of the Arts," *Art of Two Germanys*, 277-293; 280.

Brecht, Johannes R. Becher, the GDR's first minister of culture, Stephan Hermlin, Wieland Herzfelde, brother of artist John Heartfield, Stefan Heym, Anna Seghers, Friedrich Wolf, and Arnold Zweig, besides the philosopher Ernst Bloch, who however, resettled in the FRG after the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Unlike the situation in West Germany, the Weimar Republic exiles initially formed the foundation of cultural life in the GDR, although working within the prescribed and proscribed limits of the governing ideology -- art in support of the political, as set forth in 1951 by GDR President Otto Grotewohl.<sup>51</sup>

Christa Wolf's relationship to this older generation varied by person. She attended the lectures of Hans Mayer, onetime colleague of Georges Bataille, on world literature in Leipzig in 1951, but not the contemporaneous courses of Ernst Bloch.<sup>52</sup> As her literary career advanced, naturally Wolf came to know the authors and works of the small and regulated literary community. Two writers of the older generation, with whom Wolf maintained collegial relations, present a study in contrast: Anna Seghers and Stefan Heym. Anna Seghers, whose 1942 novel *The Seventh Cross*, written in English, became an international bestseller as anti-fascist testament, pursued an aesthetic aim of nurturing socialist consciousness<sup>53</sup> in the new and 'humane' socialist state.<sup>54</sup> *Die Toten bleiben Jung* [*The Dead Stay Young*], published in 1949 is viewed as a seminal work of heroic antifascist literature, yet one which by some readings implicitly privileges a communist, if not Stalinist, "motherhood"<sup>55</sup> as ordering principle. Her 1959 novel, *Die Entscheidung* [The Decision] focused on individual responsibility. Seghers argued against Lukács and dogmatic constructions of socialist realism, expressed some criticism

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<sup>51</sup> Otto Grotewohl, quoted in Kim 117.

<sup>52</sup> Magenau 57.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 214.

<sup>54</sup> Swales 188.

<sup>55</sup> Hell 64ff.

of official decisions, but retained and worked within state positions, including president of the *Schriftstellerverband*. Wolf credited the influence of Seghers for much of her conception of subjectivity.<sup>56</sup> Stefan Heym became a United States citizen in exile, published in English and German, frequently criticized the regime, and was among those, with Christa Wolf, who protested the ouster of Wolf Biermann from the GDR. His novel *Goldsborough* casts striking coal miners in Pennsylvania in a heroic 'proletarian' role. In 1977 the SED brought charges against Heym over copyright irregularities with his novel *Lasalle*, published in West Germany.<sup>57</sup>

Themes of literature in the German Democratic Republic during the 1950s often revolved around antifascism and the planned economy.<sup>58</sup> Notable also were the theatrical productions of the Berliner Ensemble under Brecht and the publication of the journal *Sinn und Form* featuring also Western contributions.<sup>59</sup> Wolfgang Emmerich's timeline of major writing in East Germany between the years 1950 and 1959 shows that most were by members of the exile or Nazi period resistance community. Among those on Emmerich's list beginning writing careers at this time are Franz Fühmann, Uwe Johnson, Irmtraud Morgner, and Erwin Strittmatter. Franz Fühmann wrote both adult and children's fiction, held political posts within the GDR but became gradually disillusioned with the regime.<sup>60</sup> Uwe Johnson criticized the hypocrisy of the GDR regime in guaranteeing civil rights, constitutionally, and in practice denying these. His *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* [*Speculations about Jacob*] was published in the West in 1959, the same year that he left

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<sup>56</sup> Christa Wolf, quoted in Magenau 214.

<sup>57</sup> Magenau 307.

<sup>58</sup> Emmerich 530-536.

<sup>59</sup> Stephen Parker, "Peter Huchel and *Sinn und Form*: the German Academy of Arts and the Issue of German Cultural Unity," *German Writers and the Cold War 1945-6*, eds. Rhys W. Williams, Stephen Parker, and Colin Riordin (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 1992) 132-158; 132.

<sup>60</sup> Emmerich 333.

East Germany. Johnson was a member of the *Gruppe 47* and a friend of Günter Grass. Irmtraud Morgner's work focused a sensibility for myth and fantasy on daily life rather than simply mirroring reality as a given socialist aesthetic norm.<sup>61</sup> Erwin Strittmatter was actually the earliest of the above to attain some renown with novels and a play (*Katzgraben*) that affirmatively dealt with changes in village and agrarian life under the socialist system.<sup>62</sup>

In 1959 the Bitterfeld Conferences elaborated the Party's desire for literature to reflect the aspirations and concerns of the state's workers, to erase the division between art and production, between poet and worker, in a true proletarian literature. Accordingly, writers would become erstwhile industrial workers and workers also writers, coached by established authors.<sup>63</sup> Two notable novels from this program were Erwin Strittmatter's *Ole Bienkopp* and Christa Wolf's *Der geteilte Himmel*, both appearing in 1963 after the building of the Berlin Wall and Cold War tensions began increasingly to isolate East Germany from the West. As the decade progressed, and into the early 1970s works from some GDR authors began to observe the human dimension of life under 'real existing socialism', its past, and its contradictions. These included Jurek Becker's *Jakob der Lügner* [*Jacob the Liar*], Günter de Bruyn's *Buridans Esel* [*Buridan's Donkey*], Hermann Kant's *Die Aula* [*The Lecture Hall*], Ulrich Plenzdorf's *Die neuen Leiden des jungen W.* [*The New Sorrows of Young W.*], and, perhaps as chief exemplar, Christa Wolf's aforementioned *Nachdenken über Christa T.* The later 1970s witnessed a counterpoint between critique and government repression but the period also gave rise to expanded themes and techniques, especially in the theater pieces of Heiner Müller. On balance, it has been said that East German literature, constrained by censorship and allowable subject matter, was

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid. 287.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 199.

<sup>63</sup> Magenau 91ff.

nevertheless ethically oriented. Its communication was considered practical rather than theoretical, and signaled coming changes in societal attitudes through subtlety in depiction of social experience.<sup>64</sup> It is also notable that women writers produced a large proportion of literature in the GDR. In the interaction of these authors, Christa Wolf is credited with playing a central role.<sup>65</sup>

Comparatively, an overview of West German literature after the publication of the *Blechtrommel* reveals increasing politicization. The Auschwitz trials in Frankfurt impelled a greater coming to terms with the Holocaust and the Nazi period, in works like Peter Weiss' *Die Ermittlung* [*The Investigation*]. Themes in the works of other writers, for instance Heinrich Böll and Hans Magnus Enzensberger, revolved around repression of dissidence, criticism of FRG authoritarianism, student protest movements, and the Viet Nam War. During the time of the genesis of Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster*, literary currents in the West saw interest build for social concerns surrounding the women's movement, as revealed by Verena Stefan's *Häutungen* [*Shedding*] and the early work of Elfriede Jelinek, and renewed interest in subjectivity, as in the work of Thomas Bernhard. The major works of Günter Grass during this period consist of the continuing thematization of Danzig in *Katz und Maus* [*Cat and Mouse*] and *Hundejahre* [*Dog Years*], *Örtlich betäubt* [*Local Anaesthetic*] a satire on West German society in relation to the Viet Nam war and other issues, and *Aus dem Tagebuch einer Schnecke* [*From the Diary of a Snail*] his reflections on his support of and campaigning for social justice, West Germany's Social Democratic Party, and its candidate for chancellor, Willy Brandt.

### **2.3 The Past in the Present**

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<sup>64</sup> Ursula Heulenkamp, "Was bleibt - Versuch einer Bilanz nach vielen Kontroversen," *Der geteilte Himmel, Literatur und ihre Grenzen in der DDR*, ed. Martin Sabrow (Leipzig: Akademische Verlagsanstalt, 2004) 49-74; 55.

<sup>65</sup> Swales 189.

The extent to which, or even if, Grass's *Blechtrommel* and Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster* serve as loci for the discursive reflection, beyond the denoted story elements, of the tensions in the societies in which they were produced, depends on the orientation of the reader to a number of factors. These are (1) the text, as a site of significance; (2) the temporality and thus immediacy/non-immediacy of the referenced society for the reader; (3) the discrimination of material traces of these as in some sense for the reader *factual*, as opposed to the manipulation and ambiguation of the relation of 'fact' to narrative by textual and authorial design; and (4) discrimination between modes of determining such manipulation. The sum of which implicates the reader's relation to the above as also object for explication, accorded space contingently within the narrative whole. Exploring the texts from the interrelationships of these viewpoints will also have consequences for the inquiry into critical perceptions of the German nation, National Socialism, and questions of guilt and responsibility.

From this multiperspectival orientation *Die Blechtrommel* may be read as commentary on the West German society in which it was written -- indeed it has been argued that this is a primary reading<sup>66</sup> -- through various correspondences. Overt thematization of post-World War Two issues occurs naturally in Book Three of the novel following the essential chronology that orders the surface features of the narrative. Covertly, this commentary begins already at the conclusion of Book Two, when we are informed that Oskar will begin a new and adult life, having added a small amount of height to his still comparatively slight stature. The parody here of a *Stunde Null* mentality that regards slight advance as real growth in moral and intellectual outlook would seem obvious.<sup>67</sup> This conceit continues with Oskar's admission that he has lost

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<sup>66</sup> Nury Kim 40.

<sup>67</sup> B 564/TD 409.



interest in being a grown-up.<sup>68</sup> If this passage is correlated with the previous aside concerning the nostalgia of later West Germans for the immediate postwar years,<sup>69</sup> years that in reality were ones of privation and even starvation, it then becomes clear that the real trajectory of collective memory, of which that nostalgia is symptomatic, is a forgetting that aims back towards the pre-war era of fascist hegemony.

In Book One, at the beginning of the *Schaufenster* ["Shop Windows"] chapter, Oskar muses from the vantage point of the mental institution on his drumming under grandstands, thus disrupting Nazi rallies, as on a level with acts of Resistance. With undisguised irony he compares his fantasy world to those who claimed to have stood against the regime internally in both local and psychological senses.

Von Geist des Widerstandes spricht man, von Widerstandskreisen. Man soll den widerstand sogar verinnerlichen können, das nennt man dann: innere Emigration.<sup>70</sup>

Situating the tone of disdain in the extra-textual world of at least purported facticity, is Grass's avowed respect for Alfred Döblin,<sup>71</sup> genuinely and necessarily an exile. In Book Three, detailing his night school education in the British Occupation Zone, Oskar mentions Borchert's *Draußen vor der Tür*, in passing, linking the play to his negligible experience of the theater, in general, and to his rather uninformed appreciation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.<sup>72</sup> Regarding Oskar, a symbolic figure with shifting signification throughout the novel, both narrator and narrated, here as exemplar of at least a segment of the postwar German populace, the text constitutes implicitly a short discussion of the lack of artistic appreciation accorded the new and the unreflective

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 572/417.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 570/415.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 157/111.

<sup>71</sup> Preece 23.

<sup>72</sup> B 571/TD 416.

reverence for familiar figures; even if, or even because, like Gründgens, they could be identified with the common experience of the ordinary person in the Third Reich.

*Die Blechtrommel* presents a picture of a traditionalist and politically apathetic Federal Republic. The text queries where those who turned the gas valves might be hiding<sup>73</sup> and portrays the citizenry as unable to express their emotions without synthetic stimulation in the "Onion Cellar."<sup>74</sup> Much of the satire directed at this society is placed within imagery of, and allusions to the artistic and cultural currents of the time, and often only briefly, in passing. The early linking of Rasputin and Goethe as the poles of Oskar's education, the less than exalted evaluation of the latter<sup>75</sup> and subsequent allusions could be seen as a 'deflating' satire on the Goethe cult in FRG scholarly circles. A deeper repudiation of that mentality arises if the reader associates the novel as a whole with the genre of the *Bildungsroman* and notes the extent to which the text represents a continual travesty of any Goethean harmony of life and outlook. Of course, as Oskar romps through the cultural milieu of the Federal Republic, it is not just the traditional and aesthetized that is parodied but also the faddish and profit motivated art world itself, underlined by the superficiality of figures such as Klepp, Lankes, and Ulla. Yet allusions to a more serious reality situate the reader among the discursive tensions of this world in the discussion over whether one's wartime conduct was, *passé*.<sup>76</sup> A chilling reflection of this period,<sup>77</sup> placing the text momentarily into relation with a work like Wolfgang Koeppen's *Tod im Rom* [Death in Rome], is the attempt in the postwar world of West Germany to carry out a military execution order from 1939.

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 263/188.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. 685ff./497ff.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. 111f. /78.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 718/520.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 757/547-548.

The reader schooled in the personal histories and works of the *Gruppe 47* authors, might make cases for various allusions also to these and many other personages and subject matters in the *Blechtrommel*. The stylistic and aesthetic properties of the novel might be considered a statement either for or against literary currents of the time, and/or the realist, modernist, or magical realist novel. One area for further investigation might be that of locating the author within the discourses that arise from the narrative thread(s). For instance, Günter Grass has blamed the "irrational" tradition in European culture for the calamity of Nazism and has stated his intent to combat that tendency in his works.<sup>78</sup> Searching for the significations that give rise to this discussion as integral to the sense allocation of the narrative, also necessarily situates the author into the text as proper object of narration.

The societal backgrounds and reception histories of *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* are integral to sense allocation and as narrative extension of the novels themselves, may be regarded as conditioning factors for the reader's expectations regarding the texts. The publication of the former novel occasioned lawsuits and withdrawal of prize offers.<sup>79</sup> The first critical reactions to the work were naturally reviews, both positive and negative. Marcel Reich-Ranicki faulted the novel for excesses including lack of taste, a stance he later explained as the product of a critical method that must also be subject to self-critique.<sup>80</sup> Negative sentiments usually centered on the novel's depiction of crudities and sexuality, lack of respect for authority and religion, and generally reflected the opinions of regional press and conservative news media. Positive criticism appears to foreshadow critical directions taken by

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<sup>78</sup> Günter Grass, quoted in Kim 41.

<sup>79</sup> Preece 47.

<sup>80</sup> (a) Marcel Reich-Ranicki, "Auf gut Glück getrommelt," Hamburg: *Die Zeit*, 1 January 1960, "Die Blechtrommel," *Attraktion und Ärger: ein Kapitel deutscher Literaturkritik*, ed. Franz Josef Görtz (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1984) 116-120; (b) "Selbstkritik eines Kritikers," Cologne: Westdeutscher Rundfunk, 22 May 1963, broadcast, Görtz 151-157, print.

subsequent *Blechtrommel* scholarship.<sup>81</sup> The links between the German lower middle class and the success of Hitler is mentioned in one article.<sup>82</sup> Hans Magnus Enzensberger noted parallels between the novel and the *Bildungsroman*, credits Grass with formal invention, and perceived in Oskar the "mouthpiece" also of contemporary Germans.<sup>83</sup>

Siegfried Mews observes that although *Die Blechtrommel* was not published in the German Democratic Republic until 1986, there was deprecatory comment from that quarter also. He cites a later review as being more positive with the criticism, however, that Grass had anti-communist views.<sup>84</sup> With the publication of Ralph Manheim's English translation *The Tin Drum* in 1963, reviews in the United States perceived the novel, contrary to its German reception, as an apolitical text with undefined stylistic characteristics.<sup>85</sup> A compilation of newspaper and magazine reviews from this time reveals a wide variety of viewpoints. *Time* magazine linked Grass with Heinrich Böll and Uwe Johnson as authentic voices in a new German literature and praised *The Tin Drum*, characterizing its stylistic features however as "gaudy."<sup>86</sup> Clifton Fadiman compared the work favorably to Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*<sup>87</sup> while a review in the *Los Angeles Times* was much more guarded in its evaluation, describing the work as containing the type of satire found in the old *Simplicissimus* magazine combined with the

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<sup>81</sup> Siegfried Mews, *Günter Grass and His Critics: from the Tin Drum to Crabwalk* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008) 16.

<sup>82</sup> Joachim Kaiser, "Oskars getrommelte Bekenntnisse," Munich: Süddeutsche Zeitung, 31 October/1 November 1959, Görtz 52-57.

<sup>83</sup> Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Wilhelm Meister auf der Blechtrommel," Stuttgart: Süddeutscher Rundfunk, 18 November 1969, broadcast, Görtz 62-69, print.

<sup>84</sup> Mews 17.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. 18.

<sup>86</sup> n.a., "The Guilt of the Lambs," *Time*, 4 January 1963, Ray Lewis White, *Günther Grass in America: the Early Years*, Germanistische Texte und Studien 12 (Hildesheim, New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1981) 2-3.

<sup>87</sup> Clifton Fadiman, Review, *Book-of-the-Month Club News*, March 1963, White 7.

"nightmare element" of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*.<sup>88</sup> Consideration of the many reviews of *Die Blechtrommel* in the various world languages, e.g. those attendant upon the novel's translation by Jean Amsler into French in 1961 as *Le Tambour*, are obviously beyond the scope of the present work.

*Kindheitsmuster* functions as the fictive autobiography, albeit one that deconstructs, or perhaps better *restructures*, identity, not only of an individual but of a generation. Yet it also restructures the relationship between socialist artist and official socialist art not as outright critique but as a

[. . .] Spannungsfeld, in dem Kulturpolitik und literarisches Werk aneinanderprallen und dadurch negative oder . . . positive Folgen in Sachen der Literatur entstehen [. . .]<sup>89</sup>

Thus, in 'authentically', i.e. as self revelation, coming to terms with an individual's, a generation's, and by implication a nation's National Socialist experience, *Kindheitsmuster* situates that process, and the reader, within the socialist society, comprehended in the state, as typified by the earlier reference to Otto Grotewohl. Implicitly this arrangement also locates the state within the discourse of authoritarianism, which must be carefully channelled under the production conditions of the GDR, such as by the 1970s, the critique of Stalinism, as evidenced in the short fabula of Herr X, the ark, and the impossibility of honest communication in an "age of suspicion."<sup>90</sup> Also placing the work within its societal setting, and part of the narrative by extension into the material world, is the reception history. Upon publication, some GDR reviewers criticized the complexity of the novel as 'formalist'. Others deplored its failure to articulate the GDR's socialist constitution. In the West reviewers faulted Wolf's failure to

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<sup>88</sup> Robert R. Kirsch, "Rebirth of German Novel Hailed in Puzzling Work," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 March 1963, White 9-10.

<sup>89</sup> Kim 133.

<sup>90</sup> K 561f./PC 361f.

criticize the Communist system; others disliked the self-reflective mode of narrative.<sup>91</sup> Behind the former criticism one detects echoes of a narrow versus a broad engagement with Lukács' ideas on historical biography and its relation to the life of the people and economic reality,<sup>92</sup> and the absorption into a human and flawed subjectivity and thus the negation, of any heroic model within the form of the novel.<sup>93</sup> *Kindheitsmuster*, like many East German works thus finds a place for itself by both conformity and nonconformity to official artistic doctrines, in the society at large, generating the fields of tension referred to earlier as determinants of the work as site for engagement with the discourses resulting from those incongruities.

*Kindheitsmuster*, in challenging the reader to compare her recollections of Nazi Germany, and one's place and attitudes within it, with those of the characters in the novel,<sup>94</sup> also challenges dogmatic versions of such recollections and creates a distinct conceptual space for itself in relation to some members of the older communist generation. Anna Kuhn hypothesizes that the novel's initial disclaimer of facticity parallels that of older writer Wolfgang Joho's similar disclaimer in his novel *Klassentreffen* [*Class Reunion*] that conventionally, for GDR orthodoxy, defines the Federal Republic as the heir to the Third Reich.<sup>95</sup> *Kindheitsmuster*, however, thematizes the varying constitutions of concepts of truth and reality in conjunction with the thought that a book, for instance, may begin to be falsified, unremarked, already before its material development.<sup>96</sup> A similar thought links Wolf's formulation with one of Anna Seghers

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<sup>91</sup> Kuhn 107.

<sup>92</sup> Georg [György] Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983) 333-334.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. 347.

<sup>94</sup> Kuhn 106-107.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> K 115/PC missing.

that the depiction of characters as *typical* actually imposes a preconceived idea on a particular representation of reality.<sup>97</sup> Seghers not only argued with Lukács' dogmatic attitude in privileging bourgeois realism as literary model but also supported the idea of formal experimentation<sup>98</sup> and re-valued the German Romantics, an attitude productively developed in Wolf's later, *Kein Ort. Nirgends* [No Place on Earth].<sup>99</sup> Wolf's editing of Segher's essays published as *Glauben an Irdisches* possibly afforded opportunity to thereby interrogate the orthodox socialist realism on the basis of its deviation from realism itself and to consider the central role of *Erfahrung* in determining an orientation to any putative reality.<sup>100</sup> Thus the legacy of the returned exiles becomes internalized in *Kindheitsmuster* as aesthetic tension embodying a history of debate between differing positions.

*Kindheitsmuster's* relation to Christa Wolf's own generation of writers might be regarded as analogous to the novel's narrative strategy. The first person is missing from the memories of the Nazi era, positing a "nonidentity of child and adult,"<sup>101</sup> in other words a discontinuity between the 'then' and the 'now' which questions the possibility of unification of the two, except through a complete honesty in remembering that refuses to deny unpleasant historical facts.<sup>102</sup> It is just this honesty that demands the realization that the narrating 'I' of the historical author's own life, is like most humans, not wholly continuous between life stages. It should therefore not be surprising to realize that *Kindheitsmuster* stands at the end of a conceptual development that encompassed early on the typically expected official viewpoints from a member of the SED,

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<sup>97</sup> Anna Seghers, quoted in Kim 142.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. 141.

<sup>99</sup> Kuhn 142-143.

<sup>100</sup> Kim 142-143.

<sup>101</sup> Hell 201.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. 204.

expressing itself in a socialist fervor that initially claimed the territory of protecting society from the low standards of Americanization and Westernization of culture.<sup>103</sup> Perhaps tellingly, she valued Strittmatter's *Tinko*, with its emphasis on human failings on the road to socialism, rather than heroic success.<sup>104</sup> A trace of this attitude might be found in *Kindheitsmuster's* seventh chapter with the question, "Was heißt: sich verändern?"<sup>105</sup> The difficulty or even impossibility of real change in character was the special province of Franz Fühmann and some critics, such as Kim, see his influence in *Kindheitsmuster's* devaluation of the official transformed antifascist resistance fighter,<sup>106</sup> in favor of the posited discontinuity of personae between Nelly and the fictive author. As Wolf's artistic maturity proceeded, her relations with members of her society and particularly professional colleagues, form a part of her life narrative that relativizes and ironizes the quotation concerning the impossibility of honest communication in an "age of suspicion." In 1959 she began functioning, like many East Germans, as an *Inoffizielle Mitarbeiterin*, or unofficial coworker with the state security apparatus, the so-called *Stasi*, after an initial period of observation.<sup>107</sup> This fact, revealed decades later in *Was bleibt*, ultimately became the proximate grounds for denial of status as an independent intellectual among some critics. What is germane here, are not questions of ethics but the realization that this baggage is carried, and is obscured in relation to the creative work, perhaps tangentially touching certain areas, in much the way that Grass's service in the SS is obscured in relation to his.

The orientation to *Kindheitsmuster's* creative setting that is most distinctive is that of the feminine viewpoint. Whether viewed as an elaboration of a "paternal family narrative" or as a

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<sup>103</sup> Magenau 70-71.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. 73.

<sup>105</sup> K 223/PC 141.

<sup>106</sup> Nury Kim 156-157.

<sup>107</sup> Magenau 85-87.



link with a broader community through memory,<sup>108</sup> the subjectivity is always that of a gendered individual in personal development, in relation to particular histories and memories constituted in the male dominated world, are processed either in accord with, in opposition to, or in a manner that blurs these distinctions, as also those of genre and actants.<sup>109</sup>

The secondary literature to Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster* comprises, as is the case with *Die Blechtrommel*, a voluminous amount of material in various genres. Already between 1973 and 1975 reviews appeared commenting on the progress of the novel's writing, often based on Wolf's public readings of excerpts.<sup>110</sup> 1976 witnessed both pre- and post-publication announcements, discussions, events, and reviews in East and West Germany. Initial reviews appeared in the GDR in periodicals such as *Freiheit, Neues Leben* [periodical of the FDJ, the party youth organization], and *Vorwärts*. Klaus Jarmatz, in the SED party organ *Neues Deutschland* faulted the novel's treatment of "anti-Fascist resistance."<sup>111</sup> Hermann Kant praised the content of the novel while faulting the complexity of its style.<sup>112</sup> In the FRG Hans Mayer, Wolf's former professor of literature, registered skepticism of *Kindheitsmuster's* premise that Nazi and Communist totalitarianism really differed and criticized Wolf for insincerity.<sup>113</sup> Marcel Reich-Ranicki reviewed the work partially positively for its abandonment of the heroic

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<sup>108</sup> (a) Hell 199; (b) Kathleen L. Komar, "The Communal Self: Re-Membering Female Identity in the Works of Christa Wolf and Monique Wittig," *Comparative Literature* 44.1 (Winter 1992): 42-58; 45.

<sup>109</sup> Hell 137.

<sup>110</sup> Henk de Wild, *Bibliographie der Sekundärliteratur zu Christa Wolf* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995) 335.

<sup>111</sup> Klaus Jarmatz, "Kindheitsmuster. Zu Christa Wolfs Roman," *Neues Deutschland* 32, 5/6 March 1977: 14.

<sup>112</sup> Hermann Kant, "Eine Kindheit wird besichtigt," *Der Bienenstock* 113 (1977): 8.

<sup>113</sup> Hans Mayer, "Der Mut zur Unaufrichtigkeit," *Der Spiegel* 31.16 (11 April 1977) 185ff.

protagonist but negatively for naivete in the face of the GDR dictatorship.<sup>114</sup> Soon reviews appeared internationally, such as the positive evaluation of W. V. Blomster focusing on Wolf's modes of narration<sup>115</sup> and Stephen Spender's essay on the social significance of the work from the English translation.<sup>116</sup> A translated review of Alexander Stephan gives the novel lukewarm praise while questioning its sincerity in criticism of the East German governing regime.<sup>117</sup>

Substantial critique also materialized. In East Germany, Heinz Plavius praised the work for, among other qualities, its expansion of literary realism and intergenerational understanding.<sup>118</sup> Annemarie Auer, on the other hand, criticized the novel for lack of class consciousness and overly subjective perspective.<sup>119</sup> Other authors and critics such as Wolfgang Hegewald and Stephan Hermlin defended Wolf and *Kindheitsmuster* and attacked Auer's position as dogmatic.<sup>120</sup> Sigrid Bock evaluated the novel positively as the culmination of Wolf's literary strivings to that point<sup>121</sup> and Therese Hörnigk explored the work's contributions to the

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<sup>114</sup> Marcel Reich-Ranicki, "Christa Wolfs trauriger Zettelkasten," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (19 March 1977): 5.

<sup>115</sup> W. V. Blomster, "Review, Christa Wolf, *Kindheitsmuster*," *World Literature Today* 51.4 (Autumn 1977): 611-612.

<sup>116</sup> Stephen Spender, "The Mortal Sin of Our Time, a Model Childhood, by Christa Wolf," *The New York Times Book Review* 85.41, 12 October 1980: 11,34.

<sup>117</sup> Alexander Stephan, a) "Review: *Kindheitsmuster* by Christa Wolf," trans. Bidy Martin, *New German Critique* 11 (Spring 1977): 178-182; b) "How did we become as we are? The Treatment of Fascism in GDR Literature," trans. Ian Wallace, *GDR Monitor* 3 (Summer 1980): 5-16; c) *Christa Wolf*, 4th ed., (Munich: Beck, 1976, 1991).

<sup>118</sup> Heinz Plavius, "Gewissensforschung; Christa Wolf: *Kindheitsmuster*," *Neue Deutsche Literatur* 25 (1977): 139-151.

<sup>119</sup> Annemarie Auer, "Gegenerinnerung; Gedanken beim Lesen," *Sinn und Form* 29.6 (1977): 847-878.

<sup>120</sup> Wolfgang Hegewald, Stephan Hermlin, Kurt und Jeanne Stern, Helmut Richter, Dieter Schiller, Leonore Krenzlin, Preface by Wilhelm Girnus, "Briefe an Annemarie Auer," *Sinn und Form* 29.6 (1977): 1311-1322.

<sup>121</sup> Sigrid Bock, "Christa Wolf: *Kindheitsmuster*," *Weimarer Beiträge* 23.9 (1977): 102-130; 103.

topic of fascism within GDR literature.<sup>122</sup> Hans Richter, of Jena, however, faulted both the lack of political commitment and narratorial innovations.<sup>123</sup>

*Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* are thus situated within discourses that defined the societies in which they were produced. Of interest is what they disclose about the processes by which these societies also situated themselves into and within discourses that defined their relationship to history and to themselves. . In both cases, the signifying potential of also that not said, supplies a cognitive commentary *sotto voce* on the trajectory of the story in print across the page.

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<sup>122</sup> Therese Hörnigk, (a) "Das Thema Krieg und Faschismus in der Geschichte der DDR-Literatur," *Weimarer Beiträge* 24.5 (1978): 73-105; (b) "Kriegserlebnis und Wandlungsgestaltung in der frühen DDR-Literatur," *Literatur im Wandel; Entwicklungen in europäischen sozialistischen Ländern*, eds. Ludwig Richter, Heinrich Olschowsky, et al. (Berlin, Weimar: Aufbau Verlag, 1986) 223-246; c) *Christa Wolf* (Berlin: Volk und Welt, Göttingen: Steidl, 1989); d) "Gespräch mit Christa Wolf," in (c) *Christa Wolf*, 7-47.

<sup>123</sup> Hans Richter, "Moralität als poetische Energie," *Sinn und Form* 29.3 (1977): 667-678; 678.

### **3. *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster***

#### **3.1 The World in the Works**

At the most immediate level of reading, *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* tell thought provoking stories about the relationships of their various figures. Yet any adequate allocation of sense to these stories and the events of, and emplotments in which they consist, places the reader into contact with the significance of extra- and intertextual relationships revealed through close reading of all narrative elements. These, in turn, further situate the texts and reader into categorical perspectives within which, and in counterpoint with the primary surface elements, alternative narrative configurations suggest themselves.

The novels present meta-textual<sup>1</sup> social commentary as allusions; alternative narrative modes are also encountered. In the following discussion the terms 'allusion' and 'reference' are used (contra Genette) in the sense of explicit denotation. The dissertation privileges and modifies a perspective derived from Edward Said as well as Bakhtin's dialogic principle as a basis for relating texts, readers, and perceived 'realities.' In searching for these relationships, as grounds for counter narrative or explicatory sub-commentary on societal discourses in Grass's and Wolf's works, the inquiry will be restricted to specific perspectives suggested by the texts.

##### **3.1.1 The World as Intertext**

Of the several means by which texts may be in dialogue with each other, that of marked intertextuality is readily evident in Grass's and Wolf's novels. As *Die Blechtrommel* relates the story of Oskar Matzerath, born in Gdańsk [then Danzig] and raised during the National Socialist

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<sup>1</sup> Accepting Genette's taxonomy for purposes of labelling. Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997) 4.

years, at the narrative surface, one also becomes aware of the "copresence,"<sup>2</sup> to borrow a term from Genette, of other texts. Early in the novel, in the story of Oskar's firebrand Grandfather Koljaiczek, the semiotic productivity of inserting song titles and lyrics into descriptive prose may be observed in the fantasy stream of consciousness parody of German patriotism with a naval motif such as,

[. . .] Promenadendeck, *Heil dir im Siegerkranz* [italics added], die Göschflagge des Heimathafens, *Prinz Heinrich steht am Steuerrad* [italics added] und mein Großvater Koljaiczek barfuß [. . .]<sup>3</sup>

The passage continues with the line from the latter song, "ein Volk das solche Fürsten hat" which in the original concludes the sentiment with "das leidet keine Not."<sup>4</sup> Koljaiczek thus escapes the thoroughly mocked German authorities as Oskar's narrative reduces the verities of national pride simultaneously to slapstick comedy and bitter irony.

The unfolding tale situates Oskar in a specific and symbolic social setting. One learns that during the First World War Oskar's mother Agnes has entered into a romantic relationship with her cousin, Jan Bronski, but in 1923 marries Alfred Matzerath, a Rhinelander, who, convalescing from a wound, stays on in Danzig after the war. Thereafter, Agnes, Alfred, and Jan, also married but opting for Polish citizenship, form a personal and political *ménage a trois* that becomes a conceptual framework for the orientation of the reader within the peculiar and fateful geopolitical circumstances of the 'free city of Danzig' and its national client relationships. If "history is in the detail"<sup>5</sup> in the *Blechtrommel* so also is milieu and the work abounds in the

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 1.

<sup>3</sup> B 36/TD 23.

<sup>4</sup> Breon Mitchell, "Glossary," TD 580.

<sup>5</sup> Preece 39.

particulars of material culture, such as description of contemporary stamps, which with their political import might give a little insight, at least sensorily, into the everyday world of the characters.<sup>6</sup> The paramount artifact might be the tin drum itself, which wholly other than a material prop, becomes, in a passage parodying the Nietzschean *will to power*, the support for and objective embodiment of, Oskar's refusal to develop into an adult.<sup>7</sup>

At the age of three Oskar decides to stop growing, as a protest against the adult world, and lives a life of willfulness and egocentricity as he explores and makes his way in that world. The primary tools that assist him in his idiosyncratic life path initially are his toy drum and his glass-shattering voice. Assisting the narrative and underlining character relationships in the passages that describe Oskar's transformation is an allusion to Johann Strauss' *Der Zigeunerbaron* along with Biblical and liturgical references. Although the written passage with Agnes at the piano and Jan at her shoulder mentions only the operetta,<sup>8</sup> the extension of the narrative in Volker Schlöndorff's film, naturally enough quotes a specific musical passage -- one that would seem to both ironicize and signify, the lovers' belief in the rightness of their relationship.<sup>9</sup> When Oskar's voice shatters the glass of the household clock, the narrator satirizes the dependency of adults on their creations by referring to Jan Bronski's silent intonation of liturgical formulae, whether as supplication or imprecation is somewhat unclear.<sup>10</sup> Later, the re-functioning of a biblical passage concerning Sodom and Gomorrha serves as a sarcastic

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<sup>6</sup> B 48/TD 32.

<sup>7</sup> (a) Ibid. 70/48. (b) Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1988) 70.

<sup>8</sup> B 72/TD 50.

<sup>9</sup> Schlöndorff, Volker, dir, *Die Blechtrommel*, 1979, film.

<sup>10</sup> B 79/TD 55.

comment on the relations of the adults and their acquaintances in Oskar's world.<sup>11</sup>

Oskar grows up in a lower middle class milieu of rough children, self-indulgent adults, and Nazi ideology. His own self-indulgence actually makes him somewhat immune from the pretensions of adults, whom he continually disdains and shocks. The minutiae of daily life, such as Oskar's kindergarten experience of popular religiosity, signified by Aunt Kauer's singing and demeanor,<sup>12</sup> create a feeling for authentic childhood experience, albeit one that never seems to miss an opportunity to mock the grownups. Although not intertextual in the strict sense, the mention of numerous literary and popular works and figures announces a perspective for associated figures in the *Blechtrommel*, such as the pedophilic greengrocer and scoutmaster Greff, and chronicle Oskar's own cynical self education as he manipulates people for his purposes.<sup>13</sup> Other signifying strategies include allusions to Faust within the context of Goethe as a *Biedermeier* rather than a classically transcendent figure and possibly Oskar's own bargain with the tin drum.<sup>14</sup> Goethe and Rasputin become the antipodes of Oskar's education,<sup>15</sup> a dualism made much of in the literature on the novel,<sup>16</sup> making of Oskar also a Faust surrogate<sup>17</sup> with his two souls. When Sigismund Markus woos Agnes with the declaration that Germany will be successful and Poland will not, that is, Jan Bronski will never amount to much, the narration

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<sup>11</sup> B 82/ TD 57.

<sup>12</sup> B 90/ TD 62.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 107-118/75-83.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 118/83. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Faust I, "Vor dem Tor," v. 1112, Faust II, Act 1, "Finstere Gallerie," v. 6212ff., *Faust: die Tragödie erster und zweiter Teil*, ed. Erich Trunz (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1986) 41, 191.

<sup>15</sup> B 112/TD 78.

<sup>16</sup> Siegfried Mews, *Günter Grass and His Critics: From The Tin Drum to Crabwalk* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008) 22-24.

<sup>17</sup> Judith Ryan, "The Revocation of Melancholy: Günter Grass' The Tin Drum," *The Uncompleted Past: Postwar German Novels and the Third Reich* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983) 56-69; 61.

conjoins Oskar's drumming with musing on the historically fragile independence of Poland through a burlesque of yet another line from Goethe and one from the Polish national anthem.<sup>18</sup>

The readily readable literary and cultural allusions become rather sparser as the *Tin Drum's* narrative proceeds. The text throughout the novel delights in the small detail such as the Hitler Youth "Eastwind" song allusion, satirically suggesting that an ode valorizing German aggressive designs on Eastern Europe actually floats more flags and banners than any other, in precisely the scene in which Oskar prepares to bring disorder to the festive proceedings at the grandstand.<sup>19</sup> In the same manner, Oskar's estimation of the Hitler Youth wind band's offerings as cacophony, the production of which suggested to him that the heroes of National Socialism as typified in the films *SA Mann Brand* and *Hitler-Junge Quex*, had, contrary to their slogans, indeed died in vain.<sup>20</sup> In the following chapters of the novel, Parzival is invoked as symbolic stand-in for Jan Bronski and still later Oskar conceptualizes himself with a Christ-like persona while his mother is in the confessional, all structured with reference to the Roman Catholic mass.<sup>21</sup>

By 1937 Oskar's mother, deeply depressed and encumbered by an apparently inescapable sexual objectification, loses the will to live and obsessively overdoses on fish. This sub-narrative is initiated and signified by, eels caught in a decomposing horse head, their incorporation by Oskar's father as soup, and the nausea which envelopes Agnes which is subsequently projected into marital discord. At the appropriate moment of flaring tempers the "Huntsmen's Chorus" from Weber's *Der Freischütz* signifies the wound inflicted by Matzerath on Agnes as Agathe, but

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<sup>18</sup> B 134/TD 95; Goethe, *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, Entrance monologue; Polish national anthem.

<sup>19</sup> B 149/TD 105.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 152/107.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 182-183/129-131.



the banging of the piano lid and the clatter of the fallen stool ensure that there will be no ultimate happy ending here.<sup>22</sup> After her death, Oskar's childhood world disintegrates. The Jewish toy merchant Sigismund Markus, from whom Oskar obtained his tin drum, commits suicide after *Kristallnacht*. Matzerath and Bronski, estranged after Agnes' death, keep their own separate company in a relationship alluded to by the "eternal feminine" of *Faust II*.<sup>23</sup> Jan Bronski is executed by German troops after the siege of the Polish post office, marking the beginning of World War Two. After seventeen days Poland capitulates and the pathos of Polish cavalry fighting German armored units is signified in the *Blechtrommel* as inversion of the Don Quixote tale, in Polish Pan Kiehot [Kichot]: tilting at *Panzers* believing they are windmills.<sup>24</sup>

The occurrence of major specific literary or other media based quotation or reference continues its metacommentary at irregular intervals. After Oskar's father hires a young woman, Maria, to care for the teenage Oskar, whose stature is that of a small child and thus considered handicapped, both Oskar and his father eventually have sexual intercourse with her. In 1941 Maria bears a child, Kurt, who is either Oskar's son or half-brother. Almost predictably, the characters involved in this situation evade seriousness, accomplished by Oskar in one instance, through the drumming of variations on a popular tune about the sea war against England after radio news of German U-boat victories conveniently defuses an awkward sexual situation.<sup>25</sup> Oskar partakes of military service by joining Bebra, a little person and circus clown, entertaining the German troops in France. The persistence of the wartime mentality in the later Federal Republic of Germany is foreshadowed by anachronistic reference to a post-war American hit

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 202/143-144.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 272/196.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 324-325/234.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 376-377/271-272.

song,<sup>26</sup> along with the fact that characters and locale also resurface in the 'West German' chapters of the novel. Oskar's romantic interest, Roswitha, is killed in an Allied attack after the D-Day invasion. Oskar eventually makes his way back to Danzig as the war turns against Germany. He arrives home from his odyssey, but dissimilarly to Ulysses finds life there relatively unchanged. Biblical passages, liturgical references, and recall of Oskar's childhood frame his renewed metonymic encounter with 'Jesus' as statuary, in a passage dissociating the narrative voice from Oskar and intermittently identifying the latter with St. Peter and ultimately with Jesus himself.<sup>27</sup>

From this point *Die Blechtrommel* employs marked intertextuality in the form of references to a Christmas carol, Goethe, Wolfgang Borchert, Shakespeare, Dostoyevsky, the Bible, Dante, and a Church symbol. Oskar's father swallows and chokes on his Nazi party pin when Soviet forces arrive, precipitating his shooting by a Soviet soldier in the confusion. At Matzerath's funeral, Oskar starts growing again and becomes hunchbacked. This section is introduced by a recapitulative history of Danzig, through which Oskar historicizes his life, times, and decisions that includes an ironic mention of city native Johannes Falk, author of "O du Fröhliche."<sup>28</sup> Particularly poignant is the arrival of Mariusz Fajngold, escaped from Treblinka.<sup>29</sup> Oskar, Maria, and Kurt then flee to the West where he enters a sanatorium. He is released in 1946, undertakes vocational training and apprentices as a stonemason. The text exhibits acquaintance, satirically, with post-war society by referencing Gustav Gründgens, successful before, during and after the Third Reich, in his performances as Tasso and Hamlet, as well as the

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 449/323.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 468-471/336-340.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 522/378.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 543-544/394-395.

sensation caused by Borchert's *Draußen vor der Tür*.<sup>30</sup> Oskar's commentary on the contemporary art scene likewise satirizes various shallow attitudes as the text throws names such as Raskolnikov into the aesthetic mix, with contextually dependent implications of unspecified crimes and punishments. Thereafter, in the early years of the Federal Republic he encounters acquaintances from his military service, including Bebra, and plays in a jazz band in the 'Onion Cellar' nightclub where patrons may peel onions in order to cry.

When Oskar's dog finds a woman's severed ring finger, he is charged with murder and committed to a mental institution from which he narrates and is discontinuously narrated by, the voices of his story. As these tell of Oskar's flight to Paris two years earlier, the fact that the date of narration is his thirtieth birthday brings once again comparison with Jesus.<sup>31</sup> Before his arrest, Oskar fantasizes himself as Dante ascending from the Paris metro as from hell, on an escalator, interviewed by reporters from *Der Spiegel*.<sup>32</sup> Oskar's concluding peroration, begun in the manner of the Apostle's Creed, voices his now open identification with Jesus, summarizes his life through many of its objective correlates, and ends with renewed and perhaps final confrontation with the *Schwarze Köchin*, Oskar's ultimate alibi for historical causality and human responsibility.<sup>33</sup>

*Kindheitsmuster* or *Patterns of Childhood* tells the story of Nelly Jordan's childhood in Nazi Germany as "[d]er ganz normale Alltag des Faschismus."<sup>34</sup> The narrative is related by the fictive author (in process of writing the 'memoir'), the narrating subject, presumably the mature Nelly, the narrated subject, in the course of a car trip with her family to her hometown, G.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 571/416.

<sup>31</sup> B 764/TD 553.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 771/558.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. 776-779/561-563.

<sup>34</sup> Firsching 69.

[Gorzów Wielkopolski], in Poland, the former L.[Landsberg an der Warthe] in pre-war Germany. The work consists of eighteen chapters, which in the edition of the year 2000 and later have descriptive titles in a table of contents. The English translation of 1980 has no such table of contents and deletes a number of passages found in the German edition.

The story, extant on several time planes, is thus discontinuous as a linear narrative. The plot is overlain with myriad discussions of history, humanity, memory, and writing and these are introduced and illustrated most often by allusions to or quotations from various works of literature and popular culture. Similarly to their use in *Die Blechtrommel*, such references locate the characters within certain social settings and open up discussion on the nature of those settings for both the textual figures and the reader. Unlike Grass's work, *Kindheitsmuster* largely foregoes the satirical stance and employs intertextual reference to interrogate history and memory as discourses of lived events for both fictive characters and reader. Essentially, Nelly Jordan spends the first sixteen years of her life suspended between family life and Nazi indoctrination. These two poles become conflated in her memory so that thoughts of one are associated with the other. At the publication of the novel one might assume a similar psychological process for many readers whose subjective experience of the Nazi period might, at least in memory, have paralleled the constructs of *Kindheitsmuster's* figures. The many allusions to childhood songs, nursery rhymes, and their juxtaposition with counterparts in National Socialist ideology situate the characters and older readers into a world constructed by memory and its discontinuities. For the reader with no direct experience or memories of Nazi Germany, for instance a younger generation typified in the novel by the fictive author's daughter, Lenka, there exists also a set of extra-textual allusions and references thematizing the tension between experiencing, remembering, and then communicating the childhood years under Nazism.

Explicitly marked intertextuality in *Kindheitsmuster* begins before the beginning of the tale itself with an epigraph from Pablo Neruda's *El libro de las preguntas* or *Book of Questions* framing, with perhaps some degree of pathos, the discussions to come.

Where is the child I used to be,  
still within, or far away?<sup>35</sup>

At the beginning of the narrative proper the fictive author begins the act of writing, in the third person, dissociated from Nelly who as a child finds her place in the family as an *I*. Yet exactly at the beginning, the initial sentence, in free translation from Faulkner, seems to bridge that dissociation in acknowledgement of the presence or perhaps better 'present-ness' of the past.<sup>36</sup> In the following chapters the gradual Nazification of Nelly's hometown is recounted against tales of family genealogies, fights with other children, and family gatherings. There are SA and SS parades and memories of her younger brother Lutz. On a different time plane there are discussions between the narrator, her daughter Lenka, and H., Lenka's father. All these happenings are placed in textual and conceptual proximity to a huge array of references to texts within the mundane situations of the novel's characters. In addition to the childhood songs, songs and sayings of fascist indoctrination, and newspaper articles, there are citations of world events in the 1970s, the Vietnam War, the assassination of Allende in Chile, the Watergate scandal, and even the death of Ingeborg Bachmann. Already in the first chapter of the novel the narrator interrogates the accuracy of memory followed by a quip that her daughter might forget the present news of the United States bombing of North Vietnam.<sup>37</sup> Memory produces cognitive

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<sup>35</sup> Pablo Neruda, from *Book of Questions*, trans. attributed to Margaret Sayers Peden, *Patterns of Childhood*, front pages.

<sup>36</sup> K 11/PC 3. Compare "[t]he past is never dead, it's not even past," William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (New York: Random House, 1951) Act 1 Scene 3.

<sup>37</sup> K 19/PC 8.

artifacts of Nelly's existence as the fictive author probes the childhood locale. Nursery rhymes and folk songs illustrate the tenor of that existence and delineate the experiences that shape Nelly's awareness and memory of family, external history and their respective emplacements.

In some instances the correlation of family, memory, dreams, and the contemporary world of authorship become also for the English reader a correlation with concerns of text translation. In a passage citing memories of Nelly's mother, Charlotte, conflated with a dream of the neighbors house burning, compared with 'forgettable' news such as an earthquake in Nicaragua, the magnitude of bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong expressed as double the explosive force of the Hiroshima atomic bomb, and leading into a dictionary definition of memory, the English translation leaves out the paragraph on catastrophe and war, even transposing the initial mention of the narrator's soothing warm drink to a passage four paragraphs later.<sup>38</sup> The ensuing etymological disquisition on memory, quoting from Albrecht Haller's "Trauerode" of 1736, has likewise failed to materialize in the English translation.<sup>39</sup> The fictive author muses on titles, on the way in which life and behavior, particularly that of a child is regulated, often by a *Muster* or pattern, from Latin *monstrum*, and with the coming of fascism, the regulation of the adult world also in terms of the loss of the freedom of the press or of assembly, hardly noticed immediately by the populace at large.<sup>40</sup>

The narrative voices of *Kindheitsmuster* interweave witness, memory, and reflection as German society succumbs to National Socialism. The process evinces a certain discursive 'authenticity' in its many references and allusions to and from the material, tangible world. There are newspaper accounts of local and world events and statistics of political affiliations as

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 58-61/33-35.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 62/missing.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 65/36.

reference to Nelly's vague notion that people called Communists existed and were being attacked by members of the SA.<sup>41</sup> Intimately bound up with this idea is the reflection, in answer to the question of Kasimierz Brandys, that what accustoms people to dictatorship is possibly the limiting of "their curiosity to realms which are not dangerous to them."<sup>42</sup> Or *[b]rauchen wir Schutz vor den Abgründen der Erinnerung?*<sup>43</sup> -- a thought correlated with rumors of peace in Vietnam from January 1973 and reflection on the 'hypocrisy' of the American president, as well as Nelly's family life in the 1930s. To President Nixon's proclamation that at no time in the post-war world was a lasting peace as possible as now (February 20, 1973), the fictive author asks herself if indeed crises have been abating in recent years, if this has affected her writing, her sense of life's timing, and further if Bertolt Brecht's pronouncement on the attainment of importance through thematic living may be credited. Rejecting this idea, the contemplative thread weaves Nelly's father's incorrect recitation of Schiller's *Das Lied von der Glocke* together with reflections on the sheer volume, contingency, and entanglement of thought and experience, all of which is reflected at some level in writing, which must cut through it all by balancing "seriousness and recklessness."<sup>44</sup> Ultimately, unlike the flight and return of Apollo 14, there is no possible calculation of the trajectory of one's own life, and like certain Soviet cosmonauts who died during their punctual return to Earth, no celebration of tragic failure in a world of military heroes and rock stars.<sup>45</sup>

The voluminous correlation of narration and citation continues with Lenka singing the spiritual "O Freedom" during the 1971 car trip, Nelly finding she is unable to keep her arm raised

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 65/37.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 110/67 quotation as given.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 114/missing.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 150/94 quotation as given.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 151-152/94-95.

in salute during the singing of "Deutschland über Alles," musings about Lenka's concept of truth in relation to Nelly's elucidated by her reaction to the suicides of her German instructor and friend. These are referenced through Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* and the suicides of Kleist and Henriette Vogel.<sup>46</sup> The context presents further reflection on Nelly's childhood encounters with truth and lie at school, containing yet another juvenile song (substituted in the English translation by one that rhymes in English) and poem.<sup>47</sup> Nelly is exhorted by her teacher to hate Jews and Communists, and discovers she cannot. Eventually she internalizes conflicted and sexual associations with Jews but also, after *Kristallnacht* empathy also. This conceptual conflict and its memory is contextualized by anti-Semitic doggerel, as common at the time as well-known rhymes such as "Maikäfer flieg!" The fictive author contemplates the psychological normality of Adolf Eichmann and Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Höss, Nazi news agency accounts of the bombing of Guernica -- actually, torched by Soviet forces (!) -- and the launching of the 'Strength through Joy' ship, the *Wilhelm Gustloff*. News reports of Stalin's purges bring embarrassment to the fictive author, as a committed communist, in explaining this historical period to her daughter, Lenka, relating the idea of personal change also to memory and its physiological basis.<sup>48</sup> *Kindheitsmuster's* Chapters 6 and 7 reflect on German nationalism and anti-Semitism culminating in Nelly's memories of *Kristallnacht*, 8 and 9 November 1938. These are cognitively associated with a radio speech the year before by Joseph Goebbels, triggered also by memories of a fire in her own home -- a wicker chair -- and her brother burning his hand on an electric stove.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 153-170/96-106.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 182-187/114-115.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 203-233/128-148.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 249-255/158-162.



*Kindheitsmuster's* Chapter 8 begins with Ingeborg Bachmann's citation of Flaubert, on experience and knowledge, [m]it meiner verbrannten Hand schreibe ich von der Natur des Feuers.<sup>50</sup> Authenticity becomes the issue with allusions to world crises, the beginning of the war in Vietnam, the assassination of Salvador Allende in 1973, and the realization that the socialist bloc of nations did not aid the leader of Chile's Communist Party, Corvalán.<sup>51</sup> How does one mediate, in writing, the past and present, in what does this consist, is it a dialogue? In this manner the fictive author begins her chapter on the beginning of World War Two and its effects on Nelly's family.<sup>52</sup> With the coming of war, her father enters military service; he returns almost unrecognizable near the end of the novel. An inventory of citations, through which a dialogic relationship between Nelly's past and the fictive and also real author's present might be established includes: (1) a speech by Goebbels announcing the realization of the greater German *Reich* through the *Anschluss* of Austria, (2) the correlation of German children losing their fathers in war with Arab and Israeli children losing theirs similarly in the conflict of October 1973, perhaps even someone who survived a German concentration camp, (3) news accounts of the war's progress in 1939, (4) official versus real intentions by wartime leaders, with contemporary allusion to the 'Pentagon papers' made public by Daniel Ellsberg, (5) the generational exhaustion of terms of disgust, and (6) the reporting of the "persecution of Jews" in a small town in Germany in 1973.

Nelly experiences the rites of passage from childhood in Nazi Germany: membership in the Hitler Youth, for girls the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* and at Nelly's age specifically, the

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<sup>50</sup> (a) Ibid. 256/163; (b) Karen Achberger, *Understanding Ingeborg Bachmann* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1995) 132.

<sup>51</sup> Robert J. Alexander, rev. of *Chile, Corvalán, Struggle*, by Viktor Shragin, trans. Yuri Sviridov, *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 62.1 (Feb. 1982): 159-161.

<sup>52</sup> K 256-281/PC 163-179.

*Jungmädel* organization. Meta-commentary in the form of a quotation from an English story situates the fictive author into Nelly's complicity with National Socialist goals: "I was a nice girl, wasn't I?"<sup>53</sup> The different semantic levels and social situations on and for which this phrase, with its evocation of dissolute innocence and shocked regret, could function as intertext, highlight the dilemma. As an eager member and leadership candidate<sup>54</sup> in the official youth group of a government that fostered euthanasia for those it deemed unworthy of life, a fact touching also her extended family,<sup>55</sup> Nelly has thus sold, if unwittingly and under legal compulsion, her moral selfhood for the solidarity of the organization and the social acceptance that entailed, a fact made evident through a youth leader's intoning of verses from a Nazi song that extols the merging of the 'I' with the 'we'.<sup>56</sup> Ultimately, reference to a television show about youth drug addiction in the United States underscoring the necessity of recognizing that one needs help as prerequisite to recovery, frames the question for the fictive author: how did we, meaning also I, become who we are presently?<sup>57</sup>

Nelly's awareness of puberty is conditioned also by National Socialist models including awareness of a woman's sexual role from the perspective of the SS newspaper *Schwarze Korps* and infatuation with her own role model, teacher Julianne Strauch, a leader in the National Socialist Women's organization, couched once again in remembrance of poetry recitations.<sup>58</sup> The narrator-author recalls the "final solution" in Hitler's Germany in the contexts of Nelly's knowledge of the dismissed Professor Lehmann protesting that he is not Jewish, of Lenka's

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 295/189.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 296/189.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 308-310/196-198.

<sup>56</sup> "Vom Ich zum Wir," Heinrich Annacker, Ibid. 299-298/191.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 328/209.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 331-348/212-222.

school studies about the Holocaust in the 1970s GDR, and historical discussion of the culpability of German manufacturers for genocide. Among the material referents for this discussion are Lenka's school history book with a picture of Auschwitz-Birkenau, some statistics of genocide, and a map of concentration camps, all of which the narrating fictive author finds insufficient with its non-mention of Eichmann and general lack of detail.<sup>59</sup> Nelly's own awareness of I.G. Farben is as a firm employing Germans repatriated from the East and is correlated with reference to Rudolf Höss's specifications of exactly how Zyklon-B gas was used for extermination purposes. A discussion between Lenka and her mother about differences of opinion with others brings up Mann's *Mario and the Magician*. The narrator-author's dream of the victims of Stalin leads into a citation of Meister Eckhart. Immediately the rosy picture of life, reinterpreting evident war-time privations, presented by Nazi Germany's news and entertainment media is credited with developing a penchant for utopian thinking. A newspaper photo from 1974 of the former vice-president of Chile under Allende on the "concentration camp" island of Dawson, imprisoned by the military junta, leads into a discussion of the 1963 'Auschwitz trials' in Frankfurt and the complicity of I. G. Farben in technical arrangements for maximizing work forces, i.e. knowledge of the liquidation of less productive workers.<sup>60</sup>

Nelly's confirmation in the Church takes place in a ceremony compared to hypnosis -- duly defined in both a *Random House Dictionary* and the *Kleine Deutsche Brockhaus* -- and is employed in Chapter 12 of the novel as metaphor for the exercise of power, even that of military provenance, over unsuspecting subjects.<sup>61</sup> In the ensuing chapters of *Kindheitsmuster* references to sources similar to those described to this point comment upon, illustrate, and underline the

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 366-368/234-236.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 367-389/235-248.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. 394 ff., 422/252ff., 270.

discussions of memory, its loss, and its importance for conceptualization and personality development. As Germany is defeated, Nelly and her mother flee west, through Brandenburg into small towns and villages in Mecklenburg. The hardships of those times and depiction of the Soviet occupation as well as assertions of continuity between the Nazi past and the socialist present, challenged official East German precepts concerning fascism and the Holocaust. Privileging the feminine perspective<sup>62</sup> seems to indicate subtle discord with official formulations, although notably, the persecution of Communists under the Nazi regime is, naturally, referenced.

The fictive author-narrator broaches, in 1974, the topic of the sterility of life in a socialist society dominated by a production mentality at environmentally degraded worksites, with the reproach from her daughter that those few, like the author, who can work in personally rewarding occupations, are an imposition upon the rest of society who labor in industry. Back in 1971, on the trip to G. formerly L., a reference point for the mother daughter relationship is formed by mention of Joseph Roth's *Job*, unread due to over tiredness from the journey. In 1974, General Pinochet's assumption of the Chilean leadership along with the names of four murdered Chilean citizens is immediately juxtaposed with Nelly's local newspaper's list of prominent Germans whose citizenship had been revoked, e.g. Bertolt Brecht, Erika Mann, Friedrich Wolf, and others, in the 1930s. When Soviet forces reach the Oder reference is made to the blindness of Hitler to impending collapse, as detailed in the memoirs of General Guderian and a memorandum by Albert Speer.<sup>63</sup>

Other major quotations and marked referents in *Kindheitsmuster* involve verses of a bawdy song with allusions to the German 'conquest' of Poland illustrating the loutishness of East Germans on vacation in Prague; Goethe's paradoxical saying that he had written much in order to

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<sup>62</sup> Hell *Post-Fascist Fantasies* 200.

<sup>63</sup> K 431,440/276, 282.

have something on which to base his memory; a definition of *verfallen* as one's own consent to ruination; verses from the fictive author's memory of Goethe's Masonic ode "Symbolum;" the Moscow history professor, quoting Montesquieu's valorization of reason; and Paul Fleming's "An sich," in relation to the acceptance of self; a North Vietnamese offensive into South Vietnam. The list continues with Schiller's dictum that truth lies in the abyss; selections from Ernst Busch's *Songs of the International Brigade* from the Spanish Civil War; the offense to Nazi authorities of Schiller's *Don Carlos* and *William Tell* in their mention of freedom of thought; and finally Nelly's incomprehension of Goethe's *Iphigenie* in relation to Julianne Strauch's reading of the accessible and stirring "Feiger Gedanken," as portent of that change which must ultimately produce the mature fictive author and mark the boundary of discontinuity between the two.<sup>64</sup>

### 3.1.2 Levels of Narration

What purpose do such citations really serve, viewed thus abstractly, as a list, disconnected from the narrative, in both *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*? What actual and/or symbolic distances are traversed that could not otherwise be approximated in original and homogeneous textual formulations for communicative ends? Certainly the texts abound also in metaphors, similes, and myriad examples of unmarked intertextual references, requiring only the reader' to construct conceptual bridges between the disparate elements. In making sense of the works as a mutual dialogue, that is a negotiation of constantly reconfiguring difference, between text, reader, and perceptual or material constructs, i.e. a 'world,' the various explicit references to other literatures may be regarded as the atoms of meta-textual discourses and significations, as indicated earlier, themselves in a state of flux within certain limits, dependent on the changing moments of reception and circumstance.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 447-612/286-392.

Of particular interest is the effect such citations have on narrative relationships. Intertextual associations directly affect the more pivotal of these, those involving the narrator in relation to story, to reader, to history, politics, and other matters. *Die Blechtrommel's* narrator is, at the textual level, a complex of voices embodied in the first person narration of Oskar Matzerath, the third person narration about Oskar Matzerath, which is sometimes self-reflexive, and presentations of secondary narrators. It may be argued that these voices are all simply the 'I-narrator'<sup>65</sup> Oskar but inasmuch as the configuration of narrating voice(s) usually analytically implicates narrative veracity it has been widely observed that in the *Blechtrommel* it is just this quality that cannot be relied upon for representational stability.<sup>66</sup> By one analysis, Oskar is a variably embodied allegorical figure representing the social factors that enabled the success of National Socialism and after the war hindered the ability of the populace to overcome its influence.<sup>67</sup>

When ones correlates Oskar as narrator with associated intertextual allusions he also becomes an interdiscursive storyteller as textual denotations acquire additional and/or possibly contradictory connotations when brought into the conceptual proximity of referenced intertexts. For example, the passages in which the narrator relates with quasi-innocence the wonderment of Oskar at the Roman Catholic liturgy and its symbols of faith<sup>68</sup> voices a much different discourse when articulated as a category. In this case the encounters with religious language, devotional

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<sup>65</sup> Bal 20ff.

<sup>66</sup> Amir Eshel, "The Past Recaptured: Günter Grass and Alexander Kluge at the Turn of the Century," *Deutsche Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts im Spiegel der deutschsprachigen Literatur*, ed. Moshe Zuckermann (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003) 181-203; 187.

<sup>67</sup> Nury Kim 82.

<sup>68</sup> B 182f./TD 114f.

statuary, and allusions to biblical stories underscores Oskar's self-identification with Jesus.<sup>69</sup> An interesting feature of this textual complex is the decisive role played by the activity of drumming for such identification and the implication of that activity as a mode of discourse in its own right, here, as one of legitimization. Thus the 'atomic' intertexts from liturgical and devotional literatures [and in keeping with materialist interest, their objective referents] as category, form one or more meta-discourse(s) in relation to the text's narrative surface, but always in reception in process of modification by the degrees of connectivity imputed to the dialogical relationships between both semantic and signifying elements.

Noteworthy also are the terms in which the intertextual relationship has been introduced into the critical literature. Julia Kristeva's reading of Bakhtin preserves *and* re-interprets both the socio-theoretical implications of communication and the semiotics of the text's linguistic substrate.<sup>70</sup> Within Bakhtin's vision of the *dialogic* as the polyvalent determinant of communication and concomitantly, social structure as such,<sup>71</sup> Kristeva emphasizes the critical potential inherent in its generalized application to the text as a "mosaic of quotations"<sup>72</sup> and the writer as "no more than a text re-reading itself."<sup>73</sup> Considering all writing as a mosaic of associative intertexts could obviously be applied as an elucidating strategy also to *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*. These presuppose a consciousness on the part of the reader of a wide range of associations and the desirability of correlating these with the text, often even with apparent banalities, throughout the reading.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 468ff./336ff.

<sup>70</sup> Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) 34-61; 37-40.

<sup>71</sup> Bakhtin, "The Problem of the Text" 124ff.

<sup>72</sup> Kristeva 37.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 56.

When the *Blechtrommel's* narrator relates the news that the German lines are experiencing "erfolgreiche Frontverkürzungen"<sup>74</sup> associations that might come to mind would be the possible contexts of the concept of "successful," those of shortening of fronts, the vehicle for delivery, presumably the military communique, and the implications of the reasons behind this action, questioning why success in the larger conflict, one of expansion, should entail a line contraction, even if successful at that level. The reader is asked to correlate the grammatical semantics with the signification of what is not stated, based on presumed knowledge of an actual historical situation, for a differentiation of sense that traditionally would be referred to as irony. Similarly, when in *Kindheitsmuster* the narrating voice editorializes, as Nelly's own realization, that Nelly had lived for twelve years in a dictatorship "anscheinend ohne es zu merken"<sup>75</sup> the irony here issues from a universe of intertexts (particularly in German Baroque literature) on the problematic of reality and appearance, *Sein und Schein*, and the possible contexts of noticing, with two further implications in German: (1) why was a *Diktatur* not *merkwürdig*, was it not sufficiently unusual? and (2) what else was not noticed by Germans like Nelly in this period and why?

The dependence of these types of allusions on the cognition, where conjectural, and the recognition where intentional, of the reader might invite a more structured approach to the consideration of intertextuality. Of course, this structured approach is itself only a way of relating elements in the context of philosophical precepts that validate the procedure. In that sense, methodological comparison becomes an element of the works' extended narrative within the world of literary criticism. Gérard Genette's approach to intertextual resources reveals refinements of previously mentioned concerns as well as shifts of emphasis. In *Palimpsests*, in

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<sup>74</sup> B 434/TD 312.

<sup>75</sup> K 616/PC 394.



application of these resources to the literary canon, he categorizes "transtextual" relationships as a series of delimitations, only the first of which he is prepared to call intertextuality.<sup>76</sup> Defining the relationship between texts that comprise this category as "copresence" Genette includes here the allusion, the *plagiat*, and the quotation.<sup>77</sup> For the more general perceptions of intertextuality Genette distinguishes relationships in four additional increasingly abstract categories.

If one were to analyze the texts of *Kindheitsmuster* through Genette's taxonomies, the results might comprise the following distinctions. The category of *intertextuality* should be very close to the marked citations and allusions discussed earlier in this chapter, augmented by all obvious borrowings. *Paratextual* analysis will vary among the editions of the novel, with the primary English edition presenting more minimal desiderata in this category than the primary German edition. *Metatextuality* might be apparent in *Kindheitsmuster* to the extent that one perceives a commentary on the *Blechtrommel* itself by parallels and contrasts across the range of narrative categories. Genette's *hypertextuality* would be observable as the conjectural transformation of texts possibly by an earlier writer like Anna Seghers, or more plausibly Wolf's own 'illness' fabulae of *Nachdenken über Christa T.* into those of *Kindheitsmuster's* constituent texts. *Architextuality* might be evidenced by Wolf's novel in relation to the *Bildungsroman* on the unspoken correlation of *Bildung* with *Muster* in relation also to generic similarity at the levels of both content and structure.<sup>78</sup> The practical consequence of this kind of analysis is (1) to effect a certain elucidative order through prioritization in regard to possible relationships between texts, as Genette makes clear in discussion of his category of "hypertextuality"<sup>79</sup> and (2)

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<sup>76</sup> Genette 1-2.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 2.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. 3-5.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. 394-395.

to limit or at least systematize the anarchical tendency toward infinite semiosis inherent in the unbounded proliferation of contexts into which textual significations may be situated, as diagnosed by Derrida.<sup>80</sup>

### 3.2 The Reader in the Works

Of course, long before the term 'intertextuality' came into use, writers indicated relationships between texts by which denotation and connotation, signifier and signified, could extend, complement, and contradict primary meaning. Metaphor, metonym, synecdoche and utilization of allusion, parody, pastiche, quotation, and travesty, all of which are to be found in the *Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*, extend the semantic range of the narrative and must be considered as constituents of the story-bearing text in terms of the etiology of their inclusion within the text. At this point these latter terms coalesce with the broader concept of intertextuality in their dialogic relationship to each other and to their location within the text of the novels, the cognition of the reader, and the extra-textual environments of all. It is in fact the *inter*-distribution of symbolic figures that construct the polysemic bases of both works. Inspecting these, it is apparent that sense allocation through intertextual analysis is for these works in no way forced. Indeed it might be possible to read both, through implication, as treatises on the subject considering the large corpus of citations evident. Based on the readings of the allusions and their contextual relationships as developed here as well as in Chapters 2 and 4 of this dissertation, a general feature of such hypothetical treatises would be, agreeing with Stierle, that the problematics of the texts control and delimit the semiotic range of sense afforded by allusive and symbolical resources.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context," *Limited Inc*, ed. Gerald Graff, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman and Samuel Weber (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1988) 1-23; 12.

<sup>81</sup> Stierle 15.

At this juncture, the relationship between texts and reader needs further consideration. For Said, as discussed previously, texts exist cognitively as materially situated discursive entities.<sup>82</sup> Since they reflect the "realities"<sup>83</sup> of life, they exert a claim upon the reader embodying the power relationships of those realities, however tenuous or ambiguous. In a supplementary manner, Jauß draws attention to the extent to which the reader's perceptions of a particular text are also conditioned by previous literary experience.<sup>84</sup> As developed in Chapter 1 the relationship between text, reader, and concerns external to both presents a mutual situation of each in the other with mutual claims and limitations. Within this framework it is still possible to conceive the literary work as the sum of innumerable intertexts but through 'worldly' and textual constraints on sense allocation the underlying contingency derives from the unconstrained variations of the *reader's* imaginative appreciation of these. Yet unconstrained does not mean uninfluenced and as both Said and Jauß from separate perspectives indicate, the texts of works may partially constitute such influencing factors. Without the cumulative literary experience of the reader, *Die Blechtrommel's* allusions to Goethe, Rasputin, and other entities, and *Kindheitsmuster's* myriad evocations -- Faulkner, Ingeborg Bachmann, for instance - would communicate no sense. To the extent that all are constellated in the works in a specific spatial and temporal manner, communicates a specific sense contingent upon the reader's previous experience, imagination, and fantasy, as modes of personal explication.

Of course it may be objected that both world and text are primarily cognitive constructs of the reading subject. At issue are positions in ancient but still current debates on the relative

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<sup>82</sup> Said 150.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. 5.

<sup>84</sup> Jauß 169.

independence of 'realities' and 'things' from the human mind and/or their constitution through language.<sup>85</sup> Specifically, these include ideas about the nature of the artwork [including *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* as literary fiction] in relation to the participation of the viewer, listener, or reader in its realization. Much of immediate philosophical background to these issues may be found in the writings of, among others, Heidegger, Sartre, and Adorno. *Die Blechtrommel*, in particular, references the position of the visual and plastic arts in post-war West Germany. This discussion is, however, not enjoined in *Kindheitsmuster*. In the interval between the publication of *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* the art world in the United States, with the participation of Western Europe, witnessed debate on the 'autonomy' of the artwork in relation to the beholder as argument about the then new current of Minimalism.<sup>86</sup> Neither of the novels addresses these issues directly. Grass's work situates these references for the most part satirically but with some recognizable connection to theories on art, e.g. Oskar's experience with Professor Kuchen and 'expression'.<sup>87</sup> Wolf's work usually disguises such remarks as subtle comments underlining a point enunciated in connection with another issue. For instance, Nelly's non-acquaintance with the word 'panic' is paired with remarks on Picasso's *Guernica* as an ironic reproach against the brutalities of humanity as "homo faber."<sup>88</sup>

Both Grass and Wolf have commented on the relationship between life and art to the effect that the author or artist is both a product and a contributor to the outlook of society.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Derrida *Of Grammatology* 22ff.

<sup>86</sup> Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood" (1967), *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

<sup>87</sup> B 606-607/TD 441-442.

<sup>88</sup> K 229/PC 145. Wolf's friendship with Max Frisch adds an extra intertextual layer of explication for this phrase.

<sup>89</sup> (a) Günter Grass, "Die Meinungsfreiheit des Künstlers in unserer Gesellschaft," *Der Schriftsteller als Zeitgenosse*, ed. Daniela Hermes (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag,

Christa Wolf's ideas regarding the role of the reader have been expressed as belief that methods of narration are conditioned "durch den geschichtlichen Kontext, in dem der Künstler wirkt und seine *Zeitgenossenschaft bestätigt*" [emphasis added].<sup>90</sup> Günter Grass attributes to Döblin the conception with which he agrees that "[d]er Leser in voller Unabhängigkeit einem gestalteten gewordenen Ablauf gegenüberstellt: er mag urteilen, nicht der Autor."<sup>91</sup> These brief quotations would seem to encapsulate attitudes close to Sartre's conception of the human being as the initiator of relationships called 'reality'. Specifically "[r]eading seems . . . to be the synthesis of perception and creation."<sup>92</sup> Unlike Sartre<sup>93</sup>, neither Grass nor Wolf draws a clear line in these contexts between artist and author.

### 3.2.1 Dialectic and Dialogic

Following the lead of *Kindheitsmuster*, with its often close juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated objects, one might also correlate text with intertext in modified Benjaminian terms as a constellation of objects in the 'now' forming a *dialectical image*.<sup>94</sup> Re-interpreting Benjamin:

[. . .] image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal, the relation of what has been to the now is

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1996) 112-124; 113. (b) Christa Wolf, *Lesen und Schreiben, Aufsätze und Prosastücke* (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1972) 203.

<sup>90</sup> Peter Beicken and Rolf J. Goebel, "Erzählerische Selbstverständigung: Christa Wolf zwischen Moderne und Tradition," *Monatshefte* 74.1 (Spring 1982): 59-71; 60.

<sup>91</sup> Günter Grass, quoting Alfred Döblin in "Über meinen Lehrer Döblin," *Über meinen Lehrer Döblin und andere Vorträge* (Berlin: Literarisches Colloquium, 1968) 7-26; 11.

<sup>92</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *What is Literature?* trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1947) 43.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* 7.

<sup>94</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991) 462.

dialectical: not temporal in nature but figural [. . .].<sup>95</sup>

Considering the relation of text and intertext to also be one that imparts sense by coming together “in a flash” the text replaces what Benjamin would have regarded as the “purely temporal” or historiography, here re-interpreted as the purely literal. The process of sense allocation, between text and intertext is the “relation of what has been to the now;” it replaces, or better extends, Benjamin’s concept of history. What remains the same is the radical contingency of the process as that which was hidden or devalued within the text, or on the part of the reader, or within real world referents, comes to the fore and militates against any overarching or eternally valid interpretation. If, for Benjamin, image replaces narrative as history, and as re-interpreted above, image replaces interpretation within narrative, then narrative becomes a broader construct than either with the proviso that such must retain both the “now of a particular recognizability”<sup>96</sup> and the materialist sifting that uncovers the historical or cultural ‘detritus’ that occasions the destabilizations in play.

Returning to the idea of the dialogic relationship of all elements and parties to literature, in which each requires the others, one might consider that both this theorization and the immediately foregoing are in fact variant roads to a similar if not the same destination. The points of comparison are: (a) both the dialectic and the dialogic embody discourses or language usages that derive from specific histories, or formative elements, that are related as stories, even if issuing from some definition of factual circumstance and (b) the polyvocality and resultant polysemy of dialogism, instantiated in *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* through both intertextuality and narrator problematization, instigate a semantic debate between the alternatives represented by the respective voices. Situating both methodologies in a ‘worldly’ manner (Said)

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

the narrative substructure becomes more important than the definitional superstructure precisely by involving the reader, through negotiation of the conceptual distances between these as "historical and social actors"<sup>97</sup> within those relationships.

It is true that Bakhtin devalues dialectics, almost facetiously defining it as an abstraction of dialogue devoid of "living words and responses."<sup>98</sup> Certainly this critique is at least partially aimed at the dogmatic uses of the term within officially sanctioned Soviet cultural analyses. Benjamin, on the other hand, understands dialectics as the most adequate descriptor of humanity's social journey. Mediated by Marx's materialist and economic explications, Hegel's conception of the dialectical changes in thinking, language, and the "realization of . . . freedom"<sup>99</sup> in history becomes for Benjamin the observation that

[j]ust as the entire mode of existence of human collectives changes over long historical periods, so too does their mode of perception.<sup>100</sup>

Beginning the essay with a short disquisition on the dialectical relation of Marx's concepts of base and superstructure, Benjamin adduces the relevance for culture in general.<sup>101</sup> In so doing, he attempts to distinguish 'genuine' Marxist ideas in their complex comprehension of social

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<sup>97</sup> Said 15.

<sup>98</sup> Bakhtin "From Notes Made in 1970 – 71," *Speech Genres* 147.

<sup>99</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Reason in History: A General Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, trans. Robert S. Hartman (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1997) 78, 79.

<sup>100</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, Second Version," *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin, trans. Edmund Jephthcott, Rodney Livingstone, Howard Eiland, and Others (Cambridge, Mass.: London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008) 19-55; 23.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. 19.

structures from simplistic interpretations.<sup>102</sup>

The beginning of *Kindheitsmuster's* eighth chapter is illustrative of the above possibilities. It not only presents the following complex as voices and significations in dialogue: relation of experience to authenticity, the appreciation of war by those who have experienced it, the inability of the socialist nations to aid Allende and Corvalán in Chile, the question of how past and present may be mediated; it also cognitively opens a dialectic of possible alternatives for one to consider in mediation.<sup>103</sup> The idea, posited earlier, that the texts under consideration may be regarded as sites of theoretical negotiation for sense allocating discourses, whether conceived as meta-commentary or as "dialectics at a standstill" (or one defined as the other), contains the corollary that the intertextual elements as atoms of those discourses may also be thought as points, or singular emplacements, defining, symbolically, a discursive non-stable 'topology' of the textual sites that may be analyzed across discourses and even works in terms of configurations denoting similarity and difference. The narratives thus affected will then take on certain configurations either in the conceptual realm, the material realm, or both, depending on whether the intertextual elements reside more in one area or the other. For instance, in the *Blechtrommel* the arrangement of figures and actions could produce a mental map of relationships for readers but an analysis of the work based on referenced places could extend the narrative into the realm of geography. In the case of *Kindheitsmuster* a similar observation could be made but if the myriad items, e.g. journal articles, etc. named actually exist in archives which the reader could inspect, the narrative would become similarly extended into the material realm and perhaps analyzable in terms of the placement and provenance of the items.

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<sup>102</sup> Rainer Nägele, "Body Politics: Benjamin's dialectical materialism between Brecht and the Frankfurt School," *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, ed. David S. Ferris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 152-176; 160.

<sup>103</sup> K 256/PC 163-164.



Analyzing the novels in terms of the emplacements of the various references and citations could thus produce narrative perspectives in terms of those references and citations. Surveying the references in both the *Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* reveals cases of similar allusion. The chapter that concludes Book One of the former is named "Glaube, Hoffnung, Liebe" the Biblical faith, hope, and love from 1 Corinthians 13 v. 13. The same phrase occurs in *Kindheitsmuster* on German grave monuments that have been vandalized.<sup>104</sup> Is there a relationship between the two that would profitably elucidate either novel? There is certainly difference. *Die Blechtrommel's* chapter is structured primarily in terms of the fairy tale formula, *es war einmal* . . . that contains the bitter denunciation of the nation that believed the "Gasman" to be Santa Claus and that mocks the faith, hope, and love sentiment.<sup>105</sup> Both passages begin in cemeteries, but from that commonality formally diverge into separate fabulae. Analysis in terms of the rather slight quotation would thus appear forced, except for the fact that both use the biblical conceit to thematize important aspects of coming to terms with the Holocaust. In *Die Blechtrommel* the focus becomes the willful childishness of a nation that accepted and participated in genocide. In *Kindheitsmuster* the fictive author, through the cemetery experience, develops empathy for the victims of genocide and their descendants who have vandalized the grave markers. Another candidate is comprised by the category of quotations from, or allusions to Goethe. What differences, similarities, or outright non-sequiturs would characterize not just an analysis of the way both works cite Goethe, but a narrative structure in which for each the cited materials determine the discourse by which the narrative is emplotted? The same could be done for concepts denoted by words such as *Gedächtnis* and *Geschichte*. Would it be possible or desirable to map the elements (usages) of either of these words (as concepts) from one narrative

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid. 489/314.

<sup>105</sup> B 261ff./TD 187ff.

onto another in such a way that an intelligible relationship would be seen to operate between them under transformation of contexts as narrative perspectives in their own right? These lines of thought provoke speculation on the extent and limits of narrativity and the elements from which it arises.

Regarding *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* as contributing to discussions of history and memory through *narrative* constructs, entails interrogating these simultaneously in their most concrete and abstract manifestations, viz. real world and historical referents and intertextual associations and conceptual re-constellation of these into dialectical or speculative configurations, in that these activate the story-telling process that constitutes the novels' contributions to the allocation of sense for the constitutive problems raised by those stories. Ultimately this involves situating all elements and parties to these narratives dynamically in relation to each other without precluding the contingencies of hybrid relationships between the world, the text, and the reader that would actuate such sense, or (after Said) to activate "critical consciousness" as "an unstoppable predilection for alternatives."<sup>106</sup>

### **3.2.2 The Novels as Performative Critique**

The implied discourses on history and society projected by *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* also performatively embody literature-theoretic critiques. In referencing debates current at the time of writing, whether directly, through intertexts, or by more general implication, the works obviously situate themselves -- and the reader -- into the respective critical milieus of their time. For Grass's work this included the German post-World War Two mixture of theoretizations including those dating from the Weimar era and before, as well as the larger European intellectual sphere mentioned earlier. For Wolf's novel the immediate

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<sup>106</sup> Said 247.

background resides in the negotiations of norms and strictures of East German society, officialdom, and intelligentsia in relation to her own purposive contributions to these.<sup>107</sup> Obviously the more general theme is the role of art and literature in socialist society under various conceptualizations, including those of Lukács. The sense of the term 'performativity' employed here is the observation that *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* (a) generally, intervene in the world beyond just description as instruments of meta-commentary and its effects on the reader, and (b) specifically, constitute 'writing acts' that through their respective narrative methods and structures present correctives to those alternatives that are the objects of their critiques. Instance (a) comprises the research agenda of this dissertation as a whole, including the analyses to this point, of interest here is the nature of the works' performativity as described in instance (b).

*Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* exemplify their implied critiques through narrative techniques primarily in terms of the theory of the novel, the treatment of historical materials, engagement with subjectivity, and the questioning of the relationship between the Nazi era and post-World War Two German society. Grass has described the former work as having an "ironisch-distanzierten Verhältnis" to the *Bildungsroman*.<sup>108</sup> Others have seen the work as a parody of the genre.<sup>109</sup> In this regard, the ambiguities of *Die Blechtrommel's* non-linear narrative method, common to much modernist literature, may be viewed as a challenge to the Goethe cult and its emphasis on formal harmony in post-war West German literary scholarship. The necessity of dealing with a world that is not whole requires a methodology that reflects this social situation and finds its expression, as Adorno proposes, in an aesthetic distance that varies

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<sup>107</sup> Magenau 249-250.

<sup>108</sup> Heinz Ludwig Arnold, "Gespräch mit Günter Grass," *Text und Kritik* 1/1a (1971): 1-26; 6.

<sup>109</sup> Nury Kim 43.

throughout.<sup>110</sup> This variation or disunity of perspective is incorporated in the unreliable narrator Oskar reflecting on the act of narrating<sup>111</sup> as also the object of narration. Oskar viewed as a symbolic and constructed figure in relation to the real world situations referenced alongside the intertextual allusions presents a challenge to the nature of literary construction. To the extent that the text reflects on particulars, e.g. history, subjectivity, this challenge extends to the nature of historiographic and socio-psychological writing as well. Another aspect of the variation in aesthetic distance, the inclusion of magical, mythical, and fairy tale tropes as structural elements runs counter to literature that associated these with the irrationalism of fascism. Adorno's musings on the folk play as projecting a world wherein

[. . .] the preindustrial way of life, was of greater value than the city . . . that rough and ready fisticuffs was the proper response to sophisticated civilization [. . .]<sup>112</sup>

is also applicable to the prose medium. If the horrors of Nazism lie outside the scope of realistic depiction, as Adorno avers,<sup>113</sup> then the evocation of the irrationalities within the world from which the horrors issued turns the folk work, as Adorno again detects in relation to Brecht, into its opposite,<sup>114</sup> through ironic implication.

*Kindheitsmuster's* enactment of critique through methodology takes place against the background of allowed and/or favored artistic norms within the socialist state of East Germany in addition to the larger world of European aesthetics. By the 1970's the authority of Lukács,

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<sup>110</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, "The Position of the Narrator in the Contemporary Novel," *Notes to Literature, Volume 1*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Sherry Weber Nicholzen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) 30-36; 34.

<sup>111</sup> B 12/TD 5.

<sup>112</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, "Reflections on the *Volksstück*," *Notes to Literature, Volume 2*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Sherry Weber Nicholzen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) 334-335; 334.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.* 335.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

Wolf's early mentor,<sup>115</sup> was officially no longer acknowledged due to his support of the reform-minded Hungarian regime of Imre Nagy.<sup>116</sup> Nevertheless, official prescriptions for artistic endeavor emphasized the popular, the typical, and attitudes on life deemed optimistic and edifying for the socialist citizen,<sup>117</sup> very much like Lukács' ideas on these topics.<sup>118</sup> *Kindheitsmuster's* negotiation of these facts is realized as both assent to and dissent from official doctrines. This occurs through the injection of personal experience into the commonly accepted historical realities as *authentic* typicality. The very nature of authenticity and objectivity are dialogue between present and past?<sup>119</sup>

The exploration of one's growth from fascist youth to mature anti-fascist communist through the artifice of discontinuous narrative voices contraposes a new *subjective* 'socialist' novel against that of Lukács and others. Wolf's novel does not tell a story or recount a human experience so much as it interrogates the nature of telling and of being human within the framework of an ethically engaged socialist society as implied, if unrealized, ideal. A particularly poignant aspect of this type of narrative is the manner in which the body becomes metaphor for society and writing becomes therapy.<sup>120</sup> Thus, like other GDR writers, *Kindheitsmuster* exposes a widening gap between official strictures and authors' methodologies<sup>121</sup> already seen in Wolf's earlier novel, *Nachdenken über Christa T.* Wolf has recounted her (and her colleagues) hopes for a reformed and culturally open GDR since the

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<sup>115</sup> Magenau 48.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. 84.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. 257.

<sup>118</sup> Lukács 332ff.

<sup>119</sup> K 256/ PC 164.

<sup>120</sup> Magenau 259.

<sup>121</sup> Hell 16.

1960's and the disappointments in that regard.<sup>122</sup>

Thus *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* appear to embody correctives to some of the objects of their critiques in terms of writing methodology as well as subject matter. In so doing they raise questions concerning that subject matter: the constitution of history and its transmission in relation to the nature of subjectivity and its relation to moral agency during the National Socialist era and after. In raising such questions they present the possibility of narrativizing perceived facts in ways that may constitute historical and sociological discourses more varied than or even in opposition to those accepted by Grass's and Wolf's societies. The works therefore situate world, text, and critical reader into contingently new cognitive versions of their subject matters.

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<sup>122</sup> Christa Wolf, "Rummelplatz 11. Plenum 1965," *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1996) 58-70; 62.

## 4. History, Memory, Narrative

### 4.1 The Problem Defined

Both *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* clearly situate themselves in discourses of history and its perceptions. This is not merely to posit that the works comment upon history, or make historical events into a portion of the novels' subject matter. Rather, the works become sites wherein the texts, their historical referents and allusions, and the experiences of the reader, interact in ongoing debate about the relationships between and the significance of these elements. As such, they constitute, in narrativized form, fictive counterparts to historiographical accounts of these relationships.

The abstraction, *history*, finds concrete expression in Grass's and Wolf's texts through various means. For both, a kind of 'social history' picturing details and material artifacts of particular milieus forms a significant substrate of the narrative structure. Against the background of a general historical process, the Nazification of Germany, the surface features of both *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* often reflect the interplay of the remembered or constructed experiences of childhood games, adult love affairs, and the paradoxical small (and large) brutalities of everyday life. These are all placed in recognizable locales and vivified by allusions to material artifacts such as clothing, photographs, and the general accoutrements that accompany the prosecution of daily life.

Looking at the novels individually, the *Blechtrommel's* sense of temporality alternates continuity with discontinuity. Anachronisms such as the crosscutting of Oskar's family history with 'historical' digressions and reflections from the vantage point of his incarceration in a mental institution, in the narrative present,<sup>1</sup> are abundant. In the novel, one might initially group

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<sup>1</sup> Neuhaus 23-25.

historical allusions into categories such as symbolic representation, chronology, documentation (in one instance), and of course narrative, to the extent that this latter may be separated from the others.

Nury Kim argues that the entire work, as engagement with history, is structured allegorically. The characters, the narrated events, and in a complex and multifaceted manner, the narrator -- Oskar Matzerath -- all function as illustrations of the principle "etwas anders bildlich zu sagen."<sup>2</sup> Additional desiderata include (1) intentional relationship between verbal picturing and significance, (2) rational explicability of details (of correspondence), and (3) provocation to reflection. In Kim's typology the figures fulfill the prerequisites of allegory through embodiment of the social attitudes, in a consistent and rational manner, historically associated with segments of the German lower middle class amenable to Nazi ideology.<sup>3</sup> The particulars of the characters' private lives stand for historical events. For instance, the *ménage à trois* of Agnes, Alfred, and Jan and their respective power relationships, picture the political realities of the Free City of Danzig caught between Germany and Poland.<sup>4</sup> Oskar, according to Kim, both as figure and narrator, embodies a parody of every relationship with which he may be associated.<sup>5</sup> As such, he becomes the figural illustration of aggression,<sup>6</sup> of the infantilism of the German population of his time and place,<sup>7</sup> and in the very synthetic quality of this role, an allegory of West Germany's post-World War II flight from engagement with the recent past into the escapism of cultural

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<sup>2</sup> Nury Kim 69.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 71.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 80.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 81.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 83.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 85.



aestheticism.<sup>8</sup>

Volker Neuhaus refrains from using the term *allegory* in explication of the previously cited examples [except in quotation of other analyses] but concentrates instead on the relationship between abstract chronology in the novel and its materialization in the lives of the characters. In his view it is the constellation of the not merely symbolic but concrete details of life's relationships that delineate the political tensions germane to the era.<sup>9</sup> Whatever the terminology employed, it should be apparent that actants in the *Blechtrommel* may be analyzed in terms of a wide range of symbolic and semiotic allusions to memories of historical events, placing those associations into dialogue with such memories. That the propensity to analyze symbolically is also a function of the analyst's experiences, expectations, and decisions may be inferred by careful comparison of Kim's and Neuhaus's accounts, aligned with the emphasis of Julian Preece that "[h]istory is in the detail in *The Tin Drum*."<sup>10</sup> A case in point is the fairy tale beginning of the passage "[e]s war einmal ein Blechtrommler" which develops almost as a theological treatise on the credulous *Volk* who believed in the *Weihnachtsmann* who was really the *Gasmann*.<sup>11</sup> Of particular interest is that this disquisition follows the discovery by Oskar of the dead Sigismund Markus<sup>12</sup> accompanied by the shift from first to third person narrator that continues throughout the *Gasmann* episode. One might ask if these passages merely chronicle persecution and pre-figure genocide. Certainly the latter passage would seem to also pre-figure, through narrator detachment, that same distancing from the memories of the events that post-war Oskar, as 'every-German,' parodies in relation to these brutal manifestations of German history.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 89.

<sup>9</sup> Neuhaus 39, 58.

<sup>10</sup> Preece 39.

<sup>11</sup> B 261-262/TD 187-188.

<sup>12</sup> B 260/TD 186.

*Die Blechtrommel* presents its stories very much with a sense for dates, supplying an abstract background against which the concrete details of the characters' everyday lives may be projected.<sup>13</sup> By another perspective, these details, when correlated with purported historical events implicitly illustrate aspects of accepted chronology.<sup>14</sup> Yet the fantastic nature of many of these stories and the quasi-nihilistic narrative view as a whole suggest that Oskar is once again ridiculing: this time, that version of historiography that sees itself in Mary Fulbrook's words as "retrieving the evidence and reconstructing the past"<sup>15</sup> in an unproblematic manner.

A sample of the comparison of *Die Blechtrommel's* 'narrated family history' with 'textbook history' demonstrates the way the former is often situated in discussions provoked by the latter. At the beginning of Oskar's tale he places his grandmother, Anna Bronski, in a potato field outside Danzig in October 1899.<sup>16</sup> A few pages later, the coincidence of this occurrence with the Boer War is made explicit, becoming also the historical referent of the conception of Oskar's mother, Agnes. This is followed by a satirical allusion to the Biblical Immaculate Conception and birth of Jesus, with description of Agnes' astrological natal chart thrown in for good measure.<sup>17</sup> Further on, the group wedding photograph of Oskar's mother at age twenty-three betrays the year, is situated narratively in conjunction with the Treaty of Rapallo, and descriptively presages the relationship of Agnes, Alfred, and Jan.<sup>18</sup>

Even without explicit dating, events such as *Kristallnacht*, the beginning and some of the conduct of World War II, and other recorded occurrences are deducible from the text. Many are

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<sup>13</sup> Neuhaus 39.

<sup>14</sup> Preece 39-40.

<sup>15</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *Historical Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002) 13.

<sup>16</sup> B 12/TD 10

<sup>17</sup> B 23-24/TD 13-14.

<sup>18</sup> B 62-63/TD 43-44.

given at least general dates. An important episode, Oskar's sexual awakening, is placed in July 1940 and correlated with the overrunning of France by the German army.<sup>19</sup> 1949 finds Oskar playing in a jazz band at the Onion Cellar nightclub<sup>20</sup> but the founding of the two German states in that year is not specifically mentioned. In one passage historical artifact appears to actually materialize on the page. The model and real world referent for the official looking announcement of Jan Bronski's execution,<sup>21</sup> is presumed to be a similar document sent to Günter Grass's aunt<sup>22</sup> which, through alteration, might be said to function as counterpart to source criticism at the fictional level. In *Kindheitsmuster*, similarly, commonly accepted historical details are clearly evident.<sup>23</sup> History is presented on three levels, the past of the Nazi period to 1945, the past of the car trip of 1971, and the present of authorship, 1972 to 1975.<sup>24</sup> These historical levels are paralleled by the narrative voices: Nelly, the mature fictive author who meditates on Nelly and her past, and the same with family on a remembered journey.<sup>25</sup>

Julia Hell places the analysis of *Kindheitsmuster* within her psychoanalytic study of East German literature. Her explication of the work and its author is further situated in a discourse that she designates as one of the GDR's "*foundational narratives of antifascism*" [italics in

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<sup>19</sup> B 345/TD 249.

<sup>20</sup> B 685/TD 497.

<sup>21</sup> B 321/TD 231.

<sup>22</sup> Janina Gesche, *Aus Zweierlei Perspektiven . . . : Zur Rezeption der Danziger Trilogie von Günter Grass in Polen und Schweden in den Jahren 1958-1990* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 2003) 120.

<sup>23</sup> K 257/PC 164.

<sup>24</sup> Hell 201.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

original].<sup>26</sup> In this account, the adoption of a post-fascist identity by East German citizens problematized the psychic dimension of the parent-child relationship and made "sexuality the privileged terrain of subject constitution."<sup>27</sup> This perspective, which will be discussed further in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, opens *Kindheitsmuster's* window on history. The split subjectivity of narrative voice is thus the result of the history that Wolf's generation lived and is accessible only in memory. The conflicts of the memory of this history are processed within the body as site of resistance to Nazism.<sup>28</sup> For Hell, then, *Kindheitsmuster's* historical engagement is determined as an attempt to recover a lost psychic unity sundered through trauma.

Kim situates the discussion of *Kindheitsmuster's* historical dimension within the attempt by critical authors in the German Democratic Republic to account for the authoritarian character of their nominally socialist and egalitarian society as a consequence of an incomplete coming to terms with the National Socialist past and inherited 'Prussian' behavioral norms.<sup>29</sup> He locates this discussion more narrowly in terms of Christa Wolf's efforts to accomplish just this in the work as fictive autobiography, narrativizing the recent past as personal experience<sup>30</sup> in a signature manner that has become known as 'subjective authenticity.' As subjective literature the story focuses on Nelly and her family and their reactions to events. Adding an authentic, e.g. documented, historically grounded, remembered, as opposed to fabulous, element to this allows the literature to cognitively link with those members of society harboring memories and

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 17.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 132.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 200-212.

<sup>29</sup> Nury Kim 115.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 169.

tales of similar experiences, across several generations.<sup>31</sup> Historical engagement in the novel is consequently structured by Nelly's own engagement with the values of National Socialism and their intuited contradictions. These contradictions are then imputed by the mature fictive author to be still present, under socialism, through textual linking with acknowledged contradictions in communist society, such as Stalinism.<sup>32</sup>

Annette Firsching reflects on issues common to both Hell and Kim. Her approach emphasizes the novel's attempt to make sense of the "completely normal everyday life under fascism"<sup>33</sup> and to make this experience comprehensible to the generation of East Germans coming of age in the 1970's. This appraisal comes from working through different levels of memory<sup>34</sup> and projects into the mother-daughter relationship as empathy and onto the societal level as attempt at enlightenment, especially for the young, through historical consciousness.<sup>35</sup> The anguish and utopian striving evident in *Kindheitsmuster* has not been without its critics, however. Anke Pinkert raises the objection that even though the novel's superficially exemplary working through the past "undermines the GDR's abstract and depersonalized discourse of fascism,"<sup>36</sup> it fails to question the power bases that excluded certain discussions, such as personal suffering, from communist accounts of history at the outset.<sup>37</sup>

*Kindheitsmuster* makes of historical consciousness a principal theme through its often-

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<sup>31</sup> Nury Kim 176.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 199-200.

<sup>33</sup> Firsching 69.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 86.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 98-101.

<sup>36</sup> Anke Pinkert, "Pleasures of Fear: Antifascist Myth, Holocaust, and Soft Dissidence in Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster*," *The German Quarterly* 76.1 (Winter 2003): 25-37; 30.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 30.

quoted first lines.

Das Vergangene ist nicht tot; es ist nicht einmal vergangen. Wir trennen es von uns ab und stellen uns fremd. Frühere Leute erinnerten sich leichter: eine Vermutung, eine höchstens halbrichtige Behauptung.<sup>38</sup>

Befitting a work that probes the significance of the past through childhood memory and its repression, this novel, like *Die Blechtrommel* re-presents that experiential matrix as a type of familial social history punctuated by an empirically articulated historiography of the Nazi period. Unlike Grass's novel, the latter unfolds this matrix as two narrative pasts and a narrative present, as indicated earlier. These levels also delineate a tripartite emplotment in which Nelly's story, the car trip, and the writing of the fictive novel proceed by their own chronologies. The fictive author, as narrator, dates the beginning of writing at November 3, 1972. Initial musing on the past and its relation to memory leads to recall of the automobile journey of the summer of 1971 to L., now G., activated by an image split between geographical memory and the facing of practical and political concerns such as the need for visas and dealing with the Volkspolizei.<sup>39</sup>

Through the agency of memory the scene shifts immediately to Nelly's world, thirty-six years earlier. The second chapter commences with a reflection on the flight of Nelly's mother from the advancing Soviet forces in January 1945. This reflection is linked shortly with the ability of the fictive author's daughter to quickly sketch a family tree in December 1972. This, in turn, leads to the introduction of Nelly's family members in 1932, their later fates, and a lesson in ethnic slurs for the narrator's daughter. Later in the same chapter the etymology of the word *Gedächtnis* is pursued to the year 1350 and linked with a verse from Albrecht Haller's "Trauerode" of 1736 illustrating the word's sense in this context of thought about earlier

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<sup>38</sup> K 11/PC 3.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 11-13/3-4.

experiences.<sup>40</sup> Within a very few passages attention shifts to the vote tally in March, 1933 for Communist, National Socialist, and Social Democratic parties in the town L.<sup>41</sup> with the revelation that Nelly's parents usually voted social democratic. As the novel proceeds, narratives, constituted from memories of experiences are projected onto a large background of intertextual references, including the Vietnam War and the assassination of Chile's Salvador Allende, and frequently dated historical references and chronologies. This structure would seem to question the theoretical basis of historical perception in the same way narrative perspective in the work questions subjectivity.

## 4.2 History

In considering *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* as fictively analogous to historiography it would be well to remember, that among historians, there is great diversity of opinion on the constitution of historical representation. This diversity has been demonstrated through the adoption of different forms of historicism, social historical emphases, Marxist viewpoints, and post-structuralist formulations.<sup>42</sup> Even with the application of secular and nominally objective criteria to the description of history in the late eighteenth century,<sup>43</sup> historians' theoretical emphases obviously define the field of inquiry. In the nineteenth century Ranke's conception of history "as it actually was"<sup>44</sup> underlay a research interest that regarded the

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<sup>40</sup> K 62/PC missing.

<sup>41</sup> K 65/PC 37-38.

<sup>42</sup> Joachim Eibach, "Sozialgeschichte," *Kompass der Geschichtswissenschaft*, eds. Joachim Eibach and Günther Lottes (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2002) 9-22; 10.

<sup>43</sup> Fulbrook 12.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* 13.

state as the primary actor within the field.<sup>45</sup> Treitschke's paradigm posited history as the product of the actions of "great men."<sup>46</sup> In Germany after about the year 1890, critique of this style of historicist thinking centered on problems typified by the foregoing examples, namely the preference for description over analysis, imputation of uniqueness to historical events, and general methodological subjectivity.

Throughout the twentieth century perspectives on social history posited the whole of society as proper object of historical investigation and did so with their own distinctive approaches including comparative analysis and quantitative methods of description.<sup>47</sup> Sometimes allied with and contributory to these is Marxist historical analysis. Separating this theoretical emphasis as practiced by historians from Marxism as a movement or from state sponsored interpretations and strictures, is itself not always an easy task.<sup>48</sup> Underlying assumptions for Marxist historiography include concepts of historical progress, explications in terms of "social and economic 'laws,'"<sup>49</sup> and the importance of "revolutionary 'praxis'"<sup>50</sup> as agent of historical change. The many strands of historical analysis have included those centered around psychoanalytic interpretations, after Freud, emphasis on sociological empiricism as with the *Annales* movement in France, and a number of hermeneuticist, structuralist and poststructuralist methodologies.

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<sup>45</sup> Andreas Wirsching, "Internationale Beziehungen," *Kompass der Geschichtswissenschaft*, eds. Joachim Eibach and Günther Lottes (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2002) 112-125; 112-113.

<sup>46</sup> Eibach 10, 11.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 20.

<sup>48</sup> Matthias Middell, "Marxistische Geschichtswissenschaft." *Kompass der Geschichtswissenschaft*, eds. Joachim Eibach and Günther Lottes (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2002) 69-85; 70-71.

<sup>49</sup> Fulbrook 14.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.



Among the historians referenced in this dissertation Mary Fulbrook argues for a dialogue between differing historiographic emphases as "social constructions which are open to debate, revision and advancement."<sup>51</sup> Fulbrook seeks principles to serve as evaluative guides for historical practice in light of contradictory views of historicity. Is there a profitable way to negotiate the difference between history as a 'true' account of past events (even if variously interpreted) and history as present day construction or narrative rather than re-assemblage in the present of a knowable past? Her ultimate answer is a qualified yes, resulting in a practical methodology that posits the desirability of re-presenting the past with acknowledgement of the inevitability of its continuous construction in the present through the most "value neutral"<sup>52</sup> working procedures possible.

Jürgen Kocka, from the perspective of social history, has sought to negotiate a response to "changing cultural needs"<sup>53</sup> while preserving his own distinctive outlook. Kocka views various post World War II trends in historical research, e.g. political history, social history, cultural approaches, and transnational emphases, as a manifestation of continuous change of interest within the profession.<sup>54</sup> He believes the 'fashionableness' of new trends needs to be effectuated within a conception of history as an "empirical discipline"<sup>55</sup> with definite truth procedures, even if always "selective and relational."<sup>56</sup> Kocka is particularly interested in the historical trajectory of *civil society* as a public sphere of rights and responsibilities encompassing

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 188.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 187.

<sup>53</sup> Kocka *Civil Society* 115.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 110-111.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 113.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

all citizens equally and its relation to that of the German *Bürgertum*.<sup>57</sup> That he traces both of these to the values of the Enlightenment reflects his longstanding interest in the manner by which values of the period: rationality, self-understanding demythologization, and (theoretically) human rights<sup>58</sup> were formative also for history as an academic discipline. Here, Kocka probes the extent to which these principles project themselves into later times, including their potential for informing discussion of collective identity and historical memory, particularly as situated within the debates of the West German *Historikerstreit* of the 1980's.

In his essays published in English as *The Practice of Conceptual History*, Reinhart Koselleck investigated and formulated "anthropological" and "conceptual" concerns in historiography.<sup>59</sup> He proposed that these concerns require a "theory of periodization,"<sup>60</sup> in large part to be able to investigate the diachronic changes in language and conceptions of time in relation to the effect of such changes on historical consciousness.<sup>61</sup> These include the importance for historical conceptualization of temporality through spatial metaphors.<sup>62</sup> In a later essay the relationships between temporalization and politics and of events to social structures are explored.<sup>63</sup> Koselleck posits the non-productivity of regarding history through the lens of "chronological sequence"<sup>64</sup> and warns against seeking causality through ideological

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 16-22.

<sup>58</sup> Jürgen Kocka, "Geschichte und Aufklärung," *Geschichte und Aufklärung: Aufsätze* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1989) 140-159; 140-143.

<sup>59</sup> Koselleck 1-19.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. 5.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 7.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 115-130.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 8.

interpretation.<sup>65</sup> Also, the importance of the consideration of language as mediator for historiographic representation is thematized in his essays. Interestingly, for Koselleck "[h]istory is and remains a 'science of experience,'" <sup>66</sup> even if construed by competing methodologies. Specifically he draws parallels between Kant's ideas on experience, "embracing both reality and its knowledge" <sup>67</sup> and the contemporary emergence of 'history' as an analogous concept that merges event with experience. Koselleck felt that history is unified through "anthropological commonalities,"<sup>68</sup> including the utilization of individual or generational experience in the formation of historical constructs.<sup>69</sup>

Hayden White vigorously develops the application of literary theory to historiography. White champions the interpretation of history as narrative, with events perceived as emplotted and explicated through figural language with comparability to categories of literary genre.<sup>70</sup> Considering the importance of narrative to this dissertation, it is worth examining these ideas in some detail. White has suggested that narrative is a "meta-code, a human universal"<sup>71</sup> for transmitting a "shared reality."<sup>72</sup> Inasmuch as history does not present itself as a coherent and meaningful story, there has been a tendency to ascribe meaning through narrativization in

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. 47.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. 47.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 48.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 54.

<sup>70</sup> Hayden White, "Storytelling: Historical and Ideological," *The Fiction of Narrative: Essays on History, Literature, and Theory, 1957-2007*, ed. Robert Doran (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010) 273-292; 280.

<sup>71</sup> Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987) 1.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 1.

recounting the past.<sup>73</sup> In White's view, given that for the historian who works with narrative "the form of the discourse adds nothing to the content of the representation,"<sup>74</sup> if such narrativization is congruent with events portrayed, it may be considered valid.

White further avers that historical discourse is only viable if one considers it possible to discuss history meaningfully.<sup>75</sup> Historical discourse creates neither the events nor the knowledge thereof but rather their interpretation which is disclosed as narrativization. Therefore, according to White, modern literary theory is relevant to historiography at precisely that point where the philosophy of history needs to probe the relevance of language and textuality for an understanding of historical data as representation that possibly "constructs its subject matter in the very process of speaking about it,"<sup>76</sup> where the "form of a discourse might be one of its contents."<sup>77</sup> The adjective 'modern' is important for White's formulation in that it is only the intellectual horizon implicit in literary modernism with its conceptual ambiguities and discontinuities, requiring the appropriate tools by which to give sense, that is capable of dealing with history and its narrativizations apprehended similarly.

Hayden White is not the only theorist to present challenges to traditional historiographic assumptions. F. R. Ankersmit, for instance, argues that history is akin to a mirror in which one's own cultural identity is reflected back at the researcher.<sup>78</sup> The narrative description of history has been a topic of some debate among historians. Critics have questioned this position as

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 24.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. 27.

<sup>75</sup> Hayden White, *Figural Realism: Studies in the Mimesis Effect* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999) 1.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 4.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 21.

<sup>78</sup> F. R. Ankersmit, "Hayden White's Appeal to the Historians," *History and Theory* 37.2 (May 1998): 182-193; 193.

meaning, essentially that there is no difference between historical, literary, and fictional narrative.<sup>79</sup> The test case for this avers that such a model of historiography could produce a narrative of the Holocaust that could devalue the memories of those who experienced its effects.<sup>80</sup> White has answered this kind of criticism through seeking norms by which to distinguish narratives that may be ideologically rather than historiographically motivated<sup>81</sup> and others that might be considered incoherent at the semantic level through incomplete or contradictory employment.<sup>82</sup>

The writing of history is not the monopoly of Western Europe and the United States. Christa Wolf came to artistic maturity in a country, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) whose historiographic practice was shaped by its identity as a self-consciously socialist state. In theory, the GDR's ruling *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (SED) supported historical interpretation based on Marx's precepts. In practice, Marx's empirical critique and dynamic conception of progress were often changed into static, and statist, justification of present conditions. Although official emphases for historians evolved over time, specifically Marxist ideas at the root of East German historiography included an objective theory of history, the contemporary political productivity of the discipline, and belief in generalizable principles to explain the course of history.<sup>83</sup>

Within this framework, the development of history as a discipline in the GDR is

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<sup>79</sup> Lubomir Doležel, "Fictional and Historical Narrative: Meeting the Postmodernist Challenge," *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis*, ed. David Herman (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999) 247-273; 251.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. 251-253.

<sup>81</sup> White *Content of the Form* 77.

<sup>82</sup> White *Figural Realism* 33.

<sup>83</sup> Helen Bridge, *Women's Writing and Historiography in the GDR* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002) 11, 12.

described as commencing with an initial optimism over contributing to the construction of the socialist society<sup>84</sup> and the ability to concentrate on traditionally neglected areas of social research.<sup>85</sup> Thereafter, following a protracted period of conforming to governmental strictures, East German historiography was credited with developing a more scientifically oriented and less dogmatic approach, although in no sense independent of official positions -- essentially from the 1970's to its demise in 1990.<sup>86</sup> Literature in the GDR was also viewed as a tool for teaching historical truths.<sup>87</sup> There was thus always a cognitive tension in the society between an objective institutionalized historical reality and its more ambiguous depiction in historical fiction, providing at least occasionally a forum for the questioning of official orthodoxy.<sup>88</sup>

### 4.3 Memory

Whatever the merits of the many diverse viewpoints on historiography, most in their own way acknowledge some form of communal memory as one vehicle of cogent interpretation or representation of history. Fulbrook argues that while professional historians proceed from an empirical base considered from idiosyncratic theoretical perspectives, the societies in which they live orient themselves to history primarily in terms of a collective memory that derives from personal, public, and political perceptions.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, within a somewhat different frame of reference, Hayden White discusses the relation of memory to history in his essay on Paul

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<sup>84</sup> Stefan Berger, "Former GDR Historians in the Reunified Germany: an Alternative Historical Culture and Its Attempts to come to Terms with the GDR Past," *Journal of Contemporary History* 38.1 (January 2003): 63-83; 76.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* 70.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* 63.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* 12.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* 25.

<sup>89</sup> Mary Fulbrook, "Re-presenting the German Nation: History and Identity in East and West Germany," *Representing the German Nation*, eds. Mary Fulbrook and Martin Swales (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000) 172-192, 185-186.

Ricoeur's *La mémoire, l'histoire, et l'oublié*.<sup>90</sup> White notes that while historians may fashion for society a "public (or 'collective') memory"<sup>91</sup> from documents, facts, and recollections, memory is more dependent on emotion than any objective consideration.<sup>92</sup>

Kocka broaches the subject in terms of German society's memories of the Nazi and Communist dictatorships and their comparability, as well as of the Holocaust and the possible commensurability thereto of the sufferings of the German citizenry during the war. From his perspective, the institutional dimension of Holocaust memory in public commemoration has a counterpart in and competes with, communal memories that seek to engage some of the other concerns mentioned. Kocka cautions that these explorations must always be clearly situated in discussions of German aggression as ultimate bearer of responsibility for the remembered horrors of World War II.<sup>93</sup>

In the essays cited here, Koselleck does not address the issue of memory but rather that of *experience*. Specifically, he identifies experiences communicated inter-generationally through language as the primary means of historical representation. From this perspective, historiography is essentially the narration of these and may be considered to form several categories.<sup>94</sup> These might be referred to as experiences which are (1) individual and unique, (2) repeatable and generationally transmissible, and (3) transformable and transformative in longer time spans. Type (1) in Koselleck's view, conditions even the historian personally and might exert influence on choice of methodology. Type (2) experiences are collected, transmitted, and used by

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<sup>90</sup> Hayden White, "Guilty of History? The *longue durée* of Paul Ricoeur," *The Fiction of Narrative: Essays on History, Literature, and Theory, 1957-2007*, ed. Robert Doran (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010) 318-339.

<sup>91</sup> White, "Guilty of History?" 323.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Kocka, *Civil Society* 88-95.

<sup>94</sup> Koselleck 27, 50.

communities as bases against which to judge other experiences. Type (3) are those macro-temporal occurrences such as the decline of empires that have the potential to provide alternative explanations, even metaphorical or religious, than would ensue from judging events merely from the other two modes of experience and their processing.<sup>95</sup> Thus even though Koselleck does not use the term 'memory,' the role that he assigns to experience as constitutive of historical perception clearly overlaps with Fulbrook's and Kocka's conceptions of societal memory. These ideas as a whole situate themselves well within the present theoretical perspective, which, in privileging the contingency of reception, assumes *experience*, as either *Erfahrung* or *Erleben* (in Koselleck's terms<sup>96</sup>), to be pre-processed by individual memory, as the mode of non-immediate access to events. Judgments about these remembered experiences are then inseparable from their collection and transmission as history as well as the cognitive framework in which even documentary evidence is evaluated.

Wolfgang Müller-Funk distinguishes between *Erinnerung* and *Gedächtnis* in terms of their respective import for historiography and literary theory. Müller-Funk admits the difficulty of distinguishing between these in a cultural context but attempts, in English, to relate the former to theories of Maurice Halbwachs as shared *collective memory* based on common narratives. The latter he relates to theories of Jan Assmann as *cultural memory* based on impersonal perceptions of events.<sup>97</sup> As caution against drawing precise conclusions from this terminology it should be observed that other writers have designated the distinctions referenced somewhat differently, e.g. *kollektives Gedächtnis* and *kommunikatives und kulturelles Gedächtnis*,

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid. 50-56.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 46.

<sup>97</sup> Müller-Funk 215-218.



respectively.<sup>98</sup> Be this as it may, Müller-Funk pursues his initial distinction arguing that Halbwach's concept of collective memory is rooted in the social relationships that transpire between individuals, is predominantly oral, and substantially ends with the generation to which it belongs. The long term cultural memory that is said to derive from Assmann's ideas does not run contrary to those of Halbwach's but extends the reach of memory by acknowledging the durability of documentation, ritualization, and mythologization in transposing the memory of experienced events beyond their initial temporal framing.<sup>99</sup>

The implication is that these two types of societal memory are associated with different modes of historical narrative. On the one hand, according to Müller-Funk, *Erinnerung* personalizes history and allows one to feel part of a community that remembers. On the other, *Gedächtnis* chronicles the communal memory, which then also becomes the disputed object of definition and control through the generations.<sup>100</sup> If, as Fulbrook believes, "[h]istorical consciousness, national identity, and collective memory"<sup>101</sup> are interconnected by *story* in a "framework of meaning for salient events in a common past"<sup>102</sup> can fictional stories privileging modes of societal memory, such as those of Günter Grass and Christa Wolf function also, in some sense, as historiography? If so, are there genre specific limitations: e.g. what does one make of mythic or subjective elements within the semantic restrictions of *historical* fiction, and must this designation be rigorously upheld to qualify a work as historiography?

If one locates *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* within the preceding discussions of

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<sup>98</sup> Jens Loescher, "Kultur als Gedächtnis: Deutungskämpfe im literarischen Feld der Nachwende," *Kulturpoetik* 8.1 (2008): 86-104; 88.

<sup>99</sup> Müller-Funk 215-217.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Fulbrook, "Re-presenting the nation" 185.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. 186.

the relation of history to memory certain correspondences could be noted. Since both works are fiction, by definition one expects to find kinship with those theorizations that emphasize the narrative aspect of historical reflection. Beyond that basic tautology, what do the works actually say about the history-memory connection? No doubt both *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* are analyzable in terms of all the theoretical perspectives outlined initially. An interesting example, for instance, from the latter work is the extent to which it openly muses on the way emotion influences memory, differentiating it from documentation,<sup>103</sup> a perspective that suggests some of Hayden White's ideas.<sup>104</sup>

In Wolf's novel, the process of finding oneself and recovering repressed memories<sup>105</sup> is not only character (and by implication author) specific but presents the described experience as the "kollektive Erfahrung einer Generation."<sup>106</sup> In this respect, Nelly's experiences as part of the Hitler Youth organization<sup>107</sup> are not only individual but also obviously collective for her generation of Germans. The memories of experiences in this section of *Kindheitsmuster*, Chapter 9, remind one of Koselleck's analyses in that they initially involve surprise,<sup>108</sup> are tolerated upon reflection, and are transmitted across generations. The reflections themselves are actually withheld from transmission, a fact that highlights the trauma of remembrance to the fictive author. It is the relating of personal experience of the National Socialist past as common experience, and the relevance of both perspectives to the author's socialist present in the German Democratic Republic, that characterizes the relationship between history and memory in

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<sup>103</sup> K 512/ PC 329.

<sup>104</sup> White, "Guilty of History?" 323.

<sup>105</sup> Firsching 70.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. 71

<sup>107</sup> K 295ff./PC 188ff.

<sup>108</sup> K 295-315/PC 188-201.

*Kindheitsmuster*. This fusion of self-analytic, societal critique, and didactic is particularly evident through the linkages of past and present in Chapter 18. Here questions of economics, social justice, wartime memories, political liberation, and the ability of language to order contingent events into these categories traverses the worlds of Nelly, the fictive author, and her daughter, Lenka, revealing the interrelationship of all three.<sup>109</sup>

Grass's work proceeds, similarly to Wolf's, as conceptual bifurcation. Written in a superficially realistic style, the underlying tone of irony and fantastical employment have been said to explore the "limits of representation."<sup>110</sup> The self-disclosure of the narrator impeaches the truth-value of the narrative, yet as demonstrated, the story depends on both an implicit and explicit historicity for the power of its symbolical elements to be realized. This essential historical dimension is also realized as bifurcation: the implied possibility of historicity for the fictive individual and family chronicles, as symbolism, displayed against the explicit historicity of their 'real world' framing events. In this sense, *Die Blechtrommel's* relation of history to memory may be seen from the perspective of Müller-Funk's division of *Erinnerung* and *Gedächtnis*, as the personal and the communal perception of history, or in his terms the "collective" and the "cultural," respectively.<sup>111</sup> The terms employed might seem antithetical until traced to their sources. Müller-Funk's alignment of *Erinnerung* with Halbwach's *collective* memory defines this personalization as also a group function for choice of and contextualizing framework for, even individual memories.<sup>112</sup> The subsumption of *Gedächtnis* under Assmann's *cultural* memory places it in the realm of the formal, the contemplated, the ritualized, the

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<sup>109</sup> K 613-618/PC 392-395.

<sup>110</sup> Arnds 425.

<sup>111</sup> Müller-Funk 217.

<sup>112</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, 38.

debated:<sup>113</sup> in short the institutional memory of a society both in *mythos* and *logos*. *Die Blechtrommel* advances Oskar's narrative in short, self-contained, episodes, the majority of which reflect Müller-Funk's definition of memory as *Erinnerung* as typifying the typical, if sometimes bizarre, manifestations of Oskar's social milieu. These include, of course, Oskar's family history and relationships, childhood experiences, and adult life. In the remembered experiences of the private and personal aspects of German lower middle class life and outlook, Grass finds the nascent fascist society. The fact that these are the memories of a patently unreliable narrator obviously distinguishes *Die Blechtrommel* from *Kindheitsmuster*. If the former were viewed as the common experience of a generation similarly to the latter, the points of comparison and the purpose of the satirical mode of representation need to be made clear. The extent to which Grass's novel presents history in line with Müller-Funk's view of *Gedächtnis*, is apparent in the eventual framing and its interpretation mentioned earlier. A more special connection to this aspect of societal memory might well be in the aura of fantasy and magical imagining that adhere to the narration. Both this feature and the underlying allusions to historical, semi-historical, and fairy-tale features and personages allow the novel to be itself a chronicler of cultural memory at the level of mythic interpretation of the history in which it is situated.

Thus, in answer to the question posed earlier, historical fiction, here incorporated in the *Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*, does indeed serve, at least in this way, as a counterpart to historiography. More precisely it functions as a metahistorical commentary, in its capacity to allocate sense to the inter-generationally transmitted memories of cultural experience and institutionally collocated historical accounts. This is accomplished through the projection of

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<sup>113</sup> Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique* 65 (Spring - Summer 1995): 125-133; 129.

personal experience and memory, even the subversively aberrant, as *true* typicality, into the representation of those macro-level accounts, both as overt and covert commentary. In this regard one might re-function, to use Brecht's term, as caveat, one of Foucault's formulations to describe the working of Grass's and Wolf's novels as in this manner.

Commentary . . . gives us the opportunity to say something other than the text itself, but on condition that it is the text which is uttered and, in some ways, finalised.<sup>114</sup>

To which one inserts before the word *text* in each instance the word *historical*.

#### 4.4 Narrative

The communication of this commentary in Grass's and Wolf's novels is embodied in the modes of their narration. In *Die Blechtrommel*, Oskar's sarcastic self-centered story-telling reflects his symbolic positioning. Whether regarded as 'every German,' an individualist among conformists, or even the 'little Hitler,' Oskar's figure undermines representational stability and casts doubt on all associations.<sup>115</sup> In *Kindheitsmuster* the narrative perspective initially ambiguates subjectivity but ultimately communicates a sense of assurance to the World War Two generation that the communal psychic dislocations, guilt, and trauma are shared and describable. The split in the novel's and many readers' sense of self, thus becomes the authentic linkage with the surrounding culture. The historico-social sense of the narratives requests consideration by the reader of possibly tendentious ideological evaluations. Examples might be, in the case of the former, "dispelling pious dishonesties"<sup>116</sup> about the relation of National Socialism and post-war Germans, and in the case of the latter, not only this, but also the relating

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<sup>114</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Discourse on Language," *The Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972) 215-237; 221.

<sup>115</sup> Glenn A. Guidry, "Theoretical Reflections on the Ideological and Social Implications of Mythic Form in Grass' *Die Blechtrommel*," *Monatshefte* 83.2 (Summer 1991): 127-146; 138.

<sup>116</sup> Günter Grass, "Looking Back at the Tin Drum," *Encounter* (July 1976): 84-88; 84.

of both to communist society. The positions of the reading subject on issues thus become the actual objects of discussion implicating the consequences of this fact for one's life-world as consequences also of, and reciprocally as cognitive constructs for, Grass's and Wolf's texts.

Considering formal analysis, briefly, as an aid to understanding, one may return to Bal's definition of a narrative text, quoted previously in Chapter 1, as a narrator relating a story in "language, imagery, sound, buildings, or a combination thereof."<sup>117</sup> Bal no doubt has in mind, in addition to literal description, practices such as decoding the story in a painting or reading a cityscape as text.<sup>118</sup> Through an extension of this idea, one may view *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* as consisting in 'combinations' of such narrative elements, the reading of which discloses the essential features of and semantic levels in, the story. Viewed this way, Grass's narrative unfolds through combinations of readings: of the rhetoric of fantasy, of sometimes grotesque imagery, and of the milieus of various locales and their histories. Likewise, Wolf's novel relates its tale through the combined readings of subjective discontinuity, of the imagery of war, anxiety, and alienation, and of the environments and associated histories against which all elements interact.

The problematic position of the narrator in both novels has been noted. *Die Blechtrommel* is related alternately in the first and third person, presenting its protagonist, Oskar Matzerath, as both narrator and character reflecting on the act of narrating,<sup>119</sup> underlining his symbolic and conceptual construction, but also questioning the nature of literary construction and its relation to historiography.<sup>120</sup> Oskar's mode of narration, incorporating his drumming, has

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<sup>117</sup> Bal 5.

<sup>118</sup> Andreas Huyssen, "The Voids of Berlin," *Critical Inquiry* 24 (Autumn 1997): 57-81.

<sup>119</sup> B 12/TD 5.

<sup>120</sup> Eshel 186.

been described as a code outside of language.<sup>121</sup> To the extent that Oskar as storyteller incorporates both the story and the means of its expression, the reliability of the narrator and the truth-value of the narration are compounded of a mixture of, as Amir Eshel puts it, "[d]oubt, contradiction, and skepticism [... ]."<sup>122</sup> This quality becomes even more pointed with the addition of secondary narrators Bruno Münsterberg, Oskar's "keeper"<sup>123</sup> and Gottfried Vittlar, the dubious friend who relates Oskar's legal troubles.<sup>124</sup> Certainly alternation of narrative perspective in a conventional novel, and one might argue here also, does not replace a unified viewpoint and allows an abstract 'narrator' to nevertheless communicate no matter how quantitatively fragmented. In *Die Blechtrommel*, however, alternation of person conflicts with and destabilizes local significations, even if a global semantic associated with narration remains in place.

In *Kindheitsmuster* the narrator(s) are, as in *Die Blechtrommel*, character associated, comprising a tripartite figural estrangement that is resolved, only tentatively, at the end of the novel. The fictive author describes the present and remembers the past in the second person, the child Nelly is described in the third, but narrates from the past in the first. The lack of cognitive identity<sup>125</sup> between the citizen of the GDR and the child of the Third Reich is thus embodied in the narrator as distinct voices, in dialogue with each other, and with the broader community of which she is a member.<sup>126</sup> Thus, a distinction in narrator focalization may be drawn between *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*. In the former, the shifting diegetic markers situate the reader cognitively into a historical discourse of equal ambiguity. In the latter, the several

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid. 185.

<sup>122</sup> Eshel 187.

<sup>123</sup> B 9/TD 3

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. 745ff./539ff.

<sup>125</sup> Hell 200.

<sup>126</sup> Komar 45.

narrating voices that recognizably, for the reader, signify ambiguities in the human condition,<sup>127</sup> place her both cognitively and affectively into a discussion of shared history, and that which privileges the feminine perspective. In this regard, Hell makes the point that it is the voice of Nelly's mother that is crucial for the narrative perspective of that figure.<sup>128</sup>

*Die Blechtrommel's*, 'rhetoric of fantasy' referred to above, manifests itself in language that often traduces expected communicative functions. Assuming a conventional narratological paradigm in which events unfold with an expected logic,<sup>129</sup> is contraindicated from Oskar's introduction onward. This is evident also as one senses the extent to which the narrative simply parodies -- case in point: the mock suspense of the over long passage in which Oskar's rented Rottweiler, Lux, finds the ring finger, through the artifice of an almost excruciating delay in acknowledgement of that find.<sup>130</sup> A similar principle extends to the text's descriptive practices. Analysis of this narrative facet for purposes of delineating functions, focalization, and character motivation<sup>131</sup> must contend with passages that question, even mock, more than answer. The description of Oskar climbing the *Stockturm*, through repetitive construction, suggests both determination and futility -- for the act, as described in a sentence as labyrinthine as the referenced staircase, is itself a type of tower-building at the personal level -- the absurdity of which is proclaimed already in the text.<sup>132</sup> In addition to foregrounding Oskar's traits of willful obstinacy and rebelliousness, the description exteriorizes (it is the stairs which have "given

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<sup>127</sup> Nury Kim 187.

<sup>128</sup> Hell 205.

<sup>129</sup> Bal 7.

<sup>130</sup> B 738-742/TD 534-537.

<sup>131</sup> Bal 35-46.

<sup>132</sup> B 128-129/ TD 91.



up"<sup>133</sup>) the motivational contradictions embodied by this figure. It also invites the reader to interrogate the relationships described: the significance of pigeons, tower, Oskar, climbing, drumming, their constellation in the text, and ultimately to question the commonly accepted grand efforts of humanity, be they in architecture or human will.

Not only the depictions of events draw the reader's attention to the narratives but also the manner of their unfolding. Certainties are undermined through rhetorical questions and negative representation, and emphases indicated through anaphora and repetition. It has been remarked that such rhetorical devices focus attention more on the act of narration than on its objects.<sup>134</sup> The neologisms, variant word orderings, and idiosyncratic punctuation in *Die Blechtrommel* undermine standard reading habits and elicit concentration on the text. In a very real sense, then, focalization provided by unaccustomed expression becomes transferred to and dependent upon the attention of the reader.<sup>135</sup> Theories, sometimes conflicting, have explored the work's relation to the *Bildungs-* and *Pikaroroman* as a kindred, if ironic, essay in fictive autobiography.<sup>136</sup> Mythological, literary, and fairy tale allusions are plentiful and much discussed in the literature.<sup>137</sup> Narratologically, one might consider these aspects of textual expression as determinants of structural or functional layers of described events with distinctive inflections corresponding to particular typologies, e.g. fabula, story and narrative text.<sup>138</sup> Alternatively, one could analyze in terms of emplotment and genre demarcation. Considering

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<sup>133</sup> Mitchell translates, "[b]ut the stairs had tired too soon" TD 91.

<sup>134</sup> Georg Just, *Darstellung und Appell in der Blechtrommel von Günter Grass: Darstellungsästhetik versus Wirkungsästhetik* (Frankfurt a. M.: Athenäum, 1972) 102-108, quoted in Neuhaus 5-6.

<sup>135</sup> Neuhaus 7; compare Bal on the effect of information manipulation for the reader, 164.

<sup>136</sup> Arnds 425, Nury Kim 42ff., Neuhaus 28 ff., Preece 46.

<sup>137</sup> See Neuhaus 52-56 for primary loci and secondary literature.

<sup>138</sup> Bal 5, 75, 181.

the contingent nature of categorizations, there should also be no conflict in correlating the structuring strategies with the signifying import of the intertextual references. The point is to find or distill a discourse, or its absence, on the themes of history and memory in relation to the Nazi period and its crimes, through an analysis of the narrative relationships that places the reader and her environment into a meaningful relation with that discussion.

The subjective discontinuities evinced by Kindheitmuster's narrating voices are analyzable as tokens of different narrative levels. The fictive author muses, however, somewhat disparagingly on this strategy, one of converting the entangled threads of life into "die lineare Sprache."<sup>139</sup> The language which gives rise to such entanglement, one, in Levine's phrase of "pronominal coordinates"<sup>140</sup> might also be viewed, after Hell's suggestion, as sliding between different semantic levels, as with her example of the changing meaning and familial import for Nelly of the voice and its use.<sup>141</sup> Already at the beginning of the novel this organ is identified as the bearer of memory and the arbiter of a sense of self<sup>142</sup> and which, similarly to language in the *Blechtrommel*, reflexively *voices* both the narrative and itself.

Of a piece with the discontinuity of subjectivity in Wolf's work, is that also of time. The fictive author inhabits the temporal present of autobiography. She and her family comprise the discursive interlocutors of the remembered automobile trip to Poland. Nelly is extant only as the dissociated memory of the fascist era and its aftermath. Oskar, in Grass's work, orders events in a manner suitable to his temperament, narrative rhythm is frequently uneven, and anachronies of

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<sup>139</sup> K 424/ PC 274.

<sup>140</sup> Levine 109.

<sup>141</sup> Hell 202-203, K 56-57/PC 32-33.

<sup>142</sup> K 12/PC 4.

character histories abound. By comparison, the figures of *Kindheitsmuster* are not only differentiated and self-differentiated linguistically but also temporally, and are self-evidently the actantial embodiments of those constructions alongside their anthropomorphic status as subjectively authentic characters in a historical setting. Exactly the relationship between the abstraction in memory and the concretion of the figures in the material world forms the basis of *Kindheitsmuster's* many discussions on history, humanity, and memory and their intertextual associations. In effect, the fictive author appears to seize upon that perhaps inexpressible relationship, as determinative of the possibility or not of re-integrating the discontinuities of narrative and life.<sup>143</sup>

For both *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*, additional narrative elements, including imagery, and extratextual/intertextual referents (assessed in Chapter 3) could all be explored at length, the integrative readings of which, were posited earlier as essential to the storytelling process itself. Some short examples should suffice as illustrations. Much imagery in Grass's work, ranging from the picturing of the deformed and the coarse, to symbolic representation of a postwar West German society in flight from reality,<sup>144</sup> signifies through antithetical reflection and inversion of values, e.g. the valorization of the sanatorium's environment in relation to the outside world.<sup>145</sup> The novel abounds in striking word pictures, frequently coarse or grotesque: the moth and the light bulb, Dr. Hollatz' shattered specimen collection, the eels in the horse head, the disgusting soup; all placing concepts of purity, particularly of childhood, gravely in doubt. *Kindheitsmuster's* imagery often points to the genesis of figural estrangement and alienation,

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<sup>143</sup> K 638/PC 406-407.

<sup>144</sup> Nury Kim 23.

<sup>145</sup> Neuhaus 27.

picturing the body as site of ideological conflict.<sup>146</sup> Striking imagery often pertains to the body: the feel of the *Führer* in the stomach, the incident of adult exposure woven into a complex of images associated with antisemitism, the final emaciation of Nelly's mother, the dream of the tortured man on the narrator's bed; all picture the story of fascist trauma in the body, both individual and communal.

Material referents that possess obvious narrative functions in the *Blechtrommel* include not only the narrated locales and their histories, but also *objective correlates* that signify the inner state of characters or a particular narrative perspective. Several of these are: playing cards (the ménage à trois of the Matzeraths and Bronski), Anna Bronski's broad skirt (refuge, security, the womb), Maria's 'triangle' (death linked with sexuality), and *die Schwarze Köchin* (variously theorized as a nihilistic or existential quality of society or life in general<sup>147</sup>),<sup>148</sup> certainly not a material object but perhaps the key figure in Grass's novel. Considering also the tin drum as an objective correlate combined with the act of drumming as narration in itself<sup>149</sup> raises the possibility that subtextual significations and focalizations of such objects create latent narratives in their own right. In *Kindheitsmuster*, the exterior environments of the story include its locales and their histories [the change of Nelly's birth place from German to Polish sovereignty implicates the entire history of the time], material items such as photographs as stand-ins for memory, and hypothetically, the linkage of Nelly, phonetically close to *Netty*, with Wolf's mentor Anna Seghers [born Netty Reiling] one of whose works appears thematically close to

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<sup>146</sup> Hell 209.

<sup>147</sup> Nury Kim 96.

<sup>148</sup> Neuhaus 45ff.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. 36.

Kindheitsmuster's "problematic of identity."<sup>150</sup> The influence of Anna Seghers on Wolf has been attributed as catalyst for Wolf's critique of and moving away from socialist realism.<sup>151</sup> Seghers showed skepticism, in a letter exchange with Lukács, over totalizing formulations of genre and the prescription that the artwork should be an objective reflection of reality.<sup>152</sup> In the same vein Christa Wolf criticized the artificiality and irreality of the compulsion to realism<sup>153</sup> and in *Kindheitsmuster* directs a critique in coded phraseology of the official tendency to falsify history through dogmatism.<sup>154</sup>

#### **4.5 Assessment: *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* as historiographical fiction**

The dissertation regards *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* as sites of interaction between *the texts, their historical referents and allusions, and the experiences of the reader*, such that *they constitute, in narrativized form, fictive counterparts to historiography*. This wording reflects the view that all elements of and parties to the novels are brought together in the text, as places of theoretical interaction. Here sense is made of communications through recognition of the manner in which each element involves the others for this task. The theoretical assumptions underlying this perspective were elaborated earlier.

In what ways then, if at all, does *Die Blechtrommel*, with its mixture of quasi-autobiographical allegory, fairy tale, and mythological allusions and dimension, interact, or better, intersect, with mainstream historiographic thinking? What does it say about history? Superficially the novel could be viewed as relating personal and familial histories, in Fulbrook's sense, that resonate in both collective memory for the war generation and received cultural

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<sup>150</sup> Hell 215.

<sup>151</sup> Nury Kim 142.

<sup>152</sup> Anna Seghers quoted in Nury Kim 141.

<sup>153</sup> Nury Kim 143.

<sup>154</sup> Bridge 67; K 561/PC 361.

memory (to use Müller-Funk's distinctions) for the post-war generation. One of these 'memories of events' is Oskar's flight from Danzig in a boxcar,<sup>155</sup> reprising the refugee experience of many.<sup>156</sup> On another level, the narrative, split into the narrating and narrated, the remembering and remembered *I*, undergoes a further remove as a story told originally to and now recounted by Oskar's attendant. This story is situated in the double frame of the *narrating-I* in effect, narrating *myself*, narrating *myself*. The linking of this double distancing from the actual events questions not only the reliability of the narrator but his ability for affective involvement in the events as constituted in history. This feature is normative for the novel throughout, as evidenced even in the switching between first and third person narration. The uncertainty of perspective is not merely a matter of related events, but is embedded, formally, in the narrative process itself, as mode of communication.<sup>157</sup> On the intertextual plane, relationships may be correlated in reception with the historical documentation and memories of experiences of refugees from the East, along with the political implications of the so-called *Ostvertriebene* organizations in the FRG, to the present time.<sup>158</sup> More pointedly the historical documentation and memories of experiences of Jewish individuals who travelled in boxcars to the East, to Auschwitz, for instance, are also inescapably signified,<sup>159</sup> negatively implicating a level of historical discourse in relation to the story explicated by the text. More disturbingly for a sense of what *Die Blechtrommel* contributes to the reader's processing of history is *die Schwarze Köchin*. Whether

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<sup>155</sup> B 551ff./TD 400ff.

<sup>156</sup> Björn Schaal, *Jenseits von Oder und Lethe: Flucht, Vertreibung, und Heimatsverlust in Erzähltexten nach 1945* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2006) 42.

<sup>157</sup> Stanzel 273.

<sup>158</sup> Martin Vogt, "Deutschland von der Bonner 'Wende' zu den Problemen der Einheit," *Deutsche Geschichte: von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Martin Vogt, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1997; Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 2006) 888-970; 937.

<sup>159</sup> Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz: the Nazi Assault on Humanity*, trans. Stuart Woolf (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958, 1986) 18.

viewed as an abstract causal entity or allegorical embodiment of the omnipresence of fascism in society,<sup>160</sup> this principle of terror running through history seems almost as a vampire, to extract from Oskar's and our world,<sup>161</sup> all sense, perspective, and hope.<sup>162</sup>

The reception and perception of levels of historical discourse in *Kindheitsmuster* will of course be conditioned by the reader's experience, which even if part of German culture will be, and would be at the time the novels were written, of a generational nature. The 'subjective authenticity' of *Kindheitsmuster* initially addresses those whose experiences could be told parallel to the narrator's telling.<sup>163</sup> For others, the "split temporal framework"<sup>164</sup> and split subjectivity may carry more existential than historical consciousness with it. As with *Die Blechtrommel*, *Kindheitsmuster's* thematic configurations could also be viewed as intersecting with historiographic concerns referenced earlier. The text's reader finds herself constantly situated in discussions of the construction and fragility of individual and collective memory, the role of gender and trauma in the formulation of these, and the impossibility of objective representation. Wolf's work, unlike Grass's, relates its tale earnestly rather than satirically. It does so through serious, rather than disturbed narrators, and it voices its contemporary critique through regret, rather than distanciation.

Chapter 8 brings together important elements of *Kindheitsmuster's* historical consciousness as relationships between the memories of experiences and the possibilities of their

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<sup>160</sup> Kim 95-98.

<sup>161</sup> B 779/TD 563.

<sup>162</sup> Preece 46.

<sup>163</sup> K 256-257/PC 163-164.

<sup>164</sup> Levine 106.

expression.<sup>165</sup> The author concedes that the past, as memory, cannot be described *in objektivem Stil*.<sup>166</sup> Questioned is the adequacy of writing for mediation, in several senses of the word, as representation for another, as reconciliation, or strictly as dialogue between past and present. If, after Stanzel, one considers the goal of narrative modes that of mediating the fictional material in such a manner that the reader has the illusion of unmediated perception of a fictional world,<sup>167</sup> i.e. a reality effect, what form of communication suffices for the fictive author's purposes? As answer, the productivity of formal structures only for distanciation and their divorce from the *nackte[n] Willkür*<sup>168</sup> of life points back to the quotation from Bachmann privileging the subjectivity of experience and its communication. The passage also evokes Koselleck's disquisition on the linguistic bases of historical representation to the effect that non-experienced linguistic representation exists only in the formal and by implication, distanced, medium of writing after the event, a condition which requires *Kindheitsmuster's* narrative modalities to consider intergenerational differences in the apprehension of historical subjectivity and authenticity for effective communication of those attributes, the discussion and illustration of which comprises Chapter 8 in its entirety.

Koselleck's discussion of the relation of historicity and its expression seems particularly apt as a conceptual framework for the historical consciousness of *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*.

What belonged together, and how it did so, *in eventu* can only be determined by linguistic

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<sup>165</sup> K 256-257/PC 163-164.

<sup>166</sup> K 256/ PC 164.

<sup>167</sup> Stanzel 71.

<sup>168</sup> K 257/ PC 164.



evidence *post eventum*; depending on how these linguistic records, this oral or written tradition, are handled, the most different genres move more closely together and others move apart.<sup>169</sup>

This addresses the question in *Kindheitsmuster* Chapter 8, of the ability of the written, in this case fictional, formulation to mediate past and present -- to make the former, if not present in some sense, at least *actual* -- for the latter. This constitutes an epistemological problem of considerable dimension for it interrogates not only the reliability of memory but the extent to which the historian's craft may be viewed as scientific and the objects of its research as verifiable data. Thus the apparent inability to step outside one's own consciousness in the present, except by analogy, questions the concept of truth, and on a large scale the concept of truth in history. Historians and theorists have grappled with this problem by advancing solutions that retain substantial commitments to an objective theory of history through analytical evidentiary procedures, those that view history as more of a construction, or narrativization, and those that seek to mediate in some degree, the different orientations.

The idea of the non-correspondence of human cognition to a verifiable reality, aside from linguistic construction, and the implications for concepts of truth and representation, when transposed into the realm of literature, have produced a wealth of literary works and theoretical formulations that elaborate on and explore that idea and those implications. A list of such works might include Beckett's *The Unnamable*, John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Gabriel García Márquez' *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, or Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. The relating of the latter to *Die Blechtrommel* has become commonplace<sup>170</sup> and it

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Preece 35.

requires very little imagination for the reader to see correspondences with the others also.<sup>171</sup> Relating *Kindheitsmuster* similarly may be questioned. Wolf's novel certainly belongs here formally in terms of narrative experimentation, and is arguably material for its exploration of a personal reality of "self-difference."<sup>172</sup>

Theorists critical of the application of narrative analysis to historiography have sought to maintain a distinction between fictional and non-fictional discourse. Marie-Laure Ryan argues for such distinction through defining "criteria of validity."<sup>173</sup> Building on 'possible worlds' theory derived from modal logic, both Ryan the linguist and Lubomir Doležel have discussed minimum conditions for both fictional and historical narrative.<sup>174</sup> In this scheme 'fictional worlds' have essentially no restrictions on content and create their own reality but 'historical worlds' must not comprise physical impossibilities or non-natural agency. The use of this type of construct illustrates well one of the central points of the dissertation: literature-theoretic formulations disclose underlying philosophical principles. In this instance, the question of how thoroughly Doležel wishes to validate Kripke's *possible worlds semantics* as a philosophy of language in general, arises from the use of the construct in a literary context.<sup>175</sup> From the present perspective all theorizations, whether fictive or not embody particular discourses that may be analyzed further into processes of, and grounds for development, constituting narratives of formation. These are essentially movements of the objects under consideration, actants, and

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<sup>171</sup> For instance, comparison of the *narrating-I* in the Blechtrommel with that of *The Unnamable*, Stanzel 117.

<sup>172</sup> Levine 109.

<sup>173</sup> Marie-Laure Ryan, "Postmodernism and the Doctrine of Panfictionality," *Narrative* 5.2 (May 1997): 165-187; 180.

<sup>174</sup> (a) Doležel 253-261; (b) Marie-Laure Ryan, "Possible Worlds and Accessibility Relations: A Semantic Typology of Fiction," *Poetics Today* 12.3 (Autumn 1991): 553-576.

<sup>175</sup> Compare Scott Soames, *Philosophy of Language* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010) 50-56. Soames prefers the term "world-states" to "worlds."

viewpoints in space and time, which specify how a discourse situates a theorization, as a text, into *the* or *a* factual world as a relationship between these and a recipient. In this case, the question of historiographic sufficiency emplaces itself into the world of practical consideration by way of and in prioritizing a disquisition on the nature of reality and its import for both fictional and non-fictional applications. At issue for *Die Blechtrommel* more than for *Kindheitsmuster* is the extent to which historical narrative may present impossible and counterfactual events and still be perceived as historical reference, rather than as purely a fable. In other words: what is the communicative function of varying degrees of fantasy, mystification, or even polyvocal subjectivity that seek to comment seriously on history?

Answer: the provocation of the question itself. The modes by which the texts, the recipient, and her cognitive environment, interact to situate all within the dynamics of the text operates precisely by raising the question of the instability of the historical referents and their modes of narration and reception. It is at this point that the "discursive situation," in Said's terms,<sup>176</sup> provides the support, through reference and both positive and negative signification, to emplace the text in an exterior conceptual/material framework or world, through a measure of the distance between fantasy and the facticity (however defined) that constitutes the narratives underlying historiographical discourses. Additionally, the linguistic givenness of the narrative, that which Bakhtin characterizes as the "unrepeatable event of the text,"<sup>177</sup> essentially reveals its temporal dimension in reception, its spatial dimension through material reference, and both through its further working in broader contexts, which in an extended sense also become part of the narratives. This is simply to say that the reader of *Die Blechtrommel*, for instance, who rents the film, itself an extension of the story, and is cited by law enforcement authorities for

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<sup>176</sup> Said 25.

<sup>177</sup> Bakhtin, "The Problem of the Text" 107.

possessing possibly illegal material within some jurisdiction,<sup>178</sup> becomes in a very real sense a part of that story. In a similar sense, Christa Wolf becomes herself the narrated author of *Was bleibt* in the *Literaturstreit* of the immediate post-*Wende* years. The material events regarding in the first case, the recipient, and in the second, the author, become a part of the texts, as cognitively and dialogically constituted through the horizon of expectations of knowledgeable subsequent readers and retains the ability to situate these also into further material events of narrative extension.

It is thus as sites for thought experiment in dialogue with historical events, both those to which the novels refer and their further evental productivity that marks *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* as fictive counterparts to works, that is sites, of evidentiary evaluation, whether objectively or narratively construed, that define themselves as historiographic in the strict sense. It will be apparent that in this theorization, certain analytical configurations will differ from the expected. One of these involves an ambivalent relation to the insights of Foucault, e.g. the devaluation of the author as the text's unifying function.<sup>179</sup> From this viewpoint, accepting the utterances of Günter Grass and Christa Wolf on their intentions in their works, as an extension of the narrative, would be problematic, especially if the novels' narrating voices were identified with the authors.

Addressing this criticism involves positing the coherence of the practice as an underlying level of communication in each novel. Nury Kim identifies and documents from the works, traits that he believes are common to both Grass and Wolf and to others of their generation as the

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<sup>178</sup> Richard Weisberg, "Why They're Censoring 'The Tin Drum: Kristallnacht' Reflections on the End of the Epic," *Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature* 10.2, Tenth Anniversary Volume (Winter 1998) 161-181; 161.

<sup>179</sup> Foucault 221.

result of the childhood trauma of the Nazi era. Among these is skepticism towards generalized structures and totalizations, the accentuation of the personal and individual, the continued effects of the past in the present,<sup>180</sup> and "[d]as aufklärerische Bewußtsein des *zeitgenössischen Ich* [italics and capitalization in original]." In Kim's view, the author, the actants, and implicitly the reader are contemporarily linked in communication as an act of historical enlightenment.<sup>181</sup> In the present model similarly, auctorial elaboration is integral to the narrative, as communicative extension, particularly when the author is no longer contemporary, becoming also object of the expressed history. Secondly, the decentering function of Foucault's formulations is superseded in the present model by the decentering effect of the contingencies of and in reception. Ultimately, the mutual constitution of world, text, and reader accommodates the author as writing subject as much as the recipient as reading subject, if indeed an author is extant within this relationship.

The alternative structuring of historical discourse through narrative procedures in *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* also situates these into discussions surrounding the further implications of the historiographical practices to which they function as discursive counterparts. The theories of Ankersmit, Fulbrook, Kocka, Koselleck, or White, ideas on the constitution of history and how it is transmitted necessarily raise questions about concepts of agency and subjectivity as well as the sociological contexts in which they operate. The problems surrounding the narration of selfhood and certain contextual milieus in the referenced novels have been explored above in relation to the consciousness of history and its memory. What do the works as metahistorical commentary indicate about a sense of self in relation to agency in history? Do they illuminate debates between essentialist and anti-essentialist conceptions of the

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<sup>180</sup> Nury Kim 213-240.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid. 240-242.

self? Does 'collective memory' relate to 'collective identity' and to a sense of selfhood, however constituted? The manner in which *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* are germane to these issues becomes the next focus of attention.

## 5. Identity and Subjectivity in *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*

### 5.1 Introduction

Reading *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* closely and comparatively discloses cultural discourses and constitutive narratives that relate personal subjectivity and German cultural constructs. In this chapter these constructs will be seen to operate through individual and collective memory privileging certain forms of cultural awareness, including the contentious concept of national identity.<sup>1</sup> In the following chapter, discussions of the constitution of 'modernity' will emerge as descriptors that form links between ideas of subjectivity, identity, culture, and state and the differentiation of these concepts in German society.

Certainly one of the discussions into which Grass's and Wolf's novels mutually situate the world, the text, and the reader concerns the relationships between the sense of human selfhood and the socio-historical scenes against which it is projected. Illustrative of the concerns with which the last chapter concluded, are the following passages from the works. The opening words of *Die Blechtrommel*, "Zugegeben: ich bin Insasse einer Heil- und Pflegeanstalt [. . .]"<sup>2</sup> and an early passage from *Kindheitsmuster*,

Du aber hast eine . . . Original-Erinnerung zu bieten, denn es ist mehr als unwahrscheinlich, daß ein Außenstehender dem Kind . . . später berichtet haben soll, wie es da vor seines Vaters Ladentür saß und in Gedanken das neue Wort ausprobierte, ICH ICH ICH ICH ICH [. . .]<sup>3</sup>

ineluctably define the priority of the narrating subject within the respective tales -- but why? The following investigation will inquire into the manner in which Grass's and Wolf's novels situate

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999) 15.

<sup>2</sup> B 9/TD 3.

<sup>3</sup> K 14/PC 5.

personal subjectivity, on the basis of the preceding questions, in relation to society and the communities of readers.

The context of the Wolf quotation above shows that it might be considered the culmination of a short disquisition on authorial agency and the introduction to a narrative section comprising the rest of the chapter, incorporating a disquisition on memory and the recovery of a personal history. These concerns are framed performatively in terms of the initial considerations of the constitution of a 'self'. These begin with the specification of the quest for the child one once was in the Neruda epigraph. It is made clear at the beginning of the novel proper that alienation will mark this quest even to the point of fragmenting narration into first, second, and third personal pronouns, as well as a proper name. The complete otherness of the object of narration, as an earlier self, in relation to the narrating subject, precludes the use of the first personal pronoun. Memory, as the basis of the unfolding story is thus extant as separate voices, in the text and in the consciousness of the narrating fictive author.<sup>4</sup> These rhetorical gambits locate the text within discussions of subjectivity and their place in the external world. The ambiguity of writing in the second person implicates not only narrator but also reader, as does the reader's prior expectations concerning the issues and their constitutive elements. In *Kindheitsmuster* the treatment of self unfolds as *story* situated in the universe of narratives, not all considered fictional (e.g. psychological, sociological data), by which discourses of selfhood are ultimately fashioned, and recursively also the reader's conceptualization of these.

In contrast to Wolf's negative problematization of subjectivity, Grass's novel accomplishes a feat of subjective disorientation similar to hers through the very ubiquity of the first personal pronoun situated in communicative contexts of uncertain signification. The first

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<sup>4</sup> K 9, 11-14/PC np., 3-5.



sentence sets the tone with the narrator's concession that he is the inmate of a care facility constantly observed by an attendant who also serves as audience for the narrator's reminiscences.<sup>5</sup> Not only this concession but also the early association of the attendant with artistic endeavor raises the question of the reliability of the story and its teller while hinting at the underlying interrogative paradigm: aesthetization. As the somewhat puzzling associative contexts in *Die Blechtrommel* multiply, as narrative voice switches between first and third person, and as the narrative figure merges with the activity of drumming, the text places itself and the reader into an implied discussion not only of German history but, in the words of Amir Eshel, that of a "latent order that has as its referents the activity and effects of figuration itself . . ."<sup>6</sup> That the experience of the Third Reich is conveyed through the modality of incongruous subjectivity, implies from the beginning the importance of that subject and presumably also that incongruity, for the relating of the experience.

The relationship between the self, the incongruous, and society frames *Die Blechtrommel's* second chapter. Here, Oskar, from the vantage point of the mental institution, continues the tale of his origins with further tragicomic events from the lives of his maternal grandparents, Anna Bronski and Joseph Koljaiczek. But at this point, Oskar, as narrator, paradoxically ascribes the narration to his drum, imputing 'reality' creating powers to the instrument without which he would not have "nachweißliche Großeltern."<sup>7</sup> Yet the family adventures are immediately placed within the context of a wider world. The mention of Paul (Ohm) Krüger (also Kruger) dates Oskar's story to 1899 and the Second Boer War. Yet the date is mentioned in the text -- obviating reference for purely historical reasons. In the ensuing

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<sup>5</sup> B 9/TD 3.

<sup>6</sup> Eshel 186.

<sup>7</sup> B 23/TD 13.

chapters, Oskar's family history emerges from collections of fabulae punctuated by similar descriptive snippets of historical events. Ultimately, in Book Three the technique encompasses also life in the post-war Federal Republic of Germany. In this regard, it is not difficult to ascertain the outline of a discourse on the rise of National Socialism, that in defeat nurtures an apathy towards adjudicating the same,<sup>8</sup> arising from the myriad details and narratives of Oskar's lower middle class origins, as indeed also its source.<sup>9</sup> The narrator, fragmented and unreliable, by definition a "character effect"<sup>10</sup> rather than a person, ultimately provides unification and focalization for the disparate themes and happenings within the novel. In so doing, *Die Blechtrommel* utilizes the purported consciousness of an acknowledged 'defective' self to make a statement about that self's society by situating both within an implied discourse interrogating the constitution of historical, reliable, and normative constructs and thereby the nature of subjectivity itself in relation to these.

*Kindheitsmuster* presents in its opening pages a rough parallel to some of the above elements discernible in *Die Blechtrommel*: the placement of the protagonist as child within a family, the shifting of narrative levels, the temporal movements between the past of a fascist society and the present of a post-war world still too connected thereto and split into capitalist and socialist camps.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps the most significant factor is the precarious position of the narrator, a medley of textual voices. The details of these correspondences diverge rather markedly from the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 570-571/415-416.

<sup>9</sup> Eung-Jun Kim 170.

<sup>10</sup> Bal 113.

<sup>11</sup> Kristin Felsner, *Perspektiven literarischer Geschichtsschreibung: Christa Wolf und Uwe Johnson* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2010) 551.

former novel, naturally enough. Admittedly autobiographical in substance,<sup>12</sup> dealing with authentic personality conflicts, the overarching trajectory of elucidation focuses on *self*-awareness more than negative signification of social deficits through parody and incongruity. According to Wolf, it is the experience of her generation that divides the consciousness of self, that precludes the identification of the mature author, and in the novel the mature fictive author, with the child of the fascist era. Thus, in *Kindheitsmuster*, there moves in counterpoint to the strategies that mutually emplace the world, the text, and the reader in discussions of history, those that displace these elements from more usual discussions of subjectivity. Formally these consist of the division of the narrating subject into differing personal pronouns; substantively this is also accomplished through the exploration of the aporias of memory. For if memory prevents our being strangers to ourselves, as the narrator muses,<sup>13</sup> the knowledge of its construction for that purpose<sup>14</sup> re-instates that estrangement, when as with Nelly and the mature fictive author, the construction of memory, by evocation of trauma, reveals its incapacity to establish a stabilizing identity between earlier and later incorporations of the subject.<sup>15</sup>

The stances of *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* on the nature of the *self* and its place in, and import for larger society situate themselves into broader discussions and therefore into larger contexts within the world exterior to the text, not solely through the representations of the text but also somewhat contingently through the emplacing choices of the critical reader. One can comparatively read the respective novels' figures in a range of constructions: from the

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<sup>12</sup> Christa Wolf, "Eine Diskussion über Kindheitsmuster," *The German Quarterly* 57.1 (Winter 1984): 91-95; 95.

<sup>13</sup> K 12/PC 4.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 59-60/34.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 17/7

allegorical<sup>16</sup> to the (magical) realist<sup>17</sup> and the subjectively authentic<sup>18</sup> to the embodiment of Derridean *différance*.<sup>19</sup> Yet the novels also set certain priorities as text and the placement of these into wider discussions situate both reader and work into the extended intellectual environment.

## 5.2 Identity versus Subjectivity

In Chapter 4 of *Die Blechtrommel* and Chapter 2 of *Kindheitsmuster* the diversity of possible sources against which Oskar and Nelly respectively reflect on themselves is given concrete expression in an object -- the family photo album. For Oskar this collection provides a springboard initially for self-absorption and reflection on photographic adventures with his friend Klepp in the post-war world. This gives way to musings on the album as chronicle of history, the family in relation to fashion and popular culture, and reminiscences of interpersonal relationships. Oskar's consciousness remains the primary focus of its own attention, a consciousness that ultimately distances itself from its subject in third person narration. Nelly has already been distanced from the adult narrator, no longer a permutation of a self with which the adult can identify, as Christa Wolf later explained of her own childhood.<sup>20</sup> What the photo album reveals is subsumed under the question of how the memory functions, introduced with the observation that in German the words for *thinking*, *thinking of* in the sense of remembrance, and

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<sup>16</sup> Nury Kim 57.

<sup>17</sup> Sien Uytterschout, "An Extremely Loud Tin Drum: a Comparative Study of Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum*," *Comparative Literature Studies* 47.2 (2010): 185-199.

<sup>18</sup> Nury Kim 112.

<sup>19</sup> Levine 111.

<sup>20</sup> Wolf 95.

*thanking* all come from a common root.<sup>21</sup> The narrator makes the point that in remembrance, with its emotional connections also, of a happy childhood, the vocabulary itself provides the further connotation of thankfulness within the overall cognitive processes and militates against any questioning of this arrangement.<sup>22</sup> With the old photos as a guide to memory, *Kindheitsmuster's* narrator describes Nelly's family relationships. These associatively enjoin the nature of life in the home region, including that under National Socialism, situating its discussion into the narrator's 1971 car trip with her own family.<sup>23</sup> While both Oskar's and Wolf's narrator's photo albums place the reader into a discourse on memory, the former's egocentric approach to a construction of self contrasts with the latter's consciousness of a place in society and the ramifications of memory, both its construction and suppression.

Formally, the concept of self and the problem of its relation to society are identifiable in European culture at least from the Classical period.<sup>24</sup> Given this time span it is not surprising that 'selfhood' and associated concepts have been, and continue to be situated in a diverse number of sometimes overlapping areas of intellectual inquiry. Questions concerning the constitution of such an entity arise in connection with ideas concerning the nature of existence, of consciousness, of experience, of human relationships and their depictions in the arts. Interrogation of what *self* means or signifies is spread over fields as diverse as philosophy, psychology, sociology, political science, and aesthetic theory. Yet there is no reason to assume out of hand that the historical vocabulary contains either the logical or signifying relationships that would allow a meaningful discussion of ideas about the self across all time periods.

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<sup>21</sup> K 45/PC 25.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 46-78/26-46

<sup>24</sup> Frank, *Ansichten der Subjektivität* 37-38.

Reinhart Koselleck makes this point in regard to the development of a sense of history, aided by linguistic usages, as comparative temporality.<sup>25</sup> Manfred Frank traces the concept of subjectivity in philosophy from an intellectual kernel in Parmenides to the more fully developed elaborations of twentieth and twenty-first century thinkers like Heidegger and Derrida.<sup>26</sup> The narrating fictive author in *Kindheitsmuster*, similarly to Koselleck, reflects on the role of language in creating concepts and questions this process, here, in relation to the constitution of memory,<sup>27</sup> which in exemplary fashion informs the last passages of the novel as one of the bases, although highly ambiguous, for the integration or re-integration of experience into the sense of self of the mature fictive author.<sup>28</sup>

Dealing with the concepts surrounding the idea of the self requires terminological differentiation. The use of differing referential expressions between disciplines [and sometimes within the same discipline] regarding selfhood and its manifestations, places this and its associations into many different discourses or if viewed as a unity, into a highly fragmented discourse. One issue is the use of the terms *identity* and *subjectivity* to indicate specific perspectives. Terminology denoting either or both these concepts may vary in their English and German usages, related ideas, and connotations. A general definition from the *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* [unabridged] states that the former term may denote the "sameness of a person . . . at all times . . . the condition or fact that a person . . . is itself and not something else; individuality, personality."<sup>29</sup> Similarly this source supplies for the latter term a "conscious

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<sup>25</sup> Koselleck 161-162.

<sup>26</sup> Frank, *Ansichten der Subjektivität* 37-50.

<sup>27</sup> K 59, 78 /PC 34, 46.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 637-638/406-407.

<sup>29</sup> "Identity, 2.a," *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, prep. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1991) 811-620.

being"<sup>30</sup> which refers more specifically to the 'subject', i.e. "the thinking or cognizing agent; the self or ego."<sup>31</sup>

The *Duden Deutsches Universalwörterbuch* emphasizes the complete correspondence of a person or thing with itself, or in relation to something else, or in the field of psychology expresses the definiens *als Selbst erlebte innere Einheit der Person*<sup>32</sup> for its entry on *Identität*. *Subjekt* is defined as a *mit Bewusstsein ausgestattetes, denkendes, erkennendes, handelndes Wesen*<sup>33</sup> and *Subjektivität* is considered primarily the condition of regarding as a *Subjekt*.<sup>34</sup> More precise definition is available in the various technical literatures. Definitions, as abstractions from linguistic usage, merely situate the terms into particular discourses. Some degree of pertinence for these terms may be assessed from within the secondary literature to Grass's and Wolf's novels, which forms a part of the novels' story in its interaction with the 'world'.

### 5.2.1 Identity and Subjectivity in the Secondary Literature

A number of analysts of *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* cited in this dissertation work with concepts of personal, cultural, and/or national 'identity' or similar constructs, including those also implied by the German term *Identität*. Ursula Mahlendorf (1981) provides a review of German literature that engages with the fascist era; *Kindheitsmuster* is one of two works where she diagnoses an 'identity' problem. Mahlendorf's use of the term indicates the divorcement of the narrator from her childhood in the Nazi period and links the genesis of this situation to the prohibition of accepting and expressing true emotion in childhood that she posits as typical of an

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid. "Subjectivity, 1.b," 1944-33.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. "Subject, 9. *Modern Philos.*" 1943-28.

<sup>32</sup> *Duden: Deutsches Universalwörterbuch*, Kathrin Kunkel-Razum et al., eds., 6th edition (Mannheim: Dudenverlag, 2007) 866.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. "Subjekt," 1642.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. "Subjektivität."

entire generation. This type of "conditioning" ultimately leads her and her generation to "a denial of herself as a person with an identity and judgment of her own"<sup>35</sup> prone to leave questions of moral import to perceived appropriate authorities. Mahlendorf also obliquely alludes to the narrator's diagnosis of the presence of this condition already at the linguistic level by citing the passage that places responsibility for a "happy"<sup>36</sup> family on the child not making the parents unhappy, the very trope with which the discourse opens at the commencement of *Kindheitmuster's* second chapter.

Glenn A. Guidry (1991) analyzes the figure of Oskar in *Die Blechtrommel* as analogous to a mytho-poetic hero figure, compounded of both positive and negative attributes. Guidry then assesses the function of this character in literature to be congruent with the role of such figures in tribal societies.<sup>37</sup> In this regard Oskar is both the "trickster" and the messianic figure, identification with which, enables members of a society to seek communal solidarity. Guidry diagnoses difficulty among Germans in 'identifying' with their national history, due to its problematic nature. He then views Oskar as that mythic archetype through which the national history becomes a narrative that allows Germans to a lesser or greater extent to achieve a sense of community through identification with commonality of experience.<sup>38</sup> Guidry views *identity* as a need for the individual to find an explicatory narrative of self by positing an entity of sameness at successively higher levels of abstraction, ranging from the hero as ideal 'other' to the nation as ideal community.

Nury Kim (1995) reads *Die Blechtrommel* as allegory. As such, the figures represent

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<sup>35</sup> Ursula Mahlendorf, "Confronting the Fascist Past and Coming to Terms with It," *World Literature Today* 55.4 (Autumn 1981): 553-560; 557.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 558; K 45/PC 25.

<sup>37</sup> Guidry 129ff.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 141ff.



respective societal attitudes whose personal dynamics are negligible.<sup>39</sup> Kim reads *Kindheitsmuster* as culmination of the poesy of subjective authenticity. The work is viewed from this perspective as an engagement with both past and present authoritarian societies, the place of the individual within these, and as counter project to 'socialist realism.'<sup>40</sup> The subjective personal dynamics of an I-narrator as a self, discontinuous with its Nazi period past is taken to also define the authenticity of narration in its generational salience. This split consciousness is analyzed by Kim as a problem of *Identität* in almost every pertinent passage.<sup>41</sup> Michael G. Levine's (1997) analysis of *Kindheitsmuster's* narrative techniques includes also a look at the consequences of these for the concept of identity within the novel. Levine views the fragmentation of narrating voice as not only obscuring the narrator's sense of personal identity but also calls preconceived ideas thereof into question. The shifting pronominal levels serve as indicators of self-difference rather than self-sameness.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, the ability of movements such as National Socialism to instill a sense of collective identity through rituals of group solidarity forms a thematic counterpoint to the narrator's loss of personal continuity from childhood to maturity.

Other analysts, alternatively, privilege the idea of subjectivity/*Subjektivität* -- sometimes in comparison with identity and other constructs (e.g. *Bewusstsein*, etc.). Peter Beicken and Rolf J. Goebel (1982) treat Wolf's works, among them *Kindheitsmuster*, within the familiar trope of *subjektive Authentizität* and generally use the idea of *Subjektivität* within the parameters of the

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<sup>39</sup> Nury Kim 70.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 183-185.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 185ff.

<sup>42</sup> Levine 107-117.

*Duden* definition referenced earlier denoting the perspective of the subject.<sup>43</sup> On this initial basis the authors describe Wolf's literature-theoretical orientation as an attempt to synthesize historical materialist poetics with a fully modern sense of the epistemic subjectivity of writing. They contrast Wolf's valorization of the author's mediation of experience with Robbe-Grillet's separation of narrator and conscious self behind the text.<sup>44</sup> In Kathleen Komar's (1992) analysis, Wolf's subjective emphasis leads to the placement of the self within the community through doubled memory; in this case that of the mature fictive author and her discontinuous former self, Nelly. Komar designates the process as revising "the identity of another female subjectivity by fusing the writer's consciousness with it [. . .]." <sup>45</sup> Ultimately personal identity becomes the hallmark of a selfhood constituted through memory and language inter-subjectively within the community, in relation to the "social responsibility" inherent in this situation.<sup>46</sup>

Sabine Wilke (1993) looks at several works by Christa Wolf, among them, *Kindheitsmuster* and detects within these, parallels between historical consciousness and "Subjektconstitution und Geschlechtbestimmung."<sup>47</sup> Wilke works with both the concept of *Identität*, particularly in relation to issues of gender realization and also *Subjektivität*, especially in regard to Lacanian theories of personality development through which she approaches the problem of the novel's fragmented narrative voice.<sup>48</sup> Wilke situates Wolf's historical constructs into the Benjaminian discourse of dialectical images in counterpoint with language. She then

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<sup>43</sup> Beicken and Goebel 63.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 64-65.

<sup>45</sup> Komar 42.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 57.

<sup>47</sup> Sabine Wilke, *Ausgraben und Erinnern: Zur Funktion von Geschichte, Subjekt und Geschlechtlicher Identität in den Texten Christa Wolfs* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1993) 9.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 100ff.

transposes this approach from the archaeology of historical memory to that of personal memory within the Lacanian discourse of a dialectic of image and *méconnaissance* ["Dialektik von Imago und Verknennung."]<sup>49</sup>

Julia Hell (1997) organizes her analysis of East German literature into categories consonant with psychoanalytical constructs. *Kindheitsmuster* is dealt with in Chapter 5, "The Paternal Family Narrative as Autobiography and as Parable: Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster* and *Kassandra*." For Hell, the themes are "voice and body"<sup>50</sup> as sites of differentiation of self from paternal, and thus male authoritarian, narratives of family, Party, and society.<sup>51</sup> In this schematization the fictive author is the *narrating subject* and Nelly, the child, the *narrated subject*. The non-identification of the two bespeaks an estrangement that may only be overcome through the recalling of the voices from the past, the carrier of remembrance, through which the subject's memory may be rewritten as a unity.

Walter P. Rankin (1999) approaches *Kindheitsmuster* by situating it within the discourse of autobiographical selfhood that arises from consideration of the implications of Barthes' divorcement of "signifying I" from "signified I" and Foucault's "banishment of the writing subject by the written object."<sup>52</sup> Rankin views the gap between author and protagonist or narrator in Wolf's novel as giving rise to even greater "ontological" tension for signification and further complicated by a perspective on temporality that considers the past as coextensive with the present through memory. Ultimately any existential unification of *Kindheitsmuster's*

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 10.

<sup>50</sup> Hell 200.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 199.

<sup>52</sup> Walter P. Rankin, "Autobiographical Fiction vs. Fictional Autobiography: Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster* and J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*," *Comparative Literature Studies* 36.4 (1999): 306-319; 307-312.

narrating voices that overcome the subject's "splintered identity"<sup>53</sup> must occur within the recognition that the voices of memory are also inventions of memory: reflections rather than reality.<sup>54</sup>

Discrepancies between reflection in memory and assessment of historical reality form the basis of Anke Pinkert's (2003) trenchant critique of *Kindheitsmuster*. Pinkert analyzes the novel as an expression of "soft dissidence" in which Wolf, the author, and the East German state exist in a "symbiotic" relationship of mutual need. Pinkert's interest is the constitution of the anti-fascist self as ideological model for the regime and its modifications in Wolf's novel.<sup>55</sup> She believes that while the East German government's commitment to commemorating the Holocaust was based on a self-serving paradigm of the socialist struggle against fascism, *Kindheitsmuster* projects an affective processing of Anti-Semitism based on an empathy born of commonality that "invites the reader's identification with both the perpetrators and the victims."<sup>56</sup> Wolf's writing thus seeks to resolve the problem of self-alienation by the creation of a subject that wishes the preservation of the *Angst* at the root of the narrator's split subjectivity.<sup>57</sup>

In this view, the novel locates the dynamic of estrangement within the self in order to preserve the socialist "revolutionary project" as system, upon which her and its existence depend, as instantiations of ant-fascist subjectivity and power structure, respectively.<sup>58</sup> Pinkert summarizes the problem for *Kindheitsmuster's* sense of self by asking, through quotation of Judith Butler, if "complicity" is the "basis of political agency" how then, one might partake of

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 309.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 314.

<sup>55</sup> Pinkert 25, 34.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 30.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 31.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 34.

that agency without "subordination."<sup>59</sup> Eung-Jun Kim deals with the problem of *Subjektivität* within *Die Blechtrommel* in relation to the historical consciousness of Oskar in which no identifiable relation to "empirical reality" is detectable but only an ironicization of a "modern" perspective that values narrative anachrony.<sup>60</sup> In counterpoint to this parodistic and allegorical relation to history<sup>61</sup> Kim views the objective correlates of the novel as aids in realizing the former of two goals: (1) the author's intention to realistically portray historical events and (2) the portrayal of Oskar's subjective outlook on history.<sup>62</sup>

The writers cited in the foregoing paragraphs situate the problem of self that appears in the two novels into discussions of identity or subjectivity or both. Their terminological choices and associations also discursively position the authors in relation to the technical literature of a number of disciplines. Investigating how Grass's and Wolf's texts deal with these ideas requires looking at some of the specific perspectives that relate terminology and literature-theoretical analysis.

### **5.2.2 Identity and Subjectivity: Disciplinary Specificity**

Theories of personal and collective identity, have found optimum expression in philosophy and the social sciences.<sup>63</sup> Discussions often employ the term *identity* in ways that may not, strictly speaking, be compatible, even less identical, with similar usages across different fields or disciplines. A mathematical definition illustrative of the idea that  $a = a$ , defines identity

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<sup>59</sup> Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) 29 in Pinkert 34.

<sup>60</sup> Eung-Jun Kim 62.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. 65.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. 68.

<sup>63</sup> Karen Cerulo, "Identity Construction: New Issues, New Directions," *Annual Review of Sociology* 23 (1997): 385-409; 385.

as "the fact of being the same individual,"<sup>64</sup> a canonized idea since at least the time of Aristotle.<sup>65</sup> In classical logic the principle also implies that something cannot be simultaneously itself and its negation, and by the principle of the excluded middle, must be either one or the other.<sup>66</sup> However well suited these ideas may be to mathematics and formal logics, they, when applied unreflectively to imputed properties, including and perhaps especially those of persons, may form the justification for rigid and divisive categorizations divorced from experiential validity. A number of philosophers recognize problems with these formulations, including Hegel<sup>67</sup> who posits the measure of identity as difference, situating the concept in relation to discourses of self, skeptical of mere analysis by identification.

The problem of personal identity, as a psychological study, is thematized in both *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* and, as shown earlier, forms the basis of a number of explications. In the first novel, obviously the opening lines and all those that throughout the story associate Oskar with mental imbalance focus attention on psychoanalytical explicative models, as does also the dissociative narrative perspective and the personal stories of figures like Oskar's mother. In the second work, it is not only the mature narrator's loss of identification with her earlier self, including the sense of alterity thus created, that foregrounds the figures' implied psychological constitution. The title of the novel itself, in some usages may simply serve as a term for child development, e.g. a 1975 study includes a discussion of narcissistic disturbances in

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<sup>64</sup> E. J. Borowski and J. M. Borwein, eds., *The Harper Collins Dictionary of Mathematics* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991) 279.

<sup>65</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Hope (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1960) 166.

<sup>66</sup> Richard Purtill, "Principle of excluded middle," *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. Robert Audi, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 738.

<sup>67</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991) 185-186.

relation to "die 'klassischen' psychischen Kindheitsmuster."<sup>68</sup> The psychoanalytical discussion into which Grass's and Wolf's works situate the constitution of the "self" is bounded on the one side by the insights of Freud and on the other those of Lacan.

In Die *Blechtrommel* many of the psychological states and conditions from which Freud drew inspiration for his theories of identity are on display: narcissism, fetishism, Oedipus complex, etc.<sup>69</sup> Of special note are the many objects and figures with which Oskar identifies or fixates upon in his development, e.g. the drum, female genitalia, Jan Bronski, among others. Also in *Kindheitsmuster*, Nelly's maturity is marked by a similar trajectory of adolescent experience, albeit constituted by less extravagance of ego. In this instance the linkages with Freudian theories of identity come from the structure of the family, its reflection in society, the importance of dreams and figures of affection such as Juliane Strauch, as well as the anxiety proceeding from the many conflicts between the interplay of all these psychic factors. The reinterpretation of Freudian constructs by Lacan has been applied to Grass's novel quite aptly in terms of the ambiguity of shifting between the Imaginary and Symbolic orders in the presentation of the work's perspective(s) on the historical material.<sup>70</sup> The Lacan-derived "spekuläre Logik"<sup>71</sup> behind the development of Nelly's sense of self, in Wolf's novel, can then be regarded as an element that re-situates the issue terminologically from a discourse of identity to one of subjectivity.

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<sup>68</sup> Thomas Ziehe, *Pubertät und Narzissismus: Sind Jugendliche entpolitisiert?* (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1975) 107.

<sup>69</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, trans. Joan Riviere (New York, London: W. W. Norton, 1960) 20-24.

<sup>70</sup> Katharina Hall, *Günter Grass's 'Danzig Quintet': Explorations in the Memory and History of the Nazi Era from Die Blechtrommel to Im Krebsgang* (Frankfurt, New York: Peter Lang, 2007) 36ff.

<sup>71</sup> Wilke 100f.

In the field of sociology the concept of identity has been termed a "central" theoretical emphasis.<sup>72</sup> Formulations of selfhood and identity concepts by influential theorists like Mead, Cooley, and Erikson focused attention primarily on the issue of individual sense of self, often in conjunction with childhood and adolescent developmental psychology. The distinctive feature of the resultant sociology is the hypothesis that identity forms in relation to one's perception by society, mediated by language (Mead, Cooley<sup>73</sup>) and in stages of development through which one perceives the continuity of the social system in the self (Erikson<sup>74</sup>). Engagement with these ideas also informed West German intellectual life through the philosophical critiques, privileging the reciprocity of language competencies for personal identity through mutual understanding, of Jürgen Habermas.<sup>75</sup> Contemporary sociological studies have not been oblivious to newer ideas informed by social movements, technology, and 'poststructuralist' sensibilities. Research emphases responding to these concerns have reflected (a) the ability of oppressed peoples to identify themselves apart from standards of their oppressors, (b) the relation of identity to gender, ethnicity, and class, (c) reassessment of processes of identity formation, and (d) interrogation of the significance of virtual or cyberspace identities.<sup>76</sup>

One line of continuity between older and newer ideas in sociology is the situation of identity into a discourse of community. Despite the inversion of emphasis between Mead's

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<sup>72</sup> Cerulo 385.

<sup>73</sup> (a) George Herbert Mead, "A Behavioristic account of the Significant Symbol," *Journal of Philosophy* 19 (1922): 157-163; 160, *The Mead Project*, Brock University, 2007. Web. b) Charles Horton Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922; Schocken, 1964) 184.

<sup>74</sup> Erik H. Erikson, *Identität und Lebenszyklus: Drei Aufsätze* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973) 107.

<sup>75</sup> (a) Jürgen Habermas, "Moralentwicklung und Ich-Identität," *Zur Rekonstruktion des Historischen Materialismus* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1976) 63-88; 67ff. (b) David Ingram, *Habermas: Introduction and Analysis*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2010) 28, 309n3.

<sup>76</sup> Cerulo 386.



construction of the individual through the "generalizing of himself in his attitude of the other"<sup>77</sup> and the twenty-first century in the "conscious sense of group as agent"<sup>78</sup> in identity politics, most sociological theories regard the individual in relation to communities of other such individuals with shared characteristics.<sup>79</sup> The implications of the collectivization of attributes, whether considered essential or constructed, as *identifying* factors of and for individual members, regularly spawn narratives that place the concept of identity into discussions invoking, by some estimation, the incorporation into the individual's identity of "[t]he family, the neighborhood, the peer group, the generation, the nation, the culture."<sup>80</sup> By this schematization the member participates in each community through the internalization in memory of the history of each community with greater or lesser identification.

Regarding the *self*, contemporary literary theory, although sometimes borrowing from sociological constructs of identity, also privileges a line of thought running from Hegel to Derrida: sense of self as subjectivity. As with identity, the concept of the *subject* arises from the philosophical discourse of the dichotomy between subject and object, between thinker and thought. Ultimately, one's view of the subject determines one's perspective on issues such as the relation of mind to body, the existence or not of a reality external to the mind, and the correspondence or non-correspondence of language to such a reality. Kant's response to these Enlightenment problematics was an epistemology in which the mind only apprehends

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<sup>77</sup> Mead 161.

<sup>78</sup> Cerulo 393.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. 387.

<sup>80</sup> Aleida Assmann, "Transformations between History and Memory," *Social Research* 75.1 Collective Memory and Collective Identity (Spring 2008): 49-72; 52.

appearances; the *things-in-themselves* are unknowable directly.<sup>81</sup> Fichte asserts in his *Wissenschaftslehre* that the 'I' posits itself.<sup>82</sup> This positing is even a performative act and one through which the 'I' is the arbiter of identity as such. Hegel's complex and variously interpreted philosophy has been regarded as containing elements that seek to overcome this state of affairs. Certainly this comports with the previously quoted Hegelian idea of identity in diversity. When aligned with the propositions that reason is temporal and history itself rational, one should be able to conjecture with some confidence that, for Hegel, the human subject within this history, the goal of which is freedom, is posited not abstractly but constituted in relation to the temporal and social setting in which she is situated.<sup>83</sup>

In much the same way Marx posits the worker as a subject in relation to labor and in terms of labor's total demands on the worker, a subject that is alienated from products, from nature, and ultimately self.<sup>84</sup> Theoretically, the real condition of the individual embodies the "ideal totality -- the subjective existence of thought and experienced society present for itself."<sup>85</sup> Heidegger, in *Being and Time* appears to dissolve the radical distinction between subject and object into an ontology that defines the relationship of object to subject as two aspects of a condition of usefulness in which both attain existential specificity.<sup>86</sup> Variations on this theme

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<sup>81</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis and London: Hackett, 1987) 176.

<sup>82</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre, Schriften zur Wissenschaftslehre*, ed. Wilhelm G. Jacobs (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2007) 63-97; 69.

<sup>83</sup> Hegel, *Reason in History* 25, 37.

<sup>84</sup> Karl Marx, "Estranged Labor," *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*, trans. Martin Milligan (Amherst NY: Prometheus, 1988) 69-84; 72. ff.

<sup>85</sup> In the work cited, "Private Property and Communism," 99-114; 105.

<sup>86</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962, 2008) 66-69, 85.

could be recovered from later works also such as "The Question Concerning Technology." In the foregoing configurations of the subject, it is viewed as an unstable entity, the effect of a relationship or of a certain discourse. For contemporary literature-theoretical projects the main interest resides in the radicalization of the above explorations. Hegel's 'identity as difference' notwithstanding, the two concepts have traditionally been aligned as oppositions. Horkheimer and Adorno address an aspect of this idea when they decry the distance between subject and object as an abstraction born in domination of the latter by the former.<sup>87</sup> Edward Said addresses another aspect in criticizing the tendency of 'difference' to imply 'opposite' rather than simply 'other' in the comparison of Eastern and Western cultures.<sup>88</sup> In both cases oppositional difference militates against any consideration of shared identities.

In a different tradition Paul Ricoeur hoped to recover the stability of self within the given contingencies of existence in *narrative identity*. For Ricoeur, personal identity derives from a sense of permanence that comes through the integration of all the variables and contingencies of life into an emplotted narrative.<sup>89</sup> Borrowing from Greimas the conception of character, in this case as self, that far from being static is as much an active plot as the actions to which this normally refers,<sup>90</sup> Ricoeur posits personal identity as the unity derivable from the narrative of a life with all its discontinuities. In this sense "chance is transmuted into fate."<sup>91</sup> Of course in fiction all identity is narrative, raising the question of the relation of fiction to reception as paradigm for emplotment of one's life. To assess this question definitively would require a

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<sup>87</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002) 9.

<sup>88</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978) 46.

<sup>89</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 140ff.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* 143.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* 45.

corpus based study of case histories on the relation of reading (and by extension movie viewing and perhaps computer game playing) to how one views oneself and in what temporal units that perspective is maintained. Anecdotally it has been maintained that at least since the Enlightenment the individual experiences herself in the novel.<sup>92</sup> Ricoeur appears to validate the idea that the manner in which fiction handles narrative may be instructive for the subject's identity constructs, on the example of reaction to the *Ichlosigkeit* of Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*.<sup>93</sup> If one reads *Kindheitsmuster's* crisis of stable identity into Ricoeur's paradigm as tantamount to the concept of subjective authenticity, one might read *Die Blechtrommel's* traduction of subjectivity and authenticity as a limit case, similar to Musil, whereby the reading subject experiences the narrative stability of an identity in relation to the instability of the narrative read.<sup>94</sup>

Foucault's genealogical approach attempts to uncover the unequal distribution of power relationships between subject and object in terms of identity and difference. For Foucault, identity is not essential but inheres in discursive situations in which difference marks the level of discrimination between what would otherwise be uniform entities and is therefore decisive in subject formation.<sup>95</sup> But the discourses, be they scientific or literary, in relation to which the subject is formed are themselves the result of power structures within society that have exercised control over the formation of these through formulation of rules, promulgation by institutions, restriction through taboo, and many other procedures.<sup>96</sup> The sovereignty of the subject

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<sup>92</sup> Beutin et al. 172.

<sup>93</sup> Ricoeur 166.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1970) 54-55.

<sup>96</sup> Foucault, "The Discourse on Language" 216-219.

discernible in its identity and discriminated in its difference is therefore shown to be an illusion, a creation of institutionalized discourse within society. Jacques Derrida's signature emphases on the play of signs, *différance*, and the trace likewise deconstruct any Enlightenment model of the sovereign self. The subject as discursive entity becomes dependent on ever shifting significations in the deferral and temporalization of sense. The practical application of this line of thought is displayed in *The Other Heading* where personal and cultural identity paradoxically can only be considered as one "of the difference to oneself."<sup>97</sup>

In the wake of Foucauldian and Derridean emphases, philosophers and theorists of many orientations have defined subjectivity in terms of processes of formation in relation to: social, pragmatic, or performative discourse. One sideline to the consideration of subjectivity in these terms is the question of the persistence of agency as an aspect of the postmodern decentered subject or as satirically put, after the "death of the subject."<sup>98</sup> The question of agency brings into focus a number of underlying issues for literary analysis. This concept would seem to be one of those factors that take a text's dissolution into abstractions of function such as narrator, focalizer, and actant or those of relationship such as intertext, sign, and subject and resolves it symbolically as a discussion of the nature of causation within a given text. This is essentially a discourse about discursive constitution itself, composed of complexes of narratives (as ways of relating ideas) that span the field from: (1) subjectivity as a "function of systems of differential relationships"<sup>99</sup> to (2) the necessity of the subject for agency and responsibility.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Jacques Derrida, (a) *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. D. B. Allison (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973) 85-86; (b) "Signature Event Context" 6-7; (c) *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today's Europe*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael B. Naas (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1992) 10.

<sup>98</sup> Palti 57-59.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. 58.

The implications for 'real world' assessments of historical and political responsibility raised by perspectives on subject and agency are readily apparent in questions concerning the entanglement of event in the language of its description and the determination of political repression and liberation in a discursively constituted world.<sup>101</sup> Implications also exist for perspectives on *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*. If a symbolical correspondence between the former novel's figures and objects of narration *and* the citizenry that embraced Hitler as well as the West German economic miracle is postulated, under what constellation of subject and agency does the symbolism collapse? In Wolf's novel, at what point does subjectivity disappear into a linguistic code or become 'inauthentic' (by some definition) as a play of signs? For *Die Blechtrommel* the question of agency is paramount precisely because a realist reading of the novel denies its efficacy. Oskar's implicit unreliability, the shifting of narrative voice, the unreflective manner in which figures negotiate their lives, the *Schwarze Köchin*, all ironically signify, through the imputation of absence, the actual presence, whether acknowledged or not, of a causality and a responsibility for historical events which could more complacently be written off as merely contingent. For *Kindheitsmuster* the matter becomes urgent for the fictive author, as for a reader who might see herself in the same position, as an attempt to grapple at a personal level with the question of how 'I', and 'we', became as we are and if continuities with former selves from the fascist past play a role yet in our lives.

The relationships of the concepts of identity and subjectivity can be seen as the contextual products of discourses, often discipline specific, that arise from the expression of data analysis (and creation) across many fields of inquiry and linguistic usages. Present concern is with their contribution to an allocation of sense in the works by Grass and Wolf and what they

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid. 60.

<sup>101</sup> (a) Koselleck 29, (b) Palti 58.

disclose, in narrative, concerning the sense of self and its relation to the wider community.

### 5.3 The Self in the Novels

In the opening passages of *Die Blechtrommel* a first person narrator confronts the reader from the first word with an unexpected concession of existential liminality: confinement in a mental institution and constant observation by an attendant.<sup>102</sup> It becomes apparent that the text is generating a character effect from a figure that projects its position as a subject on the basis of that liminal condition. The narrator elaborates with the self-identificatory specification that he is *blauäugig* and therefore innocent and believable in relation to his brown-eyed attendant (in a play on the German idiom of eye color usage for personal characteristics). But the expected idiomatic correspondence is turned around and subtly perverted through the irony that it is the blue-eyed subject who is inscrutable. Both the reliability of the narrator and the grounding of *Die Blechtrommel's* protagonist, Oskar Matzerath, as narrative subject, are undercut from the beginning of the novel as functions of self-referential paradox.

Yet the paradox upon which Oskar's subjectivity is founded actually plays a superordinating role in the novel. For it places the various problematical objects of discussion, e.g. modes of narration and communication, the rise of Nazism, hypocrisies within post-war German society, the nature of ethical reflection, etc. into a discourse on veracity, which, based on narrative components compounded of liminal human experience must provoke from the reader a process of questioning to fill the voids left by the absence of verifiable epistemic coordinates. When Oskar identifies his bed in the institution as his achieved goal that also could become his faith if only the railings would extend higher to keep others out,<sup>103</sup> the text transparently and simplistically satirizes the propensity of Germans to seek comfort in materiality and to isolate

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<sup>102</sup> B 9/TD 3.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. 9-10/3-4.

themselves behind religious and ideological barriers from the disturbances of any real world outside these parameters. When conjoined with the description of the attendant Bruno Münsterberg as silent frustrated artist<sup>104</sup> a symbolic portrait emerges of West German society as complacently materialistic, culturally insular, ethically obtuse, and intellectually shallow. What is interesting as a mode of narration is that the symbolism for the novel's characters and states of affairs proceed from the semantic import of the first sentence, which is not only continuously implied but enacted throughout the text: *this sentence is not true*.

In effect the narrator says that the narrator is not reliable. In this way the text situates the problem of the self into a number of different but related discourses. In one of these the factor of unreliability may be assessed only as complex irony rather than outright traducing of narrative cohesion, judged on the basis of an applicable standard, e.g. the apparent thwarting of authorial intention by the narrator,<sup>105</sup> or perhaps a conceptual metaphor for a post-war Germany that rhetorically thwarts attempts at veracity concerning its immediate past. In another discourse the narrator's inconstancy may be regarded as that constancy which defines an identity. In this model Oskar, even as narrator, derives an identity from the story -- be it one of reliability or otherwise;<sup>106</sup> in this case perhaps that of the reliably devious or consistently naive, as *picaro*,<sup>107</sup> inviting intertextual comparison with other such figures. In yet another placement, the deficits of Oskar's projected personality actually invite questions of what a trustworthy, psychologically

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd. ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) 159.

<sup>106</sup> Ricoeur 147-148.

<sup>107</sup> Hans Wagener, "Simplex, Felix, Oskar und andere -- Zur barocken Tradition im zeitgenössischen Schelmenroman," *Literarische Tradition heute: Deutschsprachige Gegenwartsliteratur in ihrem Verhältnis zur Tradition*, eds. Gerd Labrousse and Gerhard P. Knapp, *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik* 20 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988) 117-158.



intact narrator would bring to the tale. How would the story be told if by a unified voice? Decisions concerning the relative defensibility of the various interpretive choices derive from the reader's ability, based on her experience of the interplay of texts and world, to attribute overall coherence.

If the imputed selfhood of *Die Blechtrommel's* narrator appears caught up in self-referential paradox, what does this say about, or where does this discursively emplace issues of history and memory? Viewing the unreliability of Oskar's narration as a structuring device invites one to read the textual level at which this occurs against that level incorporating commonly accepted accounts of history, philosophy, or sociology. When Oskar and other figures in the novel are either referenced in relation to, or as is the case with the scenes from the representation of *Kristallnacht*<sup>108</sup> and the siege of the Polish Post Office<sup>109</sup> inserted into, historical events, these are destabilized through conversion from the objects of historical discourse in the classic sense into objects of narrative.<sup>110</sup> As such, they reflect the imputed cognition of the narrator as paradox, transposing the events from the world's mythic "cultural memory" onto the personal but social "collective memory" (to use Müller-Funk's terminology, citing Halbwachs<sup>111</sup>) of a fictive outsider witness whose testimony impeaches its truth value. Oskar commences his tale as an "I" that posits itself yet functions symbolically as a creation of socially embedded values that play out in the reader's recognizable real world.

The figure Oskar Matzerath thus occupies a conceptual space between subjectivity and identity that basically inverts some sociological models. In contrast to Mead's discovery of self

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<sup>108</sup> B 260/TD 186

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. 285ff./205ff.

<sup>110</sup> Compare Hayden White, *The Content of the Form* 2-4.

<sup>111</sup> Müller-Funk 216.

through others, Oskar discovers others through self. Perceived, for instance by Uytterschout, as genuine subjectivity, his "underdevelopment" grants him "uncommon insight into life behind the scenes."<sup>112</sup> As a symbol however, he and other characters do not derive their identity from communal agency but the identity of the community is reflected back from the positions occupied as critique and satire. The critical assessments referenced earlier by both Guidry and Nury Kim are constructed in differing ways around this idea. In the former, society derives its identity from the mytho-poetic narrator conceived at ever higher levels of abstraction.<sup>113</sup> In the latter, specific identifying societal attitudes define the characters.<sup>114</sup> Whether one credits any of the above critical viewpoints with greater or lesser degrees of legitimacy will be a matter of interpretation. Underlying all, however, is the recognition that Oskar's myriad narrative destabilizations of conventional outlook discursively bracket the relationships between self and society, as different modes of memory, and the perception by society of itself, in terms of exactly what experience defines a society and what agency, if any, determines these and the narratives thereof.

One group of personal remembrances that define Oskar's subjectivity, forming a thematic thread with implications also for collective memory consists of the protagonist's sexual proclivities and observations. The novel presents women in stereotypical gender roles and most often as objects for satisfaction of the male gaze and libidinal appetite. Arguably this may represent behavioral standards at the time *Die Blechtrommel* was written but given the destabilizing principle of negative implicature throughout the work, on the basis of the paradoxical narrator, it would not be rash to suppose that here also the apparent crassness

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<sup>112</sup> Uytterschout 189.

<sup>113</sup> Guidry 141.

<sup>114</sup> Nury Kim 71.

diagnoses and exposes. The diagnosis becomes another example of the roots of fascism in the attitudes of the *Kleinbürgertum* through the sexual reification of Oskar's mother, Agnes, and its role in her demise.<sup>115</sup> In another instance the greengrocer Greff becomes a symbol of acquiescence to Nazism through the necessity of hiding his homosexuality.<sup>116</sup> The paradigm of sexual objectification continues with Maria during the war and is projected again onto Sister Dorothea in post-war society; the latter instance read as the exposure of pre-war attitudes continuing in West German society under the guise of voyeuristic refinements.

Oskar's sexual development initiates a discussion of what a society expects from this human function. The encounter with Maria's nudity connects the text dialogically with other depictions and experiences of youth's experimentations in the guise of low comedy.<sup>117</sup> Yet the instinctual aggressivity of Oskar's reactions implies also society's sanction for sexual violence as normative. The larger implications of the novel's depiction of sexual experience thus interrogate its significance as historical construct. Depictions of Anna Bronski, Agnes, Maria, and Sister Dorothea delineate a historico-cultural trajectory of stereotypical sexual functions: fertility goddess, mistress, submissive, and murder victim. In this way the text situates the typical facets of male dominated sexual fantasy into a discourse on the role of gender in European society. The question for the critical reader is: to what end? If the personal memory of Oskar reflects a Halbwachsian collective memory of lived experience, in what way would and should this experience be processed as cultural memory for the reflection of later generations for whom the eventual material will be perceived as history?

The sexual basis of Oskar's subjectivity and identity might be analyzed in fairly

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<sup>115</sup> B 206/TD 147.

<sup>116</sup> Nury Kim 74-75.

<sup>117</sup> B 348/TD 251.

straightforward Freudian terms. It would be easy to say that Oskar is one for whom the normative sexual development has failed. He appears to have an Oedipal complex and sees in all women the renewing of the love bond with the mother. His fantasizing and behavior with Sister Dorothea indicates possibly the presence of paraphilia,<sup>118</sup> or as Freud quaintly put it, "perverted" object choice.<sup>119</sup> In this connection, the objective correlates, particularly the tin drum, form material extensions of Oskar's consciousness and body. In their communicative functions and as sensory objects they too serve as allusions to the psychosexual dimension of life. Yet even by Freudian standards Oskar's aberration from normative development is simply that which defines Oskar as a character: a failure of maturation.<sup>120</sup>

When one adds identification with Jesus Christ<sup>121</sup> to Oskar's sense of self, a subjectivity emerges with deeper implications for the processing of German history. On one level rests the body, its personal experience and social connections. On another level stands an abstraction, the person as messiah figure. Müller-Funk suggests that a similar abstraction of the personal body to the "virtual body of the nation" is a possible outcome of the transference of personal/collective memory to long-term cultural memory,<sup>122</sup> the abuse of which has been made evident in totalitarian governments.<sup>123</sup> *Die Blechtrommel* suggests something very similar. Viewing Oskar throughout the novel as a symbolic figure,<sup>124</sup> imputes to the subjectivity of those individuals for

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<sup>118</sup> (a) Sigmund Freud, "Lecture XXI: The Development of the Libido and the Sexual Organizations," *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966) 397-420; 409ff; (b) B 646-647/TD 470-471.

<sup>119</sup> Freud, "Lecture XX: The Sexual Life of Human Beings," 375-396; 378.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.* 385.

<sup>121</sup> B 778/TD 562.

<sup>122</sup> Müller-Funk 218.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Nury Kim 70.

whom Oskar is considered representative, this projection of the personal body to the collective body then to the messianic body, or *Führer* for that collective entity. Interestingly, these elements are combined in almost precisely this form, as a failure of maturation of a nation, in the artifices of the chapter "Glaube, Hoffnung, Liebe."<sup>125</sup>

The governing dynamic of Christa Wolf's *Kindheitsmuster* is not the reliability of the narrator but the existential constitution of that voice altogether. Already near the beginning of the text, beneath the problem of the difficulty of commencing a memoir, appears the relation of language to self and by implication also to memory and its recollection of the self in the world. Specifically, the personal pronouns I, you, and she are conceived as expressions of mutual alienation,<sup>126</sup> theoretically unified only by memory, "[u]nd die Stimme, die es unternimmt, davon zu sprechen."<sup>127</sup> But if memory is constructed in the present<sup>128</sup> from a past that is *presently* painful to remember, what voice suffices to unify the two, to proffer an identity that covers different life stages of a human being, particularly when at a succeeding stage, one ethically rejects the self of a preceding? The ontological question is whether there is continuity between past and present and if so, how does one become an entity of that present in differentiation from an entity that situates itself to the present consciousness only as memory and as language. The provisional solution of *Kindheitsmuster's* principal narrative voice, the adult fictive author, is to forego the device of a unified narrator and by implication, through avoidance of the first personal pronoun, the identity of voices within a unified subjectivity.<sup>129</sup> The novel thus explicitly provokes a discourse of the proper relationship between world, its history and governance; text,

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<sup>125</sup> B 253-264/TD 181-189.

<sup>126</sup> K 11/PC missing.

<sup>127</sup> K 12/PC 4.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Compare Levine 109 for an elaboration of this idea.

its constitution in language; and reader as repository of experience accessible only in memory.

In *Kindheitsmuster*, the technical means for coping with the conflict surrounding narrative voice is the form of expression that, as Nury Kim states "eine authentische Gestaltung des gespaltenen Ich ermöglicht."<sup>130</sup> In this respect it is authentic to the author both fictive and real but also to the society of the German Democratic Republic as an artifact of that history underlying both personal alienation and political separation of a people that had once been a unified nation. It could at least be supposed that the narrator's subjectivity might correspond with those of many readers to the extent that some would feel alienated from former lives under National Socialism either by a sense of guilt or just embarrassment. In the GDR the disposition of one's life could depend on one's past and present attitude to these matters in terms of reward and punishment.<sup>131</sup> In a society that regarded itself as constitutively legitimated through its 'anti-fascist' ideology<sup>132</sup> the differentiation between the subject under National Socialism and the new subject of Marxist-Leninist socialism would be also pragmatically important. Literature that signaled a profitable engagement with that dynamic would therefore engage an authentic situation in relation to the possible concerns of prospective readers.<sup>133</sup> In this manner the novel situates itself into the discourse of cultural and national (for the GDR strongly emphasized nationalism) identity as that for which the reader could find a degree of sameness with the characters in the novel and the author herself, especially with the beguiling use of the pronoun "du" as the narrator's preferred form of self-address.

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<sup>130</sup> Nury Kim 186.

<sup>131</sup> Emmerich 36.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. 38.

<sup>133</sup> Heulenkamp 50.

When Nelly is described as split into two persons in relation to anti-Semitic doggerel<sup>134</sup> as well as her adolescent confusion at the application of the term 'Nazi' to an instructor, the *deformation* of subjectivity in relation to matters that normally would reflect a *formation* of subjectivity as exploration of normal relationships (a small child to nursery rhyme, an adolescent to teacher) is implied.<sup>135</sup> Wolf has averred that this situation was the common experience of her generation of Germans.<sup>136</sup> The role of history as formative agent for the sense of self is omnipresent in the novel. The question of how we became what we are presently<sup>137</sup> is implicit throughout in the wealth of historiographical allusion (as detailed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation) and direct engagement with the encoding of experience as history within memory. An important factor for the formation of the fictive author's sense of self is revealed in the fabula of the absence of reflection and unconcern at the plight of Ukrainian forced laborers by Nelly.<sup>138</sup> A noteworthy point is that Nelly's fascist subjectivity is not demonized as cruelty. It becomes merely the logical consequence of her difference and greater value according to Nazi racial ideology. Situated in a chapter that begins with the recognition of Nazi genocide of Europe's Jewish population much of the root of the fictive author's alienation from her girlhood self is here exposed. Yet history operates also contemporaneously and like Grass in *Die Blechtrommel* in relation to the FRG, the failures of the socialist outlook in the GDR and their implications for subjective honesty are also explored.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> K 209/PC 131.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. 537/345.

<sup>136</sup> Wolf 90.

<sup>137</sup> K 328/PC 209.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. 389/249.

<sup>139</sup> Nury Kim 158.

With the image of the child Nelly sitting and probing the uses of the pronoun "I"<sup>140</sup> the philosophical implications of *Kindheitsmuster's* problematizations become more apparent. For Nelly the first personal pronoun seems to posit itself. At least, Nelly, as an "I," posits herself as subjectively identical with the pronoun. In Mead's sociological account of personality development the important pronoun becomes the "me" as object of one's own discourse extending to oneself the conceptual space with which earlier only the 'other' had been addressed.<sup>141</sup> Similarly, the supposition that the Marxist narrativization of history proceeds initially from the perspective of the third person (Jameson in application of Benveniste on literary style) provides an insight into *Kindheitsmuster's* dichotomy of self between fascist and ideal socialist, even if the latter is critiqued in practice.<sup>142</sup> In this sense, Nelly is actually not that distant from Oskar in *Die Blechtrommel*. *Kindheitsmuster's* etymological investigations connecting *Muster* with Latin *monstrum*<sup>143</sup> inevitably signifies the state that one who followed such a fascist model would become, a noun also applied to Oskar Matzerath. The mature narrator of *Kindheitsmuster* is socially engaged even to the point of implicitly criticizing the failure of socialist nations to meaningfully aid kindred movements in Latin America.<sup>144</sup> The distinctions drawn between the historical discontinuity of a sense of self, imply in *Kindheitsmuster*, the existence of the subject to a position against *Die Blechtrommel's* more pronounced *Theoriefeindlichkeit*, as Eung-Jun Kim puts it.<sup>145</sup> Yet this dichotomy should not be too sharply enforced considering that the relevant material in Wolf's work would appear to

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<sup>140</sup> K 14/PC 9.

<sup>141</sup> Mead 162.

<sup>142</sup> Jameson 550f.

<sup>143</sup> K 62-63/PC 36.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. 283/180.

<sup>145</sup> Eung-Jun Kim 184.



question the meaning of the concept of 'authenticity'.<sup>146</sup>

In *Kindheitsmuster* the personality forming aspects of Nelly's sexual development are chronicled as psychologically normative experiences such as the youthful attachment to her teacher, Julianne Strauch.<sup>147</sup> The social implications, however, are purely those of National Socialist provenance. The teacher, despite her decidedly 'non-Aryan' appearance functions within the parameters of the system. The attitude of pupil to teacher is strongly aesthetized; poetry epitomizes the relationship. Nelly also considers herself from the perspective of an SS publication's call for "unconditional submission."<sup>148</sup> In the secondary literature, as noted, Hell undertakes a psychoanalytic reading in which "the sexual body functions both as a part of her [Nelly] which is drawn to this male universe and as the site of its spontaneous refusal."<sup>149</sup> Physical symptoms result from 'impermissible' feelings, the body becomes the "*locus* of memory,"<sup>150</sup> which functions through the evocation of voices more than images.<sup>151</sup> Within this dispensation, Hell detects the privileging of the mother's voice as least complicit in National Socialist crimes in a culture of paternalism in which

[. . .] the novel's most fundamental fantasy about the sexual body, the opposition between a *complicit, fascist male sexuality* and a *female sexuality linked to fascism through the utopia of chastity* [italics in original]<sup>152</sup>

is subverted by Nelly's realization that the object of her infatuation, Julianne Strauch, despises

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<sup>146</sup> K 256ff./PC 163ff.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. 345/220.

<sup>148</sup> PC 223/K 349.

<sup>149</sup> Hell 212.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. 213.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. 202.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid. 212.

being a woman and thus a part of the official paradigm.<sup>153</sup> This line of thinking testifies once again to the ability of totalitarian thinking to project a corporate identity, literally and by definition, on the metaphor of the individual body.<sup>154</sup>

The path to a nominal, in this case also pronominal, reconciliation of self-alienation is thus long and difficult. If language divides might it not also unite? After all, it was the adult who abandoned the child,<sup>155</sup> how hard should it be to become re-acquainted? Yet the difference appears too great,<sup>156</sup> a narrative of reconciliation should be possible but narrative levels, structures, do not correspond with life.<sup>157</sup> The real world in the guise of death actually structures the narrative. As if in a long Freudian 'talking cure' the fictive author asks if memory has been effective or merely misleading, confirming the desire not really to interrogate one's past and existence? At the end of the novel the fictive author regains the use of 'I' but as indicated by the "[i]ch weiß es nicht,"<sup>158</sup> a sense of closure is elusive.

#### **5.4 German National Identity**

The phrase *national identity* would seem to validate one of the central tenets of this dissertation: perceived realities are not necessarily based on material facts but arise as discourses, analyzable into narratives of relationships between 'facts' and events. Reinhart Koselleck illustrates the discursive placement of identity into the realm of historiography through the objectification of identity in material artifacts, such as war memorials, supposedly showing

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Müller-Funk 218.

<sup>155</sup> K 17/PC 7.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid. 190/119.

<sup>157</sup> (a) Ibid. 424/272; (b) 601/385.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid. 638 /406.

solidarity by survivors with the causes for which the dead paid with their lives.<sup>159</sup> Such solidarity with causes and their dead (or conversely through the lack of or pejorativization of such), as past events, are only present in memory and remembrance as narratives. Does this type of solidarity ultimately become a discourse of collective identity, or in the case of a nation state, that of national identity, with supposed defining characteristics that may be imputed externally and/or internally?<sup>160</sup> Mary Fulbrook points out that "[n]ational identity does not exist,"<sup>161</sup> certainly in no essential or quantifiable way, but if there is one, it results only from the desire to believe in a collective identification with shared institutions of culture.

Are there reasons to believe that individuals living within the nation state Germany actually identify themselves as part of a society with identifiable common affinities? What are the definitions involved, what constitutes a *national* or a *cultural* identity and how may this be quantified? Exactly what demographics form the research group for these questions and what methodologies are employed in analysis? A number of studies have been performed seeking to elucidate exactly these questions, among others, that can be regarded, at least, as narrative attempts by the involved researchers at correlating the data that each consider relevant. The sociologist Michael Klein approaches the topic of German national identity in terms of one's "commitment" to a specifically German identity.<sup>162</sup> Areas of research include topics like social identity, collective identity, feelings of pride/shame over being German, perceptions of German history, the concept of patriotism, and perceptions of and by the immigrant community and ethnic minorities within Germany. The study, based on statistical data, found that 82 percent of

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<sup>159</sup> Koselleck 288.

<sup>160</sup> Müller-Funk 221.

<sup>161</sup> Fulbrook, *German National Identity* 1.

<sup>162</sup> Michael Klein, *Die nationale Identität der Deutschen: Commitment, Grenzkonstruktionen und Werte zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2014).

the research population felt themselves either strongly or very strongly to be German. The study also found that many agreed that a 'typical' German conforms to various stereotypes to a greater or lesser degree, e.g. prefers rules and order: 90 percent; prefers one's *Heimat* region and observes traditional customs: 82 percent; is a democrat: 79 percent; is no longer just national in outlook but open to the world: 58 percent; among many other characteristics.<sup>163</sup> A large number of such studies indicate that the concept of German 'national identity' presently subsists within the current intellectual milieu outside of philosophical debate concerning wherein exactly the term may consist and its proper range of reference.

Mary Fulbrook surveys the topic of German national identity "after the Holocaust" and thus in relation to that event, within a framework focusing on the role of memory, "historical consciousness," and differences in outlook between citizens of the FRG and GDR, based on documentary sources and standard empirical evaluative methodologies. Fulbrook outlines her programmatic approach as developing

[. . .] a non-essentialist definition of 'nation' as a self-identifying community of common memory and common destiny, which under certain conditions -- such as warfare and external threats -- can command a remarkable emotional power, political shape, and mass following.<sup>164</sup>

Fulbrook believes that any sense of national identity for post-war Germany was "uniquely problematic" based on the fact that after the Nazi era any consideration of German nationalism was not acceptable to the world at large.<sup>165</sup> This stipulation therefore specified how Germans were supposed to regard themselves and led to official discourses of identity in both Germanys

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid. 103.

<sup>164</sup> Fulbrook, *German National Identity* 21.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid 19.

and fractious debate between representatives of disparate cultural and political backgrounds. West Germans could claim solidarity in achieving economic prosperity, evincing some feeling of shame for Nazism, and as heirs to positive aspects of German history (variously defined) within an essentially ethnic definition of citizenship. East Germans should feel unity in a peasant and workers society, as victors over fascism (viewed as capitalist in origin), and ultimately as heirs to a German history of progress towards socialism as the touchstone of citizenship.<sup>166</sup>

The idea of German national identity being both unique and problematic is of course not new. The historical background of any subjective feeling of solidarity among people defining themselves as German consists of the fragmentation of political entities within this cultural/linguistic area well into the nineteenth century, in contrast to countries like England or France, a relatively large number of invasions from outside forces, redistributing cultural and political power centers (Thirty Years War, Napoleonic Wars), the failure of the nineteenth century German bourgeoisie to establish effective and cohesive 'national' unity in 1848, and the uniting of the disparate political entities under a more authoritarian and militarist regime in the form of Prussia in 1871. Add to this the loss of two world wars and it becomes not surprising that *Kindheitsmuster* will include the passage about a certain "Herr X" who cannot accept German war atrocities because "[d]azu hatten wir ja auch gar nicht die Zeit."<sup>167</sup> The absence of apparent empathy and denial of agency would seem to reflect the mentality of one who continuously loses the more desperately one tries to succeed, signified by Herr X's earlier observation that 'we' even failed to produce an atomic bomb.<sup>168</sup> Quite aside from the unwillingness to accept responsibility there lurks under the surface of the text a hint also of the effect of that which is undecidable: the

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid. 20.

<sup>167</sup> K 559/PC 360.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

constitution of truth. The manner in which the novel in the following passages links this episode with the ideological falsification of history yields perhaps a portrait in Herr X of that German whose national identity equals solidarity with a people who, under continuous reversals of perceived verities, have lost the ability to deal with their actions except through their own optimal narrative constructions.

Critical emphases have also posited the uniqueness of the German situation in European history in variations on the *Sonderweg* thesis. Kocka points to pre-cursors of the idea among nineteenth and early twentieth century nationalists who attributed a positive advantage to the vagaries of German history, favorably opposing German "Kultur" to Western "Zivilisation" among other observations.<sup>169</sup> The more usual version of the 'special path' of Germany among nations is however, the post-World War Two question of why Germany submitted to totalitarian rule as opposed to countries that did not. Most proponents of the idea point to the historical factors mentioned earlier in combination with

[. . .] the short-term factors of the 1920s and 1930s [which] helped explain the early collapse of the Weimar Republic and analytically separable the rise and triumph of National Socialism. The Nazi dictatorship with its catastrophic consequences brought the German *Sonderweg* to its nadir, but also contributed to creating the preconditions for ending it . . . after World War II in the Federal Republic of Germany. [. . .] whose self-image no longer fed on a "contrast to the West."<sup>170</sup>

Kocka critiques the thesis of the German *Sonderweg* both positively and negatively but it is this concept of self-image that is of interest here, since therein resides the projection of individual

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<sup>169</sup> Jürgen Kocka, "Asymmetrical Historical Comparison: The Case of the German *Sonderweg*," *History and Theory* 38.1 (February 1999): 40-50; 41.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.* 42-43.

subjectivity onto the corporate entity of the state for purposes of identification.

It is also the projection of Oskar and Nelly, along with other characters, mere textual effects with imputed subjectivities, as surrogates for real-world Germans, onto the national socialist and post-war German societies and states that problematizes the relationship between individual self-image and individual agency in society. In this regard it is very much the relative allocation of the 'I' and other pronouns that specifies the overall dynamics. When Oskar shifts between narrating subject and narrated subject the contrast implicates alienation. Likewise, the estrangement of Nelly from the mature fictive author follows from that allocation of the first person to the former and the second person to the latter, as discussed. Dialogically, however, the pertinent texts of both novels include other voices that inform the implied discussion. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy credit the German Romantic movement in literature with, after Fichte, affirming "the absolute Self as *Selbstbewusstsein*."<sup>171</sup> The Romantics, within a "speculative idealism" convert "the Kantian subject (i.e. the moral subject) into the ideal of a subject absolutely free and thus conscious of itself."<sup>172</sup> The "systematic programming" therefore "makes the world itself into a corollary of the subject,"<sup>173</sup> giving rise to a "social ontology grounded in the subject . . . insofar as it possess all truth . . . and all authority."<sup>174</sup> Oskar asks the reader not to worry about his compromised position, he is always in charge, even comparing himself to divinity. The mature fictive author notes that the child that has felt the thrill of pronouncing the first personal pronoun will not be called back by the mother.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988) 33.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.* 34.

<sup>175</sup> K 16/PC 6.

Thus behind Oskar's incessant first person claim of authority and perhaps to a lesser extent Nelly's first person experimentation lies also the voice of *sovereignty*. Giorgio Agamben, from a different perspective, interrogates the concept of sovereignty as it relates to Carl Schmitt's theorization of the 'state of exception.' Agamben begins, "[t]he paradox of sovereignty consists in the fact the sovereign is, at the same time, outside and inside the juridical order."<sup>176</sup> Schmitt delivers pronouncement on the law and conditions under which it may be suspended. Yet the logic also works for the individual. In this case the dynamics of subjectivity resides in the "situation"<sup>177</sup> created by the sovereign self. Oskar and Nelly order the space around them, they create an exception to societal, and in the case of Oskar, existential rules. Nelly, of course submits to socialization within the family and society; Oskar, to a very great extent lives in a permanent 'state of exception.' Agamben references Hegel for the insight that

[l]anguage is the sovereign who, in a permanent state of exception, declares that there is nothing outside language and that language is always beyond itself.<sup>178</sup>

Oskar would seem to embody this thought in regards to his self-expression through drumming as an analog to language. These additional voices are incorporated into the discussion for the purpose of asking: is it not the projection of the absolute sovereign self into the constitution of the state that defines totalitarian government? Certainly the permanent state of exception defines the legal order of such regimes. But the power of this arrangement comes from an inversion of the sovereignty of self into an absolute subjection of self, in acceptance or promulgation of such totalitarian government as an object of identity.

Fulbrook looks at the development over time of a sense of common identity in the two

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<sup>176</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) 1.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. 16.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid. 21.



Germany's after the war. She quotes opinion sampling by the Allensbach Institute for Demoscopy that found in 1955 that 48 percent of West Germans believed Hitler to be "one of the greatest statesmen ever" if he had not initiated and lost World War Two.<sup>179</sup> On another topic, the Allensbach Institute found that the younger generation of West Germans in 1976 did not especially desire the re-unification of Germany, as opposed to support ranging from moderate to overwhelming among those between thirty and sixty-plus years of age. The younger demographic also found less attraction to concepts like 'fatherland' and gave more importance to the idea of being a European.<sup>180</sup> Regional identification has also always been strong in the German language area, often more so than feelings of national solidarity. The majority of the inhabitants of East Germany in the 1950s, despite the country's economic orientation in opposition to Western capitalism, paradoxically seemed to believe that the division of Germany would be short-lived.<sup>181</sup> By 1968 and continuing into the 1990s it is believed that the majority of East Germans who were born after the war considered themselves as GDR citizens primarily and members of a larger cultural imaginary, Germany, only secondarily.<sup>182</sup> Yet by 1990 the majority of Germans in both East and West appeared to favor unification, including Jürgen Kocka for whom this event becomes a "vindication" of democratic values.<sup>183</sup> Günter Grass and Christa Wolf were among those who opposed unification, the former from the conviction of the perpetual immaturity of the German political psyche, the latter from a desire to pursue a genuine non-totalitarian socialist society in a 'reformed' German Democratic Republic.

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<sup>179</sup> Fulbrook *German National Identity* 169.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.* 199.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.* 193.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.* 195-197.

<sup>183</sup> Jürgen Kocka, *Vereinigungskrise. Zur Geschichte der Gegenwart* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1995), cited in Fulbrook 186.

The interaction of figural subjectivity and historiographic reflection in *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* occur on differing conceptual levels. The selves appearing from the consideration of the narrator and figures as characters might be viewed as operating within the realm of Müller-Funk's concept of *Erinnerung* (after Halbwachs), the situation of the personal within the "remembering community."<sup>184</sup> *Kindheitsmuster's* 'subjective authenticity' would appear to function most tellingly at this cognitive level, essentially the story of Nelly and her family under National Socialism that much of the novel's readership might recognize as personal experience also. The referenced traces of historical occurrences in both *Kindheitsmuster* and *Die Blechtrommel* could be related to Müller-Funk's parallel concept of *Gedächtnis* (after Assmann), the situation of those occurrences within the community of "remembrance."<sup>185</sup> To the former concept adheres the spirit of irony and skepticism distilled from the existential uncertainties of the narrator's position. Inherent within the latter concept is the tacit assumption of the possibility of consensus on the existence of its referenced historical constituents. Indeed this aspect of communal memory constitutes the factor that compiles the constellation of personal experiences into a more abstract "cultural memory," which in Müller-Funk's view relates "to human beings' capacity to construct [cultural and national] identity in narrative structures."<sup>186</sup>

In Wolf's novel, communal memory is also partially specified by socialist concerns such as the failure to support the revolution in Chile. More official, 'party-line' narratives of *Gedächtnis* are sometimes subverted, however, as evidenced by the conversation about the falsification of history.<sup>187</sup> In *Die Blechtrommel* the paradox of Oskar's subjectivity presents the

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<sup>184</sup> Müller-Funk 216.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid. 218.

<sup>187</sup> K 561/PC 361

narrator as simultaneously a member of a culture and nation by definition but by virtue both of this subject's opacity of self-disclosure and the liminality of its personal experience, places Oskar also into the position of an outsider. From this doubled position the narrator's idiosyncratic *Erinnerungen* do not compile themselves into a cultural *Gedächtnis* immediately compatible with the narratives adopted by German society at large. Rather, they function as meta-commentary on the bases of that cultural memory by provoking, through their evident incongruity, interrogation of the proffered connections between the two types of memory and associated historiographic constructs. Thus *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*, each in a different manner, situate the problematic of selfhood within historical (*wordly*, to use Said's term) contexts in relation to the experiences of the reader that through relative weighting and demarcation of narratives to specific constitutive elements, allows the novels to speak to the idea that individual *subjectivity* may become an *identity* that influences the cultural and political choices made by a community organized into a nation state.

## 5.5 Conclusions

Both *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* narrativize life in National Socialist Germany from the perspective of individual experience encoded in memory. Consequently, they situate themselves into discussions of the relation of fictive to non-fictive techniques of historical description. The presumption has been that "real events do not offer themselves as stories"<sup>188</sup> and as such properly lack reference to narrators. Fictional works whose *raison d'être* is commentary on history through the relating of its elements as stories commonly employ narrative voices, which when localized also as figures in the narrative may be interrogated as subjectivities in terms of their psychology and sociological import. To the extent that these

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<sup>188</sup> Hayden White, *Content* 4.

comport with recognizable human constructs these fictive characters may also, through their imputed psychological and sociological configurations, function as implied commentators on the histories that form the subject matters of the works under consideration.

The narrative voices of Grass's and Wolf's novels, constituted figurally, offer correspondences with general problematics of identity and subjectivity in various disciplines. Surveying the critical literature to the works, as indicated above, also demonstrates a lack of unanimity about just what this entails in each case. Depending on the critical apparatus employed, the figures may be considered to embody this or that theory in philosophy, psychology, or sociology. On the one hand there is the unreliability of Oskar's fantasizing, on the other the memory of a childhood lost in the aporias of language and memory as forming rough counterparts to historical scholarship. A certain relationship between these is, however, recoverable from this state of affairs. Koselleck says the historian must make sense of the linguistic representation of the event, after the event,<sup>189</sup> and without resources of contemporaneous memory. The measure of the distance between historiographical work and the proffer of the fictive narrators to accomplish essentially the same task situates the events (considered in a text) into particular relationships with both the reader and exterior world in such a way that a certain sense of these texts may be drawn. Essentially this is also the same with decoding the subjectivities of the figures. In the case of Oskar the answer may be the question itself or at least the provoking of the question. In the case of Wolf's narrative voices a closer correspondence with recognizable human experience may be found -- or perhaps not. Another measure of distance and sense between fictionalized history and historiography issues from the agreement between the historiographic description of "entanglements, structures, processes, and

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<sup>189</sup> Koselleck 28.

interrelations,"<sup>190</sup> as Kocka expresses it, and similar micro-historical accounts in fiction.

One area where the distance between established theories and the experience of fiction may be bridgeable concerns the uses of memory in relation to the community in which the literature was produced. Both *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* privilege personal memory as indicated. In accord with Müller-Funk's appropriation of Halbwachs it is also plain that these individual memories implicate the larger community, in effect a collective memory. If this were not so there would be no point of comparison for Grass's satires or Wolf's 'authenticity'. The further idea that this immediate collective memory may be abstracted over time into a generalizing cultural memory [Assmann] with which members of the society subjectively identify finds an echo in Fulbrook and Koselleck that a sense of common ownership of certain human traits or historical events may form a collective identity<sup>191</sup> or at least a "common identification."<sup>192</sup> Fulbrook, as historian, presents critiques of Halbwachs and prefers to consider such memories as "current discourses"<sup>193</sup> leading to "'historical pictures' into which the individual memories are reinserted and endowed with wider significance."<sup>194</sup> In the fictive counterpart to this process Nury Kim proposes that although both authors are a part of the history of which they write, their works differently purposed aesthetically, have the common goal of enlightening their contemporaries about the events in which all participated.<sup>195</sup> This process depends for success on narration by a contemporary 'I' which position is occupied by the fictive

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<sup>190</sup> Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship* 107.

<sup>191</sup> Fulbrook, *German National Identity* 17.

<sup>192</sup> Koselleck 309.

<sup>193</sup> Fulbrook, *German National Identity* 144.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.* 146.

<sup>195</sup> Nury Kim 240.

narrators of the respective works.<sup>196</sup> The technique could be described in Fulbrook's terms as reinserting fictive but compelling memories into historiographic tableaux; the comparison with 'textbook' accounts endows them with wider significance for individual reader processing of those accounts. The content of that wider significance includes the failure of totalizing thought, the continuation of past negativities into the present time, and the denial of utopia.<sup>197</sup> The real world discourse into which the novels situate the reader is the authors' experience of German history, which, like the evocation of the burned hand,<sup>198</sup> leads them to these insights.

Exactly what the novels 'say', that is, how sense is allocated to the situation of world, text, and critical reader leads once again to the 'question as answer' dynamic and the issue of undecidability. If the 'I' posits itself, then what is its relation to an *other* except in instrumentalization for its own purposes? Conversely, if the self is viewed as a relationship to others or as a construction of language of which there is nothing outside,<sup>199</sup> then the inability of either the 'I' or the other to be a self-in-itself, that is, exhibit autonomy within some material or conceptual construction contradicts the principle of difference upon which each is predicated. *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* enter into the discussion of this paradox by positing composite selves of alternative voices in the texts, that throw personal subjectivity in relation to identity, and particularly national identity into bold relief, as argued earlier. Exactly what configurations of identity-in-difference or self-within-the-community allows sufficient empathy for another human to prevent the extermination of those outside the proximal perceived groupings of social homogeneity? What intersections of self and nation are requisite to restrain

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid. 225-238.

<sup>198</sup> K 256/PC 163.

<sup>199</sup> Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 49.

the desire to be unencumbered by a national history that includes the Holocaust? These questions, expressed differently, form much of the meta-commentary delivered in *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*. Yet paradox remains. *Die Blechtrommel* concludes with the *Schwarze Köchin* as apparent causal agent. *Kindheitsmuster* asks, rather than asserting, whether the voices of self, that are also the voices of history, may be integrated. All remains undecidable.

## 6. Modernity and Its Alternatives

### 6.1 Issues

Disputes among historians on the relationship between the concept of national identity and that of *modernity*,<sup>1</sup> often spawn disagreement, as is the case with David Blackbourn and Jürgen Kocka on the subject of the relative modernity of the German *Kaiserreich*.<sup>2</sup> The comparative analysis of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic on the question of the relative modernity of each state has spawned much inquiry and debate. A focal point for such discussions is the interrogation of the proposition that the development of cultural and national consciousness proceeds as a concomitant of a realization of living in a new time: a dissociation of present and past -- a sense of the modern. For their own interests both *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* reflect also on this sense, occasionally directly, but most often through implication. The former novel generally uses the word *modern* satirically as in the early passage that proposes that one "kann eine Geschichte in der Mitte beginnen . . ." which continues in the next sentence,

[m]an kann sich modern geben, alle Zeiten, Entfernungen wegstreichen und hinterher verkünden lassen, man habe endlich und in letzter Stunde das Raum-Zeit-Problem gelöst.<sup>3</sup>

Wolf's novel treats the term, modern, only descriptively in commonplace comparisons of new and old objects. *Kindheitsmuster* works with the problematic more specifically as the consciousness of the present in relation to the past and of both to memory. This is usually

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<sup>1</sup> Fulbrook, *German National Identity* 13.

<sup>2</sup> Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, "Introduction," *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, eds. Katherine Pence and Paul Betts (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008)1-34; 15.

<sup>3</sup> B 12/TD 5.



accomplished as confrontation between the fictive author and her earlier self but also surfaces in passages where present society is considered by a character to be more economically and socially advantageous<sup>4</sup> than earlier times, or more pertinently, where the idea is proffered that

[w]ir leben in einer schneller verderblichen Zeit, in einer Zeit aus anderem Stoff als jene haltbaren früheren Zeiten. (Wegwerf-Zeit). Die verschiedenen Zeiten, die verschieden schnell fließen.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout both works passages like these clearly demonstrate a perception of a 'modern' time and both novels make substantive associations between the concept of modernity and ideas about the nature of society, history, and subjectivity in relation to the German cultural experience. Essentially the novels situate the rise of National Socialism and the reverberations of its overtones in post-1945 Germany at the intersection of petit bourgeois social milieu, aggrandizement of historical narratives in relation to cultural identity, and the fracture of the moral self under the pressures exerted by the former elements. The common denominator is, as Koselleck points out, the consciousness of living in a time of new social realities -- sometimes embraced, sometimes rejected -- and denoting these through a particular word: modernity. *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* situate discussion of the root causes of National Socialism within the historical and sociological dimensions of that modernity, with particular attention to details of class structure, collective identity, family power relationships, and intellectual currents of irrationalism.

## 6.2 Modernity as Concept

Description and evaluation of the concept of *modernity* is enormously varied. When

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<sup>4</sup> K 238/PC 151.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 599-600/384.

Koselleck locates its "beginning"<sup>6</sup> in the eighteenth century he is contaminating the concept with complexes of thought often associated with the term *enlightenment*, both as concept and historical period. This might, at first glance, appear to be a felicitous correlation, considering the currency of discourses regarding the liberating potential of both the idea and epoch. Horkheimer and Adorno however, regard the perversion of the originally liberating project of enlightenment, through its emphasis on rationalization and calculability to lead eventually to the "reification of human beings in factory and office."<sup>7</sup> In enlightenment the "awakening of the subject is bought with the recognition of power as the principle of all relationships."<sup>8</sup> The "essence of things" as an abstract changeless identity "constitutes the unity of nature."<sup>9</sup> This identity when applied to the human self, privileges it with the "legal right to record and systematize."<sup>10</sup> *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* undercut this complex of thought throughout. Wolf's fictive author affirms, "'Life,' the real process, is always steps ahead [of narrative]"<sup>11</sup> impossible to catch hold of and by implication to categorize.

In Horkheimer's and Adorno's view, in economic terms and following Marx,<sup>12</sup> the entire trajectory of the original liberation of the self ends in self-alienation in adaptation to the "technical apparatus"<sup>13</sup> of the capitalist economic system. However one evaluates this critique, it is undeniable that the period in European history that witnessed theoretical support for liberties

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<sup>6</sup> Koselleck 154

<sup>7</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno 23.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 20.

<sup>11</sup> PC 272/K 424.

<sup>12</sup> Marx "Estranged Labor" 74.

<sup>13</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno 23.

also did so in an atmosphere of political repression not always obvious from a superficial reading of the philosophers of the period. Both *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* may be read as novels that deny the validity of overarching and deterministic ideologies as explanation for human behavior,<sup>14</sup> particularly in light of authorial statements on the topic.<sup>15</sup> Yet both novels indicate, and both authors express a desire to communicate, some type of 'enlightenment' about twentieth century German history and culture.<sup>16</sup>

Jauß traces the discrimination between newer and older cultural concerns to antiquity. He attributes the use of the words 'modern' and 'modernity' to the early Middle Ages and nineteenth century respectively.<sup>17</sup> He remarks on the fully contextual and imprecise meaning of such appellations as designating something that is always in a state of being re-defined in the present. For this reason he locates modernity not only chronologically but conceptually, as the antithesis of the classical or the idea of the timeless and unchanging.<sup>18</sup> Jauß's concern is not historical; it is the intellectual history of European aesthetics in their influence on contemporary thinking. Ultimately he locates the proximal genesis of modernity in Baudelaire whose concept of transcendent beauty within the contingent and changing symbolizes for Jauß the awareness of that dichotomy as the basis of perceiving modernity as periodization.<sup>19</sup> It is precisely against this aesthetized conception of modernity that *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* oppose a gritty, and in the case of the former, fantastical, reality composed of the commonplace and even the

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<sup>14</sup> Nury Kim 228-229.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 229.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 240.

<sup>17</sup> Hans Robert Jauß, "Modernity and Literary Tradition," trans. Christian Thorne, *Critical Inquiry* 31. 2 (Winter 2005): 329-364; 329-331.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 332.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 362-363.

tawdry.

Both *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* appear to evince skepticism toward 'grand narratives', notwithstanding the latter's validation of Marxist thought. The degree to which such determinations may be made, based on concepts that postdate the works in question is a matter of debate. This also becomes problematic to the extent that the authors' biographies become an element in each work's narrative, considering their own political and social commitments. Suggested contemporaneous influences on Grass have included Albert Camus and for Wolf, Ernst Bloch.<sup>20</sup>

Kocka, as historian, interrogates the productivity of the Enlightenment as period and enlightenment as attitude and manner of thinking, from the eighteenth into the twentieth centuries in his essay "Geschichte und Aufklärung." In linking *Aufklärung* with the *Moderne* he probes the conceptual bases of a process that culminates with the European history of scientific thought, industrial technologization, and rational governmental administration, as well as the critique of that process and those resultants.<sup>21</sup> The designation of *aufklären* as semantic vehicle for this complex of European intellectual history dialogically adduces other associations of the term in appropriate contexts. On the one hand there is Kant's overcoming of self-imposed immaturity<sup>22</sup> and on the other Grass's intention to enlighten (perhaps 'clarify' would be a better or at least additional translation) by broadening the conceptual horizon through artistic means.<sup>23</sup> Nury Kim expresses the situation thus.

Grass und Wolf klären also den Leser durch ihre jeweils provozierende bzw. heilende

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<sup>20</sup> Nury Kim 240.

<sup>21</sup> Jürgen Kocka, "Geschichte und Aufklärung" 145-146.

<sup>22</sup> Immanuel Kant, "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?" *Was ist Aufklärung? Thesen und Definitionen*, ed. Ehrhard Bahr (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1974) 9-17; 9.

<sup>23</sup> Günter Grass quoted in Nury Kim 241.

Kommunikationsweise auf und fördern ihn dabei, eine angemessene Einstellung zur Vergangenheit und Gegenwart zu finden.<sup>24</sup>

This statement expresses much of what criticism understands by the term modernity, viz. the goal of enlightenment, aesthetic and communicative means, and the challenge to situate oneself in terms of that goal and through those means in relation to history and society.

Koselleck invests the term, modernity, with historical consciousness of a new period of time, as an epistemological construct of the eighteenth century, distinguishing itself as an era from the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Reformation.<sup>25</sup> The conceptual formulation that interests Koselleck is that through which *Modernität* as chronological construct becomes a "shift in experience" signified by *Neuzeit*. As the periodization of history gains currency the number of attributable periods proliferates in scholarly discourse. Koselleck finds in this phenomenon another hallmark of modernity: temporal acceleration.<sup>26</sup> In this manner a terminological construct for historical periodization becomes the cognitive construct for a qualitative change in the perception of lived experience, as modernity. A similar idea in *Kindheitsmuster* was cited earlier.<sup>27</sup> For Koselleck the point is that the apperception of time, in the eighteenth century becomes a historical dynamic in its own right. The future is regarded as open inasmuch as the temporal dynamic should continue to bring forth ever newer "innovations and discoveries," creating the anticipation of progress.<sup>28</sup> By contrast the temporal conception of *Kindheitsmuster* is pessimistic. The present is disposable. Time does not comprise an arrow of progress

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<sup>24</sup> Nury Kim 243.

<sup>25</sup> Koselleck 160-162.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 165.

<sup>27</sup> K 599-600/PC 384.

<sup>28</sup> Koselleck 165.

expanding into the future but is merely variable. It may move faster and slower depending on frame of reference and memory becomes the arbiter of temporal perception.<sup>29</sup> The Enlightenment perspective is traduced; the past may be described and made sense of, the present may only be "filled in."<sup>30</sup> In these passages time is the province of human subjectivity but what appears as a new topic in the novel, at the conclusion of these musings is plausibly the last word on the matter. The narrative, the expression of memory in time, is ultimately regulated by an external factor: death, "a reliable contemporary."<sup>31</sup>

Habermas regards modernity as an "unfinished project" and seeks to preserve the liberating aspects of intellectual and societal rationalization while combating its acknowledged deleterious effects. To the charge, common to critics of enlightenment, that "rational secularization" of religion and traditions destroys ethical values without replacing them, Habermas, in the 1980s, proposed in *The Theory of Communicative Action* that although formal reason is not sufficient to supplant the mytho-poetic, meaning imparting function of traditional value systems, an aesthetically oriented, linguistically activated, secular rationality embodying "objective experience" and "social solidarity" would suffice in this regard.<sup>32</sup> Habermas' ideas have evolved over the years but remain generally faithful to the position that there is a "normative content" of modernity that "has to be acquired and justified from the rational potential inherent in everyday practice" accessible through

[. . .] a communicative reason that transcends subject-centered reason . . . [that] is in

tended to lead away from the paradoxes and levelings of a self-referential critique of

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<sup>29</sup> K 599-600/PC 383-384.

<sup>30</sup> PC 384/K 600.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 385/601.

<sup>32</sup> (a) Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* 1;(b) Ingram 320ff.

reason.<sup>33</sup>

*Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* contradict the claim to rational wholeness and communicative sufficiency by the manner in which they locate these narratives in their fictive worlds. Yet neither do they privilege perspectives of irrationalism as cultural norm. Grass's work, in its *narrative* privileging of the irrational and mythic actually throws into greater relief that which is *actually* missing, namely the critical and social. This is the root of Grass's avowed goal to "de-demonise"<sup>34</sup> the engagement with the fascist past and in writing *Die Blechtrommel* to have "den Versuch unternommen, dem Irrationalismus das Wasser abzugraben."<sup>35</sup> Wolf's novel more clearly indicates the fault lines between the rational and irrational apparent in the societal attitudes of Nelly's fascist youth and also through narrator editorializing, some of those also evident in the socialist culture of the modern German Democratic Republic. The mature fictive author discloses her and her generation's quest for healing and wholeness as narrative theme, however much she may also evince skepticism of its attainment. The structural framework of twentieth century modernity is evident in *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* in the character relationships and the implication that their deficits of humanity are not just personal but also endemic in the social milieus they inhabit. The novels therefore invite the reader to, as Stathis Gourgouris says of Said,<sup>36</sup> engage with the voids in the narrative, in this case rational, scientific, and pragmatically ethicized social structures and what their absence means and has meant historically, for the content of modernity.

The variant theorizations of modernity surveyed above have elements in common. They

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<sup>33</sup> Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* 341.

<sup>34</sup> Preece 45.

<sup>35</sup> Ekkehart Rudolph, "Günter Grass," *Protokoll zur Person, Autoren über sich und ihr Werk*, ed. Ekkehart Rudolph (Munich: List Verlag, 1971) 59-72; 67.

<sup>36</sup> Gourgouris 65.

all propose a discourse of European history that generalizes localized changes in living patterns, technological development, and cognitive constructs over several centuries into one overarching narrative of the rise of ‘modernity’. Alternative ways of constructing this discourse consist of proposing developmental lineages into the present from events and conditions such as the ascendance of print media, the Protestant Reformation, the proliferation of the novel, the utility of mechanization, and the rise of capitalism, in short, all those historical factors that become objects of investigation within ‘early modern’ studies. Another commonality among the theorists mentioned is the identification of the modern as concomitant of the eventual social and political dominance of European society by the bourgeoisie and their ideals. In this regard, the idea of living in a new time acquires the added associations of rationalization, technologization, and individualization of experience. This complex is then wielded as a conceptual weapon against the dominance of the aristocracy and their rule by fiat. The plays of Lessing and Schiller as well as the subjectivity of Goethe’s *Sturm-und-Drang* period all make an implicit claim for a mode of living grounded in a constellation of rational, ethical, economic, and civil rights regarded as normative by the standards of the newly influential middle class.

### **6.3 Self in Society: Society in Self**

The overarching problematic for *Kindheitsmuster* is arguably the much quoted last sentence of the ninth chapter, "[w]ie sind wir so geworden, wie wir heute sind?"<sup>37</sup> The opening chapter of *Die Blechtrommel*, with its narrative discontinuities, implies the same question -- with the exception that Oskar egocentrically believes there is an audience for the story of how *he* became what he presently is -- which, viewing him as figurative corporate identity, amounts to the same. In both cases a singular character either directly identifies with or by implication

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 328/209.



embodies the aspirations of a community, in the former novel to understand and in the latter to advertise, itself. As discussed in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, consciousness of societal and/or national identity, as discursive formulations, appears to be complexly interwoven with the representations of personal identity, even if tenuous and discontinuous in direct correspondence.<sup>38</sup> The question is whether there is a relationship in Grass's and Wolf's novels between subjectivity, cultural identity, aspects of modernity, and the historical circumstances of Nazism in which they are set.

In Fulbrook's opinion representations of identity through the "sense of a common past" may proceed from collective internalization of specific narratives of unity, with cohesive affective content.<sup>39</sup> After the fall of the Berlin Wall a certain temporary feeling of German unity created a popular discourse of a unified people. Lived experience shortly began to show fractures in this consensus, giving rise in popular parlance to the designations 'Ossis' and 'Wessis'.<sup>40</sup> Even more ominous was the realization that a certain segment of the population would resort to violence and murder to promulgate a renewed *völkisch* vision of a united Germany.

Fulbrook also believes a sense of collective identity may occur in relation to political legitimization claims, shared values including the myth of a common history, and a sense of common destiny, often in relation to an enemy or a population deemed to be outside the community. These may vary in emphasis and degree of affirmation between social groups and

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<sup>38</sup> Mark Hewitson, "Nation and Nationalism: Representation and National Identity in Imperial Germany," *Representing the German Nation: History and Identity in Twentieth-century Germany*, eds. Mary Fulbrook and Martin Swales (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) 19-62; 20.

<sup>39</sup> Fulbrook, "Re-presenting the Nation" 185.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* 188.

generations within a society.<sup>41</sup> Although these observations are made in the abstract, as qualified generalizations, it is apparent that all may be applied specifically at various times to the German nation as well as others. *Die Blechtrommel* caricatures many of these tokens of communal solidarity: Matzerath in his party uniform,<sup>42</sup> the rally at the Maiwiese, the common traditions of the Advent season juxtaposed against the *Kristallnacht* pogrom and its easy acceptance by the nation as a whole. *Kindheitsmuster* describes these elements realistically as the manner in which Nelly's family acquiesces to Nazi authority, the solidarity gained through indoctrination of youth, and the identification of an 'outsider' enemy, the Jewish population, that one is supposed to hate. Adduced also in both novels are the many songs, and allusions to literature as demonstrated earlier in Chapter 3, that re-enforce a sense of shared culture, markedly nationalistic in tone.

Kocka has pointed out that in the case of Germany, collective memory and consciousness has not historically been spatially or temporally coextensive with a nation state.<sup>43</sup> The impetus to express these views resulted from the West German *Historikerstreit* of the 1980s; the burden of his argument was the defense of the Federal Republic as a liberal democratic state against conservative historians proffering nationalist narratives of German history. Kocka advises a nuanced and cautious approach to ideas of cultural and national identity. Building on the idea that identity *may* be based on a common history, he qualifies this idea with the stipulation that this must include acceptance of responsibility for the catastrophic consequences of much of Germany's search for identity. Kocka offers a vision of a shared cultural understanding based on the clarifying and enlightening function of history that contributes to an identity formation

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<sup>41</sup> Fulbrook, *German National Identity* 16-18.

<sup>42</sup> B 146/TD 106.

<sup>43</sup> Kocka, "Geschichte und Aufklärung" 151.

process, that is pluralistic, consensus derived, and critical.<sup>44</sup> Although these goals are inarguably those also of Grass and Wolf, the novels position these issues in relation to those Germans for whom the loss of *Heimat* through shifting borders conditions a part of the collective memory.<sup>45</sup>

Regional consciousness has been an important element in German society throughout history. The spoken language has been and to a great extent continues to be extant in local dialects and the concept of a regional *Heimat* has had a particular resonance with the average German's self-image. In *Die Blechtrommel*, Oskar and his family are residents of the Danzig area and stem from the mix of cultures and ethnicities historically comprised by that area, a mix of German, Kashubian, and Polish. The surviving members from World War Two flee to western Germany and settle in Düsseldorf as did Günter Grass himself. In *Kindheitsmuster* Nelly and the mature author are from L., today G., Christa Wolf's home town of Landsberg an der Warthe, today Gorzów Wielkopolski in Poland. Like Wolf, Nelly flees from the advancing Soviet forces in early 1945 to locations in Mecklenburg. In *Die Blechtrommel* Oskar's that portion of Oskar's subjectivity that appears more human than symbolical derives in great part from his relationship to Danzig. Geography, locations, legends, and regional sociology situate the textual figures into a vision of a vanished world and situate the reader likewise into a relationship with that world and its figures as outsiders, which is the position the figures, particularly Oskar, occupy in the post-World War Two German social structure.

Engagement with themes and characters concerning Danzig/Gdańsk has become a lifelong project in multiple novels for Grass. For Wolf, specific engagement with her birthplace occurs in only one major novel, *Kindheitsmuster*. That engagement, as a journey of memory,

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 152-155.

<sup>45</sup> (a) K 189/PC 129; (b) Schaal 2.

chronicles not the desire, common among members of the nationalistic *Ostvertriebene Verbände* to repossess the lost *Heimat*, but to recover the wholeness of a personality fractured by the early-learned necessity to repress memories.<sup>46</sup> Thus, in *Die Blechtrommel* something akin to Kocka's position on the diversity, based on the historical record, of the constitution of German society comes into play as reproach to the legacy of Nazi exclusivist ideology still observable in the nascent Federal Republic. In *Kindheitsmuster*, the more personal focus transforms the inchoate and repressed childhood emotions of loss<sup>47</sup> into empathy for the victims of German aggression, whose retribution account for the loss of *Heimat* by the fictive author and Germans like her.

In the relation of the individual to modern German history, two fundamental orientation points stand out. The first is the campaign, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, for the establishment of a unified German state and embodies the 'material narrative' that links modernity with discourses of German cultural and national identity in tandem with issues of constitutional government and the emancipation of the *bourgeoisie*, issues that became critical in the revolution of 1848.<sup>48</sup> The second, since the end of World War Two, is the Holocaust. Kocka believes that the same mechanisms by which individuals form themselves into "Social groups with some cohesion" applies also to the "European bourgeoisie as it emerged as a postcorporate, supralocal social formation" during the Enlightenment and post-Napoleonic eras.<sup>49</sup> Historian Michael Behnen adds the following concerning this period.

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<sup>46</sup> K 91-92/PC 56-57.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 429/275.

<sup>48</sup> Michael Behnen, "Deutschland unter Napoleon. Restauration und Vormärz," *Deutsche Geschichte: Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Martin Vogt et al., 3rd. ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2002) 397- 450; 444ff.

<sup>49</sup> Kocka *Civil Society and Dictatorship* 12.

In all seinen Ausprägungen . . . wurde das Bürgertum zum Ausgangs- und Kristallisationspunkt für den technischen Fortschritt, für den Leistungswillen, . . . für die öffentlichen Debatte als Ausdruck politischer Partizipation.<sup>50</sup>

The claims for common societal identity within the discussion of this unfolding 'modernity' also included a dialectic of exclusion [often on the basis of racial theories of German ethnic purity<sup>51</sup>] and incremental inclusion of Jews and other minorities within German society.<sup>52</sup> The conflation of the concept of common culture and nation state in the mid-nineteenth century produced, according to Hewitson, the idea of German nationality as the basis of citizenship within the state. Historians of the period increasingly considered the 'nation state' to be the normal type of political entity through which narratives of progress and constitutional governance, ideals benefitting the social and economic position of the bourgeoisie, could be fulfilled. When Germany was unified under Prussia in 1871, the fact that "Germanness . . . had not been associated with a territorial nation-state"<sup>53</sup> ultimately produced a concept of citizenship based on ethnicity, *jus sanguinis*, codified in 1913<sup>54</sup> and remained in force [as default after 1945] until reforms in 1999. The problematic nature of emancipation and the full implementation of the bourgeoisie's ideal of "civil society," but excluding women, minority ethnic groups, and often the lower economic classes from the voting franchise, became even more problematic within Germany than other European countries during this time.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, the process of societal

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<sup>50</sup> Behnen 444.

<sup>51</sup> Hewitson 25.

<sup>52</sup> Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship* 21-22.

<sup>53</sup> Hewitson 25.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship* 21.

modernization came to understand itself as a more socially concerned and inclusive project, thus broadly speaking 'democratic', increasingly during the *Kaiserreich* and with force of law after World War One in the Weimar Republic, although with decreasing popular support.<sup>56</sup>

A controversial theme of German history arises from the separating of the discourses of inclusivity and greater democratization from the project of modernity, so understood, in fascist and communist dictatorships, during the Third Reich and the forty-year history of the German Democratic Republic. The overall issue, important for *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*, is the manner in which individual Germans saw themselves in relation to their society in its several permutations. Already in the nineteenth century there was awareness of the discursive rather than the essential, constitution of national identity. Sources of identification could be quite various including lifestyle and language. With the great range of lifestyles and languages available to the European citizenry as the result of the technical and educational benefits attendant upon industrialization, some wondered, at the turn of the twentieth century, wherein any national 'identity' could exist.<sup>57</sup>

In Germany, narratives of so-called German traits had been circulating for decades before the founding of the nation. Well-known are Fichte's valorization of the German language as imparting a greater clarity to German thought<sup>58</sup> and the anti-Semitic writings of Richard Wagner. Aside from such extreme manifestations, many historians believe that an intricate and self-reinforcing set of circumstances including wide-ranging philosophical debate and popular media representations contributed to a consensus, that more than nationalist sentiment, *culture*

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 28.

<sup>57</sup> Hewitson 19ff.

<sup>58</sup> Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "Fourth Address," *Addresses to the German Nation*, trans. R. F. Jones and G. H. Turnbull (Chicago and London: Open Court Publishing, 1922) 52-71; 67.

"constituted the core of German national identity."<sup>59</sup> This narrativized discourse could be molded by those representing the major power interests of society into a changing set of cultural definitions throughout German history. As in most other countries, the average German, in addition to belonging to a family, a region, or a religion would also encounter in daily life discursive ideals that suggested one's incorporation into a specific culture that partially allied one with European culture in general and partially separated one on the basis of ideas about and pride in, what might be considered specifically German.<sup>60</sup> Of course, the extent to which one internalizes such ideas as an aspect of one's own subjectivity depends on the individual. It may be a matter of conscious choice or it may be modified or actually controlled by either willing or coerced conformity to societal norms.

The manner in which the discursive ideals of German cultural and national identity were harnessed for purposes of world domination and genocide, as well as the continuation of attitudes associated with those goals into the postwar period, form the subject matter of *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*. Grass's and Wolf's novels situate these elements in terms of particular individuals, social strata, regional and religious affiliation, intellectual development, orientations to popular culture, nature and degree of conformity to societal and political norms, and the nature of these norms. Thus Oskar and his family are initially situated relative to narratives of pre-World War One constructs of life in the German dominated city of Danzig, his grandmother a peasant woman, his presumptive grandfather evading conscription into the German army. The contrast between this elemental and earthy life and the post-war city life with its commercialism, educational opportunities, organizations like the Boy Scouts, and means and

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<sup>59</sup> Hewitson 27.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 35-57.

opportunities for amorous fulfillment contributes to a sense of the modernity of daily life. The social milieu of the *Kleinbürgertum* with its provincial outlook becomes, with Grass's intention, the locus of those feelings and viewpoints that undergird the acceptance of fascism.<sup>61</sup> This social problematization connects the narrative of fascism with the 'modernity project', motivated by the values of the bourgeoisie proper. In comparison, the lower middle classes lived in relative economic, educational, and social insecurity<sup>62</sup> with affective distance from the values promulgated by the traditionally more socially secure.<sup>63</sup>

Nelly and her family come from the same background but are situated realistically rather than (or as well as) symbolically into a social setting in *Kindheitsmuster*. Both novels depict the education system's proffering of solidarity with their compatriots through exposure to *Kultur*, in the form of German literature and music. Nelly's education focuses rather more on the uses made of traditional culture for purposes of Nazi indoctrination. Neither Grass nor Wolf treats the *petite bourgeoisie* in an overtly Marxist manner, as counter revolutionaries in the class struggle.<sup>64</sup> A reader of Marxist orientation might assume this relationship as background within her horizon of expectations. The emphasis, whether expressed symbolically or realistically, is the personal and the manner and degree to which they respond to the claims of their society upon them. The protagonists then re-assemble the memory of personal and national histories into narratives from which new discourses of dealing with the Nazi period issue: the one a fantastical negative signification, the other a search for authentic personal and social integration. There is,

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<sup>61</sup> Eung-Jun Kim 148.

<sup>62</sup> Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship* 11.

<sup>63</sup> Eung-Jun Kim 170.

<sup>64</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* in Marx and Engels, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei, Grundsätze des Kommunismus* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1999) 19-56; 31.



however, an aporetic dimension to the conclusion that the authors, aside from the novels, unproblematically adopt a stance of discursive construction in relation to German identity. Günter Grass opposed German re-unification with statements in 1967 and 1990 indicating a belief that some aspect of being German would cause any unified German nation to fail.<sup>65</sup>

The second fundamental discourse in which any 'identity' of the German speaking nations resides after World War Two is the collective and cultural memory of the Shoah: the inescapable event in relation to which the process of formation of German national identity continues to be narrated.<sup>66</sup> From Adorno's interrogation of both nationalistic and devaluative stereotypes surrounding the concept of German 'national character' to Kocka's invocation of the "transnationalization" of memory and identity within historiographic and cultural studies,<sup>67</sup> the Holocaust, as touchstone for narratives of subject formation, continues to engage the imagination. The manner in which *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* deal with the Holocaust, in implicit relation to attitudes in the FRG, the GDR, and post-*Wende* Germany will be explored in Chapter 7 of this dissertation. Discussions of the nature and effects of the concept of modernity will continue to constitute one of the loci for tensions attendant upon the idea of the 'normalization' of German history.

It should be clear that discourses of modernity, identity, and subjectivity and their relation to ideas of cultural and 'national' experience and memory, are just that: discourses based on a particular situation and relating of presumed facts under guiding principles by the theorists

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<sup>65</sup> Günter Grass, "Short Speech By a Rootless Cosmopolitan," *Two States -- One Nation? The Case Against German Unification*, trans. Krishna Winston and A. S. Wensiger (London: Secker and Warburg, 1990) 5-6.

<sup>66</sup> Fulbrook, *German National Identity* 19.

<sup>67</sup> (a) Theodor W. Adorno, "On the Question: 'What is German'," *Critical Models – Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) 205-214; (b) Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship* 97.

named. Additionally, the critical reader brings her own experience, value judgments, and guiding principles to bear upon the literary material and theorizations. Thus, in the foregoing sections a certain dialogical relationship might be discernible between the ideas of Horkheimer and Adorno, Fulbrook, Habermas, Jauß, Kocka, Koselleck, and possible similarities or dissimilarities in *Die Blechtrommel* and/or *Kindheitsmuster*. These will make possible the assessment of relationship as significance in difference between the perspectives. A dialectical engagement with the questions raised by these differences, as developed in Chapter 3 of the dissertation, regarding possible instantiation of these within the texts, considers the alternatives to apparent contradictions, in relation to the underlying principles evinced, on the basis of both the contingency of recipient cognitive construction and the delimitations imposed by the 'material narrative' of their emplacement in the world.

## **6.4 Alternative Modernities**

### **6.4.1 Two States -- Two Nations?**

Koselleck, in different essays, situates the conception of time as a "force of history" leading to the idea of the future as open and not pre-determined, into the same chronological and cognitive constructs that characterize the name Enlightenment, "given by a small group of literary figures, authors, critics, and *philosophes*" to their time as an appreciation of modernity.<sup>68</sup>

Koselleck places also the idea of emancipation within this complex of thought.

Only since the Enlightenment does the privilege of exercising power over human beings . . . become a general right: that rule could henceforth only be self-rule by mature human beings (first men and. then later, women too) over themselves.<sup>69</sup>

Viewed thus, there are narratives that comprise discourses on enlightenment and, in association,

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<sup>68</sup> Koselleck 168-169.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 250.

modernity, yielding a universal claim to emancipation as ethical content and a sometimes totalizing drive towards greater rationalization and systematization as structural dynamic. To the extent that the conception of modernity took on many of these intellectual properties, emphasizing various aspects or considering them dialectically, it became possible, particularly in the mid-twentieth century, for sociologists to speak of modern societies on the basis of certain requirements, i.e. a process of rationalization of societal structures such that their *modernization* may refer, as Habermas puts it,

[. . .] to the formation of capital and the mobilization of resources; to the development of the forces of production and the increase in the productivity of labor; to the establishment of centralized political power and the formation of national identities; to the proliferation of rights of political participation . . . to the secularization of values and norms [. . .]<sup>70</sup>

after which it is possible to categorize those societies that do not exhibit a sufficient number of these characteristics as pre-modern or in some way outside a line of presumed normal development seen in European and American modernity. If one evaluates the ethical perspective of enlightenment from the vantage point of cultural difference the project of modernity loses its Eurocentric teleology. The question arises, exactly which societies should be included in this paradigm, however. Those outside Europe might fit well but Nazi Germany was *in* Europe and its crimes against humanity were so great that surely comparison with formerly colonized nations is both incoherent and demeaning to those nations.

From the above perspective, Nazi Germany and in some ways also the Soviet Union and

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<sup>70</sup> Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* 2.

East Germany<sup>71</sup> might be viewed as representative of an aberrant or even anti-, modernity. Clearly, the National Socialist state cannot be situated within Koselleck's paradigm of emancipation.<sup>72</sup> There are those such as Ernst Nolte, and others prominent in the *Historikerstreit* of the 1980s, whose narrativizations of historical data have produced discourses whereby European fascism and Hitler's aggressions are viewed as a defense of 'Western' values in the face of communist expansionism.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, National Socialism by self-profession denied the desirability of civil society virtues of tolerance and universal rights and relegated the idea of emancipation to the *Volksgemeinschaft* rather than the individual.<sup>74</sup> Official ideology affirmed that national socialist German society, purified from 'foreign' elements would strive for a classless society conducive to individual economic and social mobility in conjunction with technological modernization, within the framework, however, of a *Führerstaat* with elite governance.<sup>75</sup> The national socialist society is therefore, in regard to emancipatory claims, a contradiction in terms.

Viewing modernity as an awareness of living in a new epoch, without privileging ethical constructs, one may of course consider the modernity of fascist, communist, and totalitarian societies on the basis of structural rationalization and scientific and technological orientation. Some have regarded the rise of Nazism and particularly the execution of the Holocaust as an

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<sup>71</sup> Beate Ihme-Tuchel, *Die DDR* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002, Kontroversen um die Geschichte, eds. Arnd Bauerkämpfer, Peter Steinbach, and Edgar Wolfrum) 92.

<sup>72</sup> Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>73</sup> Ernst Nolte, "Die Vergangenheit, die nicht vergehen will," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 6 June 1986.

<sup>74</sup> Wolfgang Michalka, "Das Dritte Reich," in Vogt et al., 694-775; 711.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

actual aspect of the concrete manifestation of the abstract concept of modernity.<sup>76</sup> But what of the case of divided Germany after World War Two? Does the Enlightenment-derived dynamic of 'civil society', that Kocka defines as one in which a particular type of social action is possible:

[. . .] oriented towards toward conflict, compromise, and agreement in the public sphere; . . . stresses individual independence and collective self-organization; . . . is nonviolent; . . . recognizes differences and plurality as legitimate; [. . .]<sup>77</sup>

leading to a society that implements, with acknowledgement of differing ideas, goals for the common good, apply also to the two Germanys? Do these characteristics exclusively define a society as *modern* and does it matter? What do *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* contribute in meta-commentary to any discussion of these issues and its constituent narratives?

*Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* enter into this discussion in several ways. In general terms, as indicated earlier, the novels situate the protagonists into a world cognizable as a product of modernity as defined by the sources referenced. This includes obviously the history and social relationships that either discursively characterize or issue from those definitions and constitute the surface narratives as described in previous chapters of this dissertation. More specifically, that the novels engage these topics by problematizing human subjectivity and cultural solidarity/national identity, both during the Nazi period and in the two post-war Germanys, implicitly interrogates the constitution of modernity as a discourse in which this manner of conceptualizing history, the individual, memory, the nation, and their interrelationships arose. An even more specific connection between the novels and discourses of

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<sup>76</sup> (a) Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000) 247; (b) Detlev J.K. Peukert, "The Genesis of the 'Final Solution' from the Spirit of Science," *Nazism and German Society 1933-1945*, ed. David F. Crew (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) 274-299; 285.

<sup>77</sup> Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship* 19.

modernity occurs, in the case of Grass's work, by implicitly imputing an association between fascism and a legacy of aesthetic and intellectual irrationalism, a perspective shared in somewhat different contexts by Horkheimer and Adorno, as well as Thomas Mann in *Doktor Faustus*.<sup>78</sup> In both Grass's and Wolf's novels, blame is also given to totalizing ways of thinking.<sup>79</sup> To answer the questions posed above in greater detail requires inspecting the histories of the two Germanys in relation to narratives in *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* over the pertinent time spans.

A synopsis of cultural life within both East and West Germany was given in Chapter 2 of the dissertation. As noted in Chapter 4, if *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* are analyzed as fictive counterparts to historical narratives, the authors, as participants, become integral to their own telling of that history as part of the complex of elements that emplace their fiction within the larger world. Aligning these concerns with the history of the Nazi era is not the focus here; although interrogating the concept of 'fascist modernity' might prove productive on some level, the coherence of the definition was impeached, above, on the basis of the criteria considered. The novels, in their written form, are not products of that era, a fact underlining an important consideration in the works' genesis: the process by which the authors could come to write the works, considering the constitution of their respective personal histories and subjectivities as young people in the Third Reich. Pertinent intertextual and symbolic aspects of the stories relating to Oskar's and Nelly's youth under Nazism were outlined in Chapter 3. To the extent that the novels reveal an intent to inform, portray, and 'enlighten' also post-war German attitudes,<sup>80</sup> the world into which the texts situate the reader is that of the FRG and the GDR in the Cold War era of European history.

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<sup>78</sup> (a) Horkheimer and Adorno 152; (b) Eung-Jun Kim 127.

<sup>79</sup> Nury Kim 41; 225.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. 240-241.

Considering narrative as inherent not only in language but also in the movements of materiality through space and time as history, means that any interrogation of the relative modernity of the two German states requires investigation of the narrativizations of that history from which such discourses arise. Therefore the following discussion of the political and civil history of the two Germanys is undertaken in some detail, in comparison also with that history's fictive retelling in *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*. Considering the minimum qualifications advanced by Kocka, Koselleck, and others for the defining of a society as modern, the extent to which the two societies conformed to these will become obvious. At the end of World War Two Germany was divided by the Allies into four occupation zones: American, British, French, and Soviet. Territories east of the rivers Oder and Neiße were placed under Polish and Soviet administration pending a permanent peace treaty. The Allied Control Council abolished Prussia as an internal state and both re-created and created political entities, the *Länder*. As relations between the Soviet Union and Western powers deteriorated, the American, British, and French zones of occupation were readied for the creation of a demilitarized, democratic nation.

The Federal Republic of Germany was established on 8 May 1949. The Soviet Union had also been preparing its occupation zone for self-government and this became the German Democratic Republic on 7 October of the same year.<sup>81</sup> The narrative thread of *Die Blechtrommel* covers this time period first in the voice of Bruno Münsterberg, Oskar's institutional attendant, and then, beginning Book Three of the novel, in Oskar's third and first person alternation. The former covers the Matzerath family's refugee journey from Gdańsk to Düsseldorf in which Oskar

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<sup>81</sup> Edgar Wolfrum, *Die geglückte Demokratie: Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von ihren Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2006) 20-41.

grew a little in stature.<sup>82</sup> The latter follows Oskar and his family through the year 1947 with allusions to the privations of the era, including black market activity.<sup>83</sup> Also at this time, Oskar becomes a stonemason employed carving grave monuments. *Die Blechtrommel* notes the introduction of the Deutsche Mark in the 1948 with the observation that this time "included all the necessary preconditions for the current blossoming of bourgeois comfort."<sup>84</sup> As West Germany begins its legal history, Oskar Matzerath becomes a model at the art academy, satirizes current artistic sensibilities, and pursues his infatuation with Sister Dorothea.<sup>85</sup>

The Federal Republic of Germany adopted a constitution specifying an elected parliament, the Bundestag elected directly, and a separate constitutional body, the Bundesrat, with members appointed by the *Länder* governments. The federal government would be headed by a chancellor, the first being Konrad Adenauer of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU). The head of state would be the president, a largely ceremonial office. The FRG did not enjoy sovereign authority as a nation until 1955 when the Occupation Statute lapsed.<sup>86</sup> Since the first election, a large number of political parties were represented in the Bundestag, including those from the far right and also the Communist Party (KPD). In 1951 the neo-Nazi, Socialist Reich Party was charged with anti-constitutionality and banned a year later. At the same time the KPD was similarly charged but legal proceedings delayed its prohibition until 1956.<sup>87</sup> Gradually, the FRG became a member of the leading European economic associations. Oskar is occupied with

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<sup>82</sup> B 551-564/TD 400-409.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. 567ff./413ff.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 604 /440.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. 670/488.

<sup>86</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *A Concise History of Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 212.

<sup>87</sup> Wolfrum 65.



his own problems during this time, fleeing a murder charge in 1952; his friend Klepp distributes illegal Communist Party literature in West Germany.<sup>88</sup>

During the 1950s West Germany underwent great economic growth, the so-called *Wirtschaftswunder* associated with Adenauer's Economics Minister and later Chancellor Ludwig Erhard. Economic policy was guided by the theory of a 'social market economy', a capitalist system with substantial concessions to social welfare concerns.<sup>89</sup> As *Die Blechtrommel* ends, on Oskar's thirtieth birthday in 1954, West Germany re-surfaces on the international scene and prepares to undertake responsibilities that many thought impossible and inappropriate at the end of World War Two. On 4 July of the year, the West German national team wins the soccer world championship in Bern, Switzerland, popularly referred to as the 'miracle of Bern'. In October the Paris Accords are signed, officially ending Allied occupation, restoring sovereign authority to the country, and committing it to NATO as a military power.<sup>90</sup> The following year a new military, the Bundeswehr, was inaugurated.

Through satire and parody *Die Blechtrommel* unmistakably pillories West German society. The re-emergence of Oberleutnant Herzog,<sup>91</sup> as well as Bebra,<sup>92</sup> as continuity with the National Socialist past, thematize the hypocrisy between public and private stances in relation to the Nazi period. The underlying societal tendency implicated is that of political apathy in a bourgeois, *neo-biedermeierliche Gesellschaft* that could re-lapse into fascism.<sup>93</sup> In a global sense the novel's perverse relation to the *Bildungsroman* gleefully insults the society's

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<sup>88</sup> B 88/TD 61

<sup>89</sup> Wolfrum 75-88.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. 130.

<sup>91</sup> B 717/TD 519.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. 730/528.

<sup>93</sup> Nury Kim 41.

valorization of Goethean harmony at the cost of acknowledging the past. *Die Blechtrommel's* stylistic anomalies, nihilistic spirit, ironic tone, and sexually scandalous allusions in some sense also signifies the society from which it sprang, in that it did become published, subject more to censoriousness than censorship, and the vagaries of the publishing industry.<sup>94</sup>

In the Soviet zone of occupation, the period from 1945 to 1949 witnessed a restructuring of the economy. Large landholdings were liquidated and land redistributed with support from the Social Democratic (SPD) and Christian Democratic parties working with the KPD. Large industries were nationalized and war reparations exacted. Much of this activity could be justified on the basis of the legal expropriation of former Nazi Party members' property. Effective administrative control over the Eastern Zone was in the hands of the Soviet Military Administration or SMAD. In 1946 the KPD was merged with the SPD to form the *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* or Socialist Unity Party (SED). By 1948 the Soviet Zone affiliates of Western parties such as the Christian Democrats were also effectively being coordinated by the SED.<sup>95</sup> The permanent division of Germany was not the initial object of the victor nations. The general tensions of the developing Cold War between East and West as well as specific problems involving the occupation, e.g. currency reform in the western zones not acceptable to the Soviets and resulting blockade of Berlin in 1948 and the respective developing economic and military alliances with the West and the East Bloc nations. Re-unification talks as late as 1952 were unproductive.<sup>96</sup>

*Kindheitsmuster* portrays the defeat of Nazi Germany, Allied occupation, and life in the

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<sup>94</sup> In this connection it should be remarked that the first American edition contained substantial deletions in translation.

<sup>95</sup> Hermann Weber, *Geschichte der DDR* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999) 65-101.

<sup>96</sup> Fulbrook, *A Concise History* 211.

Soviet zone in Chapters 13 through 18. The narrative, of course, is divided into three voices forming three textual layers, running contrapuntally: that of Nelly, 1945 to 1947, that of the mature fictive author's family trip to G. formerly L. in 1971, and the fictive author's novel writing between 1972 and 1975. The narrative is thus not linear and the events described relate to each other by association rather than chronologically. Beginning in January 1945, Nelly's family flees westward with other refugees as Soviet forces advance. The reality of war impacts Nelly's world as the fictive author associates this occurrence with the beginning of the war in 1939, and further, in conjunction with the world of 1974 with wars on Cyprus, in Vietnam, torture in Chile, and disasters in Yugoslavia and Bangladesh.<sup>97</sup> Ultimately, Nelly and her family end up in the town of Bardikow in Mecklenburg. During their flight Nelly also comes face to face with the reality of the concentration camps.

Under American occupation, Nelly and her compatriots experience the shock that people seen as pillars of the community are considered by the occupiers to be Nazis and criminals.<sup>98</sup> British forces briefly occupy Bardikow and then the Russians. *Kindheitsmuster* mentions purported Soviet brutality but points out the brutality that had been directed at them by the Germans. The novel does not perpetuate a conventional propagandistic narrative of kind and helpful Russian forces with the observation that a "salvation army" could not win a war.<sup>99</sup> *Kindheitsmuster* illustrates the chaotic circumstances of life and subtly implies the persistence of the Nazi regime through the story of the area's "Red Commandant,"<sup>100</sup> a German impostor. Soviet troops are generally sympathetically portrayed in their cultural difference. The novel

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<sup>97</sup> K 443ff. /PC 284ff.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. 531-538/342-345.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. 556-557/358-359.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. 563-576/ 363-370.

imputes puritanical attitudes to a Russian woman doctor charged with investigating the extent of local venereal infection and enunciates in this connection a main underlying theme of the work. "Zum erstenmal sah Nelly mit an, wie Frauen ausbaden mußten, was die Männer angerichtet hatten."<sup>101</sup> *Kindheitsmuster* closes the immediate postwar period with Nelly being treated for tuberculosis. With the return of Nelly's father, starving and almost unrecognizable, the previous quotation gains explicatory significance by presaging Nelly's self-differentiation from the paternal, authoritarian narratives of the Nazi era and her place within it.<sup>102</sup>

The constitution of the German Democratic Republic specified a government with a president as head of state, a prime minister as political leader, the first being Otto Grotewohl, a parliament with one chamber representing the people, the Volkskammer, and one, the Ländekammer, representing the *Länder*, which were dissolved into smaller administrative units in 1952. The Ländekammer was merged with the Volkskammer in 1958. The constitution, in principle, was based on the Marxist-Leninist idea of "democratic centralism" in which parties had allotted seats in parliament with the SED in effective control.<sup>103</sup> One of the parties, the National Democratic Party (NDPD) derived its support, purposely, from former Nazi Party members. These individuals could not belong to other parties. The NDPD never failed to support the SED during its forty-year history but projected a controlled nationalist tone to appeal to that segment of the East German body politic.<sup>104</sup> In 1990 it became part of West Germany's Liberal Democrats (FDP). From 1950 effective leadership of the country was vested in the First Secretary of the SED, Walter Ulbricht. In 1952 a year-long SED campaign against the Protestant

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid. 571/368.

<sup>102</sup> Hell 199-200.

<sup>103</sup> Fulbrook, *A Concise History* 211-213.

<sup>104</sup> Weber 105.

Church was launched.<sup>105</sup> Widespread popular dissatisfaction with raised production quotas precipitated strikes and civil unrest on 17 June 1953. This was put down with the aid of Soviet military forces. Thereafter a general purge of SED membership, many formerly Social Democrats, strengthened Ulbricht's position.<sup>106</sup> With the death of President Wilhelm Pieck in 1960 the office was abolished and replaced with the *Staatsrat*, a small collective of governmental and political functionaries whose chairman was First Secretary Walter Ulbricht.<sup>107</sup>

In 1958 Soviet Premier Nikita Krushchev agitated for the end of the four-power Allied administration of Berlin. There followed several years of deteriorating relations with the West. These years witnessed increased economic hardships in East Germany following the agricultural collectivization program, and the steady loss of skilled workers through defection to the West by way of the open border in Berlin. Between 3 and 5 August 1961 the Party Secretaries of the Warsaw Pact considered a number of proposals, including obstructing air and ground traffic from the West. The solution adopted was the building of a wall between East and West Berlin and was implemented beginning in the night of 12 - 13 August.<sup>108</sup> Over the years the wall was strengthened and expanded. Free passage between East and West Berlin was not restored until 9 November 1989. Although East German society became increasingly isolated from the West, apparently the building of the Wall

[. . .] improved conditions for East Germans in the 1960s. This was the decade of the 'scientific-technological revolution', when opportunities for fulfilling careers in the GDR

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<sup>105</sup> Weber 158-159.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. 163-200.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. 216.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. 218-222.

appeared to be opening up.<sup>109</sup>

Throughout the 1960s centralized economic planning was eased and achievement incentives supported.

*Kindheitsmuster* does not address this period in the German Democratic Republic in any detail. Two previous novels by Christa Wolf, *Der geteilte Himmel* (1963) and *Nachdenken über Christa T.* (1968), do, however. The former attempts to engage the reader in solidarity with socialist society despite the disappointments and hardships. The latter appears to chide that society for losing sight of the human dimension in its socialist institutionalization. The picture presented of the GDR includes the tacit assumption of an industrial landscape re-building from the devastation of World War Two, vicarious participation in Soviet scientific achievements, adequate educational resources, and a social setting of supportive human interaction. Negatively, work place intrigues, party-line dogmatism, lack of individual fulfillment, and even environmental pollution are also described. Differences with the West appear in the depiction of life in a planned economy, of industries owned by the 'people', and the overt devaluation of the West's hedonistic materialism, a viewpoint also familiar in literature throughout the world.

In 1969 Social Democrat Willy Brandt became Chancellor of West Germany, ending twenty years of fairly conservative and staunchly anti-communist governance by the Christian Democrats. Brandt repudiated the *Hallstein-Doktrin*, under which West Germany might retaliate against countries that recognized the sovereignty of East Germany as a nation, and opened new initiatives towards the East Bloc nations. After Ulbricht was replaced by Erich Honecker under pressure from Moscow in 1971, the FRG and GDR concluded a treaty of mutual recognition. In 1973 both countries were admitted to the United Nations. Under Honecker, East German

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<sup>109</sup> Fulbrook, *A Concise History* 215.

economic policy attempted to address the issue of consumer goods production but an initial liberalization of ideological conformity disappeared in 1976 with the forced expatriation of Wolf Biermann<sup>110</sup> and subsequent protest by East German intellectuals, including Christa Wolf.<sup>111</sup> The writing of *Kindheitsmuster* was thus situated in a tumultuous period and reveals those tensions in the relationships between world, text, author, and ultimately, reader.

*Kindheitsmuster* places the adult fictive author and her family, both during their car trip in 1971 and as the novel is 'being written' -- until 1975 -- within the Honecker era in East Germany. While there are no direct political observations on the GDR, general allusions to the quality of life are often reflected in conversations with the fictive author and her daughter Lenka. Some of these draw a generational comparison between mother and daughter: the concept of *Heimat* is meaningless to Lenka; she is depressed and uncertain about the possibility of her generation participating in genocide;<sup>112</sup> she is shocked that a top student in her class at school suggests forcible starvation for the elderly and ill as a solution to world famine.<sup>113</sup> A more telling commentary on East German society resides in Lenka's observation that seventy-five percent of the citizenry, industrial workers, do not have jobs that are personally fulfilling and asks whether it is not an imposition on society that others, like her mother, as author, insist on rewarding work. While admitting that under socialism pay is good and prices are low she is enraged when malfunctioning machinery ruins her work assignments, when her co-workers abandon their stations in favor of television. At issue is whether a lifetime of labor under substandard and even hazardous working conditions is really worth the economic and social

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid. 217-218.

<sup>111</sup> Magenau 271.

<sup>112</sup> (a) K 191/PC 120; (b) Ibid. 281-282/179-180.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. 616/393-394.

compensations.<sup>114</sup> The fictive author herself often muses on her position and future in a society in which the remnants of the culture of Stalinism are still evident and historical memory becomes lost in uncritical conformity.<sup>115</sup>

Some have viewed the former Soviet bloc nations such as the German Democratic Republic as embodying an "alternative modernity" to that of the Western democracies.<sup>116</sup> One aspect of this modernity included the training of African and Asian health care workers ostensibly accompanied also by much "politicization of development discourse."<sup>117</sup> From Julia Hell's perspective comparison between the FRG and GDR reveals similarity within difference more than a relationship of modernity to pre-modernity as some suggest.<sup>118</sup> Despite the fact that it was founded as, and remained a political dictatorship, it was a society that also, in Kocka's view, privileged reason and science and the implementation of industrial production for the betterment of society through rationalization of life ways and governmental structures. Functionally this meant that the ruling SED controlled all facets of society and culture with the aim of eventually implementing a communist society and "the formation of a new personality (*neuer Mensch*) by political means."<sup>119</sup> East German consumer culture was ideally oriented toward equality of opportunity and practicality of goods. In practice, privilege accrued to Party functionaries, the intelligentsia, and citizens with relatives in the FRG, after the normalization of

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid. 425-426/273-274.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. 383-384; 561-562; 617-618/245; 361; 394-395.

<sup>116</sup> Pence and Betts 11.

<sup>117</sup> Young-Sun Hong, "'The Benefits of Health Must Spread Among All': International Solidarity, Health, and Race in the East German Encounter with the Third World," Pence and Betts 183-210; 194.

<sup>118</sup> Hell 6-7.

<sup>119</sup> Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship* 41.



relations during the Brandt administration made possible gifts and Western currency.<sup>120</sup>

The regime both relied on and distrusted its technical corps and intelligentsia. Distrust of the inclinations of the citizenry at large, perhaps not without grounds considering the history of Nazism, led the regime to invest heavily in sociological research and culminated at one point, in Ulbricht's "Ten Commandments for the New Socialist Person," a set of rules for "everyday decency and discipline."<sup>121</sup> Socially deviant behavior was originally considered an aspect of class struggle but over time, the "comprehensive systems theory of GDR reality defined asociality as its own social subsystem."<sup>122</sup> One way of controlling this 'subsystem' was to develop among the citizenry a system of *inoffizielle Mitarbeiter* to collaborate with the *Staatssicherheitsdienst (Stasi)* in identifying problematic individuals.<sup>123</sup> Capital punishment was in effect until 1987 and attempts to flee the country were frequently fatal.

The GDR could also be anti-Semitic in practice if not in theory.<sup>124</sup> The focal point for this assessment is the fact that while communism theoretically espouses the equality of all, the practical overcoming of centuries of prejudice often appeared to lack any official support. In 1950 the regime designated Jews as victims of the Nazi regime but enacted no substantial financial restitution.<sup>125</sup> As a communist bloc nation, East German foreign policy frequently aligned itself with states at war with Israel, in socialist solidarity. East German Jews perceived to be supporting Israel were therefore under suspicion and became subject to harassment and

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<sup>120</sup> Ina Merkel, "Alternative Rationalities, Strange Dreams, Absurd Utopias: On Socialist Advertising and Market Research," Pence and Betts 323-344; 340-341.

<sup>121</sup> Greg Eghigian, "Homo Munitus: The East German Observed," Pence and Betts 37-70; 44-45.

<sup>122</sup> Thomas Lindenberger, "'Asociality' and Modernity: The GDR as a Welfare Dictatorship," Pence and Betts 211-233; 220.

<sup>123</sup> Eghigian 54.

<sup>124</sup> Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1997) 106ff.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.* 95.

imprisonment.<sup>126</sup> From a purely social viewpoint, historical prejudice continued.<sup>127</sup> As in West Germany, a number of government officials and bureaucrats had held similar positions during the Nazi era.<sup>128</sup> At its beginning, the GDR's Jewish population included prominent returnees from exile like Ernst Bloch, Hanns Eisler, and Anna Seghers. After the denunciation for espionage, expulsion from the SED, and imprisonment of returned communist activist exile Paul Merker, in the early 1950s, many in the Jewish community fled to the West.<sup>129</sup> The net result was to render concern about specifically Jewish issues, e.g. the Holocaust and support for Israel, effectively nonexistent in GDR political discourse.

Discourses on the constitution of society in the Federal Republic of Germany frequently involved the narrative of belonging to Western civilization with appropriate contemporary political ties.<sup>130</sup> The country became integrated into the European Economic Community and began a program of reparations payments to victims of German aggression during World War Two.<sup>131</sup> A further unifying narrative involved the idea of the "defense of freedom" against Soviet aggression, yet there was also a strong support for neutrality, and to some extent consideration, albeit diminishing, of the FRG as a continuation of 'traditional' German society, re-vivified if not re-instituted after interruption by the Third Reich. There was also a desire to differentiate the culture from American influence regarded ambivalently as the expression of

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid. 132-134.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. 106.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. 188.

<sup>129</sup> Jeffrey Herf, *East German Communists and the Jewish Question: the Case of Paul Merker*, Fourth Alois Mertes Memorial Lecture, German Historical Institute Occasional Paper No. 11 (Washington, D. C.: German Historical Institute, 1994) 15ff.

<sup>130</sup> Wolfrum 109.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. 177.

progress or the epitome of soullessness in the technological age.<sup>132</sup>

By the end of its first decade West German society substantially conformed, in Kocka's estimation, to the civil society ideal.<sup>133</sup> As the society became more prosperous and with a generous commitment to social welfare, class antagonisms receded,<sup>134</sup> but women remained less integrated into the workforce than in East Germany.<sup>135</sup> The West German constitution abolished the death penalty in 1949 and the system of justice conformed to European principles. Ironically, in the 1970s, during the era of liberalizing tendencies under the Social Democratic administrations of Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt, the nation witnessed an outbreak of left-wing political violence by Marxism-inspired youth such as the members of the Red Army Faction. Much of this energy was fueled by disgust with the U.S. war in Vietnam and dismay on first learning of the older generation's full involvement in the Holocaust.<sup>136</sup> At the same time and throughout the separate history of West Germany and still today, neo-Nazi movements and parties as well as anti-Semitic outbreaks continued and have continued to attract adherents.<sup>137</sup>

Considering these narratives concerning the nature of life in the two Germanys during the Cold War era the question of the *distinction* of their relationship to the concept of modernity would appear to be contingent upon the manner in which each nation conformed to ideals of emancipation of their citizenry within the construct of a pluralistic 'civil society'. For Kocka the FRG strove to fulfill Enlightenment ideals and indeed derived identity from continuity with this

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<sup>132</sup> (a) Fulbrook, *German National Identity* 61; (b) Wolfrum 181-184.

<sup>133</sup> Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship* 30.

<sup>134</sup> Alf Lüdtke, "The World of Men's Work, East and West," trans. Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, Pence and Betts 234-249; 242-244.

<sup>135</sup> Katherine Pence, "Women on the Verge: Consumers between Private Desires and Public Crisis," Pence and Betts 287-321; 287.

<sup>136</sup> Wolfrum 265-271.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.* 132, 180.

emphasis in Europe as a whole and the pre-National Socialist history of Germany in particular.<sup>138</sup>

The GDR was, however, a dictatorship:

[. . .] slightly disguised one-party rule by the Socialist Unity Party [SED] without party competition and democratic elections, and without legitimate opposition.<sup>139</sup>

Kocka is clear, however, that comparability to Hitler's dictatorship, in terms of motivation and brutality is unsubstantiable.<sup>140</sup>

Kocka sees this society as not one purely of dominance but of "asymmetric symbiosis" between the state bureaucracy and its citizens.<sup>141</sup> Yet the degree to which government permeated the lives of the citizens leads him to view the GDR as possibly more "totalitarian" than the Nazi dictatorship.<sup>142</sup> From the perspectives considered, the German Democratic Republic could not be considered an example of pluralistic civil society based on its own description of striving for the "building of a post-bourgeois, socialist, finally communist society and the formation of a new personality . . . by political means . . ." <sup>143</sup> The question of its relation to 'modernity' and the concept of emancipation may not be thereby settled, however.

Adjudicating the conflicting and competing claims of the constitution of Enlightenment-derived civil society, degrees of personal liberty, and the relation of both to the concept of modernity resides in the realm of historical and philosophical analysis. These narratives and their discourses become situated dialogically among an array of significations and dialectically among an array of choices and their possible integrative (or irresolvable) interactions. *Die*

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<sup>138</sup> Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship* 29-31.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.* 40.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.* 35.

<sup>141</sup> Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship* 43.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.* 56.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.* 41.

*Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* as fictional counterparts to historiography perform these functions also, emplacing the reader, the texts, and the surrounding worlds relative to these arrays of significations and choices, in this case regarding the constitution and import of 'modern' processes in the two Germanys. The problem with the entire analysis is that it assumes at the outset one grand narrative of 'modernity' based on the history and values of the rise of the bourgeoisie, of which it is also a product and as such, a completely tautologous construction. To the definition of modernity as the 'consciousness of living in a new time' has been added the accidents of certain Enlightenment values to the exclusion of alternative possibilities.

Edward Said trenchantly critiqued the logic whereby Ernest Renan analyzed the religion of Islam "as a postscript to a postscript, a trace of a trace."<sup>144</sup> Similarly, Homi Bhabha questions a European modernity based on the constant "reconstruction and reinvention of the subject" in relation to a "contra-modernity"<sup>145</sup> of colonialism in which liberating potential is denied to non-Europeans within the paradigm of rationalization and scientism characterizing greater freedoms in the West.<sup>146</sup> It could be argued that an echo of this problematic may be found in Grass's exploration of culturally dominated European ethnic groups, such as the Kashubian and Polish populations. Wolf directly criticizes American attitudes of superiority to and actions regarding Vietnam and its people.<sup>147</sup> There appears also more than an echo of this dynamic in the expression of the way the capitalist West is related to the socialist Eastern bloc in Wolf's work. Yet neither Grass nor Wolf are advocating a right wing theory of Germany as a victim of colonialism. From the late twentieth century to the present, issues of identity and difference

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<sup>144</sup> Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* 281-282.

<sup>145</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 344.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.* 345.

<sup>147</sup> K 600/PC 384.

have sensitized world culture to exclusionary narratives. This sensitivity may partially inform the comparison of distinct political entities, the FRG and GDR, within one cultural unit, the German language sphere, during the Cold War.

There are two principal ways that societies could be said to embody, as political entities, alternative modernities: (1) through variant and conflicting validity claims for the implementation of the goals of a commonly agreed upon modern society, and (2) variant definitions of the constitution of a modern society. The theoretical models surveyed to this point were derived initially from Western European sociological constructs and utilize these, although with great modification over the years, as measures of modernity.<sup>148</sup> Kocka has viewed the GDR as modern in its centralized government, efficient bureaucratic administration, industrialization, and its break with traditional gender and family roles. He universalizes to a greater or lesser extent the constructs through which he measures the problem. Paradoxically, the governing forces within the GDR acquiesced in measuring their culture by the same standards of ‘capitalist modernity’.<sup>149</sup> They claimed they had a better way to a similar goal.

From the universalist perspective, a society that sees itself as representative of a ‘new time’ and desired to live in the openness of a non-deterministic future, would appear to be less than modern if it devalued the specific additional civil and technological characteristics imputed by Western theorists thereto. The idea that such constructs may themselves be anti-modern in actually precluding access to a more socially fulfilling, non-deterministic condition, although a minority discourse at intervals, has not been seriously entertained in the West for most of the period since the end of World War Two. The universalist view, critical to establishing replicability of results in the sciences, is, in philosophy and sociology, a descendant of Kantian

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<sup>148</sup> Pence and Betts 15.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. 17, 19.

precepts in which “human actions” even though manifestations of “freedom of the will [italics removed]” are “determined . . . in conformity with universal natural laws.”<sup>150</sup> Marxist positions, building on the Hegelian skepticism toward abstract universals,<sup>151</sup> posit the social construction of ‘reality’, but are also conflicted over the import of modernity. The goals of communism did not preclude the continuity of technologization when machines become the “property of the associated workers.”<sup>152</sup> Communist governments actually practiced the same rationalizing organizational measures as their capitalist counterparts; the only anti-modern representatives were regimes based on local traditionalist cultures and murderous variants like the *Khmer Rouge*. In a country like East Germany civil society and the rights of the citizenry were differently defined than in the West and often denied in practice. For many, like Christa Wolf, in comparison to the Nazi regime and the competition oriented capitalist world, a society that provided for its citizens’ wellbeing and extended the hope of a future open to the generalization of this condition to humanity as a whole, could evoke disillusionment but not the loss of utopian striving.<sup>153</sup>

#### 6.4.2 Grass and Wolf

*Die Blechtrommel*, expresses its commentary on modernity and its constituents most often through the media of irony and satire, which as expressed earlier, posits the validity of that which is absent in the text, essentially through negative signification. *Kindheitsmuster* adopts

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<sup>150</sup> Immanuel Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent” (1784), trans. Ted Humphrey, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays: on Politics, History, and Morals*, ed. and trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett, 1983) 29-40; 29.

<sup>151</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic* 296-299.

<sup>152</sup> Karl Marx, “Capitalism, Alienation, and Communism,” from *The Grundrisse* [selections], *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd. ed., ed. Robert C. Tucker, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1978) 221-293; 292.

<sup>153</sup> Magenau 381.

this strategy in regard to certain problematics, like the nature of subjectivity, but in other areas, such as the advancement of world peace and human rights (from the narrator's perspective) there is usually direct commentary, although often of an ambivalent import in relation to the shortcomings of GDR society. In this manner both novels narrativize historical data and so situate the elements of their stories that two similar but ultimately different discourses of personal and societal emancipation, and thus two views of modernity, communicate themselves to the reader.

In *Die Blechtrommel* one gains a sense for the outlines of a positive German cultural identity on two levels. The first issues from the conception of a society opposite the satirical picture painted in the novel, one that faces its past honestly, that abjures the popular and intellectual cultural narratives of irrationalism and aestheticism and accepts responsibility for historical actions. The second is the figure of Oskar re-imagined as divested of nihilistic, megalomaniacal traits in favor of individualistic, irreverent, somewhat anarchical attitudes transforming the character into a figure more reminiscent of, for instance, Till Eulenspiegel. In this mythic culture hero role Oskar discomforts the comfortable and challenges the conventional through the unceasing questioning of German society's foundations and goals. In *Kindheitsmuster*, the vision of a positive cultural identity first involves making whole the split personal subjectivity born of guilt. The second is the integration of such whole persons within a culture that is equitable, i.e. socialist but also allows for the development of the individual in free association with others, and in the accomplishment of these goals throws off the burden of what Julia Hell refers to as "the paternal family narrative."<sup>154</sup>

Given the nature of the two Germanys, on what bases may the works invoke the images

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<sup>154</sup> Hell 198.



of such different 'just' societies? A partial answer might be recovered by viewing the works as products of authors as members of a specific generation of Germans. Wolf's fictive author/narrator in particular, foregrounds the issue of generational attributes.<sup>155</sup> *Die Blechtrommel* is of course not an autobiography but nevertheless depends on Grass's life experiences and observations for its detail.<sup>156</sup> *Kindheitsmuster*, also not an autobiography, closely reflects Wolf's experiences and personal concerns.<sup>157</sup> In Chapter 2 of the dissertation brief biographies and sketches of the cultural scene of the FRG and GDR were presented. The works of Grass's and Wolf's contemporaries, those mostly born in the 1920's, raised under Nazism, or like Paul Celan having suffered under Nazism, reveal different and often conflicting responses to that experience that situate history, subjectivity, and identity (cultural and national), in short the hallmarks of enlightenment and modernity, into a nexus that defines different views of the constellation of these elements and their potential for liberation from the effects of their fascist and war ravaged youth.

Although Wolf's work in particular has been tagged with the label 'subjective authenticity' the writings of most of this generation have the potential to engage the consciousness of the reader of similar background. If Günter Grass and Siegfried Lenz write of their displacement due to the redrawing of international boundaries, there exists an audience with similar experience.<sup>158</sup> As a measure of the 'difference in similarity' of conceptions of society and the intellectual's place within it, as the space that overcomes the fascist past, it can be noted that

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<sup>155</sup> K 198, 233/PC 125, 148.

<sup>156</sup> Julian Preece, "Biography as Politics," *The Cambridge Companion to Günter Grass*, ed. Stuart Taberner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 10-23; 10.

<sup>157</sup> Wolf, "Eine Diskussion über Kindheitsmuster" 93.

<sup>158</sup> Stuart Parkes, "Günter Grass and his contemporaries in East and West," *The Cambridge Companion to Günter Grass*, ed. Stuart Taberner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 209-222; 220.

most of this generation became politically engaged; Grass, in the FRG, as member of the Social Democratic Party and friend of Willy Brandt and Christa Wolf, in the GDR, as member of the Socialist Unity Party, and acquaintance of the prominent leaders, including Erich Honecker.<sup>159</sup> It would appear, however, that if each writer inhabited a definitionally modern society one would at least have to constrain that definition with the modifier: alternative. A number of issues arise in this connection. As Kocka points out, the concept of an open civil society, descended from Enlightenment ideals, has been just that, an ideal, imperfectly implemented in practice in any society. The descent of these ideals through Marxist channels has also, knowingly, [e.g. Marx's 'third stage' of communism: "the *positive* transcendence of *private property* . . . the real *appropriation of the human* essence by and for man"<sup>160</sup> italics in original] never been practically implemented.

It is therefore possible to view Wolf's commitments as embodying unrealized hopes for a modern society superior in promoting equity and justice to those of the West, and as such the epitome of emancipatory modernity beyond the level of its inception by the eighteenth and nineteenth century bourgeoisies. In this respect, as Anke Pinkert observes,

In contrast to the GDR state's mythologizing of the communist resistance to fascism, *Kindheitsmuster* suggests that a full and truthful account of Germany's national socialist past would lead to a more conscientious socialist present and serve to guide future-oriented action.<sup>161</sup>

Wolf recalls in her collection of essays *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* that she and other East German intellectuals wished, with strengthened socialist principles to make the GDR into a real

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<sup>159</sup> Magenau 289-290.

<sup>160</sup> Marx, "Private Property and Communism" 102.

<sup>161</sup> Pinkert 26.

alternative to the capitalist FRG. The irony is that these thoughts were recorded on the occasion of the eleventh Party Plenum in 1965 at which she realized that this possibility was being submerged in totalitarian and ideological control by the Party Central Committee.<sup>162</sup> Pinkert's diagnosis of this dilemma is that East German intellectuals, including Christa Wolf, entered into a "symbiotic" relationship with the state in which they both supported and sought to "corrode the authority of the state"<sup>163</sup> in strategies of only "soft dissidence."<sup>164</sup>

Wolfgang Emmerich asks if Christa Wolf's continued validation of a utopian outlook within a repressive regime invalidates her aesthetics and message, linked as they are.<sup>165</sup> Wolf's publication in 1989 of the short novel *Was bleibt* was the occasion in Germany for an outpouring of criticism and prolonged debate on the responsibilities of the writer. Seeing the protagonist of the novel as identical to Wolf herself, the journalist Ulrich Greiner attacked her sincerity in portraying herself as a victim of state control while enjoying privileges as, in Greiner's words a *Staatsdichterin*.<sup>166</sup> Frank Schirmacher used the occasion to question the integrity of leftist intellectuals in the GDR and, as the *Literaturstreit* escalated, Greiner called into question the position of post-war West and East German attempts at *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* as *Gesinnungsästhetik*, that took as its themes the fight against fascism, Stalinism, traditionalism, etc. all of which he characterized as illegitimate concerns of literature.<sup>167</sup> Günter Kunert, an emigré from the GDR, announced the return of *l'art pour l'art* as the proper realm of

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<sup>162</sup> Wolf, *Auf dem Weg nach Tabou* 60-62.

<sup>163</sup> Pinkert 30.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid. 25.

<sup>165</sup> Emmerich 277.

<sup>166</sup> Ulrich Greiner, "Was bleibt. Bleibt Was? Pro und Contra: eine ZEIT-Kontroverse über C.W und ihre neue Erzählung," *Die Zeit*, 1 June 1990.

<sup>167</sup> Ulrich Greiner, "Deutsche Gesinnungsästhetik, noch einmal Christa Wolf und der deutsche Literaturstreit: Eine Zwischenbilanz," *Die Zeit*, 2 November 1990.

literature.<sup>168</sup>

The second *Literaturstreit* began a little later with revelations of cooperation between the Stasi and East German intellectuals such as Sascha Anderson, Heiner Müller, and Christa Wolf, the latter as *Inoffizielle* or *Informelle Mitarbeiterin* between 1959 and 1962.<sup>169</sup> The first of these ‘literature disputes’ was transparently an effort by conservative publicists to devalue and bring to a close any continuance of deep engagement with the National Socialist past in the new, united Germany. In its own way, unification would be a new *Stunde Null* in which the triumph of capitalism and traditional values would obviate a need for the encumbrance of historical guilt. This, of course was part of a larger effort by ‘neo-conservatives’ throughout Europe and the United States to exercise political power on the strength of discourses that proclaimed an end to historical and cultural competition and diversity on the basis of the absolute ascendancy of the capitalist West, as proven by the collapse of communism within the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The literary aspect re-played the long running debate over the pertinence of the socially ‘committed intellectual’, ongoing since Sartre. The separation of art and life is exactly the attitude of established writers in the early years of the *Bundesrepublik* that Grass satirizes in *Die Blechtrommel*. Both Grass and Wolf had elaborated artistic credos that described themselves as politically engaged citizens who were also writers.<sup>170</sup>

The cooperation of East German intellectuals with the State Security apparatus potentially raises more questions about writers regarded in the West as dissidents, and about Christa Wolf as feminist author. This discussion glosses over the extent to which intellectuals who participate in the life of their countries with any attitude except dissidence are enveloped in

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<sup>168</sup> Günter Kunert, “Der Sturz vom Sockel. Zum Streit der deutschen Autoren,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 3 September 1990.

<sup>169</sup> Beutin et al. 665-667.

<sup>170</sup> Nury Kim 241.

responsibility for the actions of the respective governments. Western intellectuals, including Grass, are believed to have knowingly received support from the CIA during the Cold War period.<sup>171</sup> When the Wall fell, many in the West were perplexed by the continued commitment of East German writers like Wolf and Müller and Volker Braun to a 'reformed' communism. Doing otherwise could be construed as merely opportunistic. It is a matter of record that Wolf was under state surveillance and she and her husband had certainly received reprimands and loss of positions for the degree of dissidence they did practice. In her writings on German problems, she is, as a socialist able to reference the fact that many if not most of the independence movements throughout Africa and Asia were opposed by the 'enlightened' democracies of Europe and the United States until quite late in the Cold War era, as well as narratives of patriarchal domination. Such arguments are perhaps irresolvable, they form the material for the reader's construction of discourses about the issues involved in consideration of the pertinent issues and alternatives. The controversies thus constitute a part of the extended narratives associated with *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*. A question implicitly posed by this situation is one more commonly applicable to charges of complicity in the Holocaust: what would you have done?

Since the 1980s and 1990s many writers have experimented with 'aestheticist' concerns, sometimes de-politicized, sometimes not. Both Grass and Wolf have passed from the scene but German literature, like world literature in general, is extremely diverse and includes continued engagement with social issues, particularly among authors from an immigrant background; one

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<sup>171</sup> Sven Hanschek, "Der Fund for Intellectual Freedom: Ein Propagandainstrument des Kalten Kriegs?" *Schriftsteller als Intellektuelle: Politik und Literatur im Kalten Krieg, Studien und Texte zur Sozialgeschichte der Literatur, Band 73*, eds. Sven Hanschek, Therese Hörnigk, and Christine Malende (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000) 285-306; 286.

thinks of Herta Müller or Emine Sevgi Özdamar, whose productions could hardly be subsumed under the heading of *l'art pour l'art*. Self-expression through internet social media also arguably comprises a type of literature in the twenty-first century and that expression is highly politicized and representative of many perspectives on the political spectrum. How one narrativizes one's interactions with the world and expressions of opinion communicated by many means in relation to one's own self-perception and role in a society are ultimately the issues of the contemporary world into which *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* conceptually emplace the reader as the legacy of the alternative embodiments of modernity.

## 7. The Holocaust: Negation, Negotiation, and Normalization

### 7.1 Problem: Nature and Scope

Since the end of World War Two the discourses that have most characterized the cultures of Germany and Austria are those surrounding the Shoah. Into the present time cultural memory, intellectual discussion, and governmental policies have been marked by their relationship to this horrific event.<sup>1</sup> *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* therefore not only cannot avoid reference to the Holocaust, but at the conceptual level, if not formally, each takes this event as a central focus of the narratives comprising the novels' various discourses. Neither novel is explicitly about the Holocaust *per se* but each fashions their narratives into fictive historiographical and sociological metacommentaries that link societal experience and its memory, as history, with the constitution of particular subjectivities, and locate these within the socio-political concept of modernity in such a way, that genocide becomes the cognitive focalizer for all the novels' discussions of 'normal' life in Nazi Germany. In this sense, the novels' situation of narratives detailing attitudes of conformity, indifference to the fundamental precepts of a civil society, opportunism, patriarchal domination, the perversions of national and cultural consciousness, and the progressive exclusion of those deemed not to truly belong to German society culminate in the logic of extermination. The delineation throughout the dissertation of these factors as chapter specific problematics leads to an appreciation of the conceptual centrality of the Holocaust in *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*.

The Holocaust emerges as an implied organizing principle of both novels through four layers of engagement. The first is the latent effect of the many covert allusions and implications to the Holocaust as well as the frequently unspoken question of where the trajectory of lives

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<sup>1</sup> Müller-Funk 210.

becoming more organized around conformity, nationalism, and the drive for purity actually leads. The second layer of Holocaust engagement in the novels is explicit reference. The third layer is the moral challenge apparent in *Die Blechtrommel's* ironic descriptions and in *Kindheitsmuster's* more direct ruminations on attitudes in the postwar Germanys. The fourth layer is constituted by the authors' awareness of personal entanglement in aspects of the National Socialist societal death machine.

Of the four modes of Holocaust *presence* in the novels, the first three will figure prominently in the explorations of this chapter; the fourth will be pursued more fully in the "Conclusion" to the dissertation. The substantiality of mode number one in the novels is apparent as a measure of the totalitarian nature of the Nazis' grip on German society and the dialogical connections between language and events that reflect that grip.<sup>2</sup> When Nelly confronts the ideology encapsulated in a song by the construct 'from the I to the we' the void signifying those who are not 'we' is filled by the victims, the Jewish population primarily. The impossibility of that population being included *in* the construct, has, in conjunction with the other elements of Nazi ideology only one logic: extermination. Every aspect of Oskar's life and transgressions in the Third Reich becomes the signifier of the real world solution to his maladjustments: euthanasia. Mode number two finds much of its expression, similar to the novels' modes of historical reflection, in detail. In *Die Blechtrommel* this might be the historicity of the Treblinka revolt, in *Kindheitsmuster* the functionings of Auschwitz. For both, the process of Nazification is made real at the level of the lives led by individuals and families, their fears and motivations. Mode three reflects the novels' moral challenge to the reader and the

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<sup>2</sup> Victor Klemperer, *The Language of the Third Reich, LTI – Lingua Tertii Imperii: A Philologist's Notebook*, trans. Martin Brady (New York: Continuum, 2006); Klemperer's opinions are here considered instructive although not definitive.



urge to enlighten. If fascism situates itself into the traditional structures of society with its reverence for authority, its conformity, its rewarding of opportunism, and the primacy of ‘feeling’ over critical reflection, then the reader is faced with an existential ‘either/or’ choice of life paths. The allocation of sense to the texts, as indicated in previous chapters of the dissertation, also partakes of the decisional problematic – or else abandonment in the face of the undecidable. The authors both face and faced the same choices involving honesty and authenticity in their writing and in real life, respectively. This fact gave credence to the position of Grass, Wolf, and other members of their generation as a collective moral authority. The basis for such stature resides in the requirement that each, with complete candor, come to terms with individual ancillary entanglement in the perpetration of mass murder.

The decisions made by Germans individually and collectively about how to regard themselves in the past, in the present, and into the future have varied since defeat in World War Two. It was once commonplace to observe that immediately after the war, the Shoah was little mentioned either by survivors or perpetrators. This assertion has been questioned on the basis of literature and accounts from the period. Perhaps more evident is the attempt by many in the non-Jewish German population to minimize the suffering inflicted and project a *Verharmlosung* of Hitler’s goals, in essence to negate the effects of genocide if not its factual basis. Later, of course, both Germanys began to honestly come to terms with recent history and to negotiate a way forward with acceptance of responsibility. Since unification, Germany has debated what a narrative not of its ‘special’ status but as a ‘normal’ European nation might entail. Viewed in this manner the dissertation will probe the societal import of such negation, negotiation, and possible normalization on the basis of their salient characteristics in Grass’s and Wolf’s novels. In doing so, the conceptual framework will be the intersection of these categories with the

aforementioned three modes of engagement through which the Holocaust is everywhere in the texts made present.

The fictive author's interrogation in *Kindheitsmuster* of how "we became as we are" and Oskar's forcing of his personal history upon the reader in *Die Blechtrommel* also implicitly comprises the question, in relation to the Holocaust, "how could we, as Germans, initiate and prosecute mass murder on a hitherto almost unimaginable scale?" This is perhaps the single most important rationale for designating the Holocaust as the central concept in the novels. If it were not for the encumbrance of a brutal and genocidal history, on a scale that many have thought unfathomable, there would be little point in writing of a society-wide guilt capable of deforming individual personalities as a historical tragedy. Narratives of the Nazi era and conceivably of the war would come together in discourses of the relative merits of the various solutions to the societal problems of the mid-twentieth century: a debate between the alternatives of communism, New Deal or Keynesian economics, and fascism. The novels explore Wolf's author's question by situating the reader through their texts into worlds in which genocide could be possible. The world in which the Holocaust was not only possible but actually occurred, has been described by witnesses, victims, chroniclers, and historians. The discourses of these groups differ from those of fiction, even though based on narrativization of data, in that they claim a truth-value for their descriptions located in the materiality of genocide itself. In relation to these the discourses of fiction work at the conceptual level, engaging the reader's imagination for processing ideas not only of what occurred but also of what could have occurred and in what way.

Although direct reference to persecution and genocide in *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* is sparse the novels instantiate a typology that subsumes the essence of real

world evental history. The novels eschew answers to Wolf's author's question, above, in disquisitions on the large movements of history – defeat in the First World War, despair during the Great Depression, deep-seated anti-Semitism – as abstract undertakings. *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* approach the issues from the perspective of the individual and the family, from the perspectives of the narrative voices. The typology broadly reflects (1) the acceptance of Nazism by the population in 1933 and over the years, (2) the perpetration of crimes against humanity, and (3) the complicity, at some level, of the populace in these crimes. These categories are reflected here under the subheadings: “National Socialists,” “Perpetrators,” and “Ordinary Germans.” To the extent that the paucity of Holocaust references causes the novels to seemingly disappear into their real world contexts, those same referents emerge as the real loci of the narratives, transpiring in the mind of the reader on the basis of the known history.

## **7.2 Negation**

### **7.2.1 National Socialists**

Reading the novels against non-fictional explications demonstrates some of the complexities of coming to terms with the rise of Nazism and the implementation of the Holocaust. In *Die Blechtrommel* “the era of torchlight parades and grandstand assemblies”<sup>3</sup> is predicted by Bebra as a time of pogrom yet he advises a strategy of survival through assimilation to the mass culture.<sup>4</sup> Oskar's German father, Matzerath, joins the Party in 1934, having “recognized the forces of law and order relatively early on [. . .].”<sup>5</sup> Significantly, these passages are placed within the larger context of Sigismund Markus' warnings to Agnes, from the previous chapter, to side with the German, Matzerath rather than the Pole, Bronski, for the

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<sup>3</sup> TD 102/B 144.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 103/146.

Germans are “going to be on top, sooner or later [. . .].”<sup>6</sup> In *Kindheitsmuster* the coming to power of the National Socialists in the town L. is presented with a torchlight parade on a particular day, March 17, 1933. The fabula in which this event is embedded also presents the driving of the German Communist Party out of L., forced recantation by its leaders, and jubilation by the majority of the town’s citizens.<sup>7</sup> The historical record shows that throughout Germany in the month of March 1933, the Nazi regime effectively seized power in all parts of Germany, imprisoning known and suspected opponents. The father of Heiner Müller, a Social Democratic activist, was arrested on 9 March.<sup>8</sup> While these types of actions are met cautiously by Nelly’s parents and even with a certain foreboding by her mother, a glimpse into what National Socialism could mean to some is more evident in the passages surrounding the figure of Juliane Strauch, Nelly’s teacher.

The character Dr. Juliane Strauch, intellectual, unmarried, yet proponent of the “ideal German woman”<sup>9</sup> counterbalances the ideological instrumentalization of women for reproductive and nurturing purposes in the service of an ‘Aryan’ nation and signifies the possibility of seeing in the National Socialist *völkisch* organizing principle a greater chance for personal attainment than under traditional or socialistic orientation,<sup>10</sup> also for women. Thus, in addition to Nazi affiliation as a vehicle to unleash brutality born of deep-seated anti-Semitic hatred, a discourse emerges, not only in fiction but also historiographically, of individuation and

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<sup>6</sup> TD 94/B 133; TD 103/B 146.

<sup>7</sup> K 87-88/PC 53-54.

<sup>8</sup> Jan-Christoph Hauschild, *Heiner Müller oder das Prinzip Zweifel: eine Biographie* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2003) 26.

<sup>9</sup> PC 219/K 344.

<sup>10</sup> Michalka 700-701.

a feeling of security within the goal-oriented society of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.<sup>11</sup> For *Kindheitsmuster*'s narrative the unremarkable texture of life for non-Jewish Germans within this society has been referred to by the signature phrase, "der ganz normale Alltag des Faschismus."<sup>12</sup> Ultimately, 'normality' included the ability of large sectors of German civil society, viz. academia, the churches, the business community, even the traditional representatives of the labor force, to accommodate themselves to the new order.<sup>13</sup>

By comparison, perusing relevant historical data on the Nazification of German society raises questions and might elicit some surprise at the scope of the involvement of ordinary Germans. For instance, the famed organist and Protestant church composer Hugo Distler joined the Party,<sup>14</sup> as did a law student named Kurt Georg Kiesinger, Chancellor of the Federal Republic from 1966 to 1969,<sup>15</sup> also Martin Heidegger. In the general elections of 1932 the National Socialist Party received 33% of the vote with 79.9% voter participation. An increase in nationalist sentiment on the whole was observable in the electoral results, even if not specifically for the Nazis.<sup>16</sup> Aside from sociological theories of group behavior, the question remains why individuals associated themselves with Nazism. The novels pursue the theme with the stories of, for instance, greengrocer Greff, Matzerath, and trumpeter Meyn, in *Die Blechtrommel* and Nelly's parents and social circle in *Kindheitsmuster*. There are generational differences in the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 701.

<sup>12</sup> Firsching 69.

<sup>13</sup> Michalka 704.

<sup>14</sup> Michael H. Kater, *The Twisted Muse: Musicians and Their Music in the Third Reich* (New York, London: Oxford University Press, 1997) 165.

<sup>15</sup> Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Kurt Georg Kiesinger," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, web.

<sup>16</sup> Martin Vogt, "Die Weimarer Republik (1918-1933)," *Deutsche Geschichte: Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Martin Vogt et al., 3rd. ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2002) 616-693; 690.

novels and in reality; the motivations of the World War One generation, the parents of Nelly and Oskar, differ from those significantly younger, particularly those coming to maturity under National Socialism who had few other standards for opinion formation.

One perhaps unavoidably evaluates by categorization. There are the leaders of the regime, tried at Nuremberg, and their personal histories and psychologies. There are those who staffed the concentration camps. There are the leaders of industry, also professional people, academics, and research scientists. For many, Party membership or identification with its goals was necessary or desirable for a successful career. There are intellectuals, writers, and journalists, some of whom claimed, in their quietism, to have exercised an ‘inner emigration.’ There are some who resisted in various ways or were able to emigrate. There are those who were murdered. How does one regard the others? A standard answer situates the majority of the German populace into discourses of apathy and political naiveté. Grass’s and Wolf’s novels attempt to explore the dynamics behind these.

### **7.2.2 Perpetrators**

In *Kindheitsmuster*, Nelly gradually comes to the awareness that the members of L.’s Jewish community, although not even communists, were effectively becoming outcasts from the larger community. Although no relevant body of law existed in 1933, it is clear that the entire program of the National Socialist Party regarding the Jewish population falls under the present legal definition of *genocide*. The specifications adopted by the United Nations in 1948 identifies the crime as the “intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group” through killing, “[c]ausing serious bodily or mental harm; . . . inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about . . . physical destruction; . . . [i]mposing measures intended to prevent

births,” and “[f]orcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”<sup>17</sup> All these measures were, of course, implemented as policy by Hitler’s regime at some point between 1933 and 1945. With progressive codification of restrictions on Jewish Germans, including the Nuremberg laws of 1935,<sup>18</sup> all non-Jewish Germans were aware of the official policies and conducted their daily lives with that knowledge. By Saul Friedländer’s analysis the majority of the German populace, although traditionally anti-Semitic and not averse to segregating the Jewish population, “shied away from widespread violence against them, urging neither their expulsion from the Reich nor their physical annihilation.”<sup>19</sup> Friedländer in no way minimizes by this statement, the extent to which average citizens and institutions acquiesced, after somewhat tepid remonstrance, in the growing persecution of Jewish Germans.<sup>20</sup>

*Kindheitsmuster* treats *Kristallnacht* in some detail, giving also statistics on the destruction. The story is embedded within a disquisition on Nelly’s acquaintance with fear, fostered by propaganda, but not with compassion.<sup>21</sup> Nelly goes to the site of the local synagogue after it burns and witnesses members of the congregation attempting to save valuables and religious heirlooms.

Um ein Haar wäre Nelly eine unpassende Empfindung unterlaufen: Mitgefühl. Aber der gesunde deutsche Menschenverstand baute eine Barriere dagegen, als Angst.<sup>22</sup>

The passage parenthetically suggests that one who as a child has been forced to have feelings of

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<sup>17</sup> Samantha Power, “A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide” (New York: Harper Collins, 2002) 57.

<sup>18</sup> Michalka 716.

<sup>19</sup> Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Volume 1* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997); 4.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 49-54.

<sup>21</sup> K 246 -250/PC 156-159.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 253/160.

compassion displaced by fear and hatred may also lack compassion for oneself as well as others.

*Die Blechtrommel* references the November pogrom within the chapter “Glaube Hoffnung Liebe” beginning,

[e]s war einmal ein Musiker, der hieß Meyn und konnte ganz wunderschön Trompete blasen [,]<sup>23</sup>

and continues with fairy tale like parallelism, “[e]s war einmal en SA-Mann, der hieß Meyn[,]” and “[e]s war einmal ein Blechtrommler, der hieß Oskar[,]” etc. The chapter develops the tale of SA-Mann Meyn, who attempts to kill his cats but fails, is expelled from the SA [Sturmabteilung] but redeems himself by participating on Kristallnacht in the burning of the Langfuhr synagogue and later the vandalizing of businesses in the Jewish community. In the end he joins the Home Guard, which becomes part of the Waffen-SS.<sup>24</sup> The toy merchant Sigismund Markus, the source of Oskar’s drums, commits suicide as his shop is assaulted by SA thugs. The extension of the fairy tale conceit to the picturing of an immature populace believing in the *Weihnachtsmann* who is actually the *Gasmann* places the narrative at the threshold of the ‘Final Solution’.

The historical record of Kristallnacht reveals the vicious opportunism of the Nazi regime in seeking excuses to harm Jews. Toward the end of 1938 the Nazi regime attempted to repatriate Jews of Polish origin but the government of Poland initially refused their return creating an uncertain future for several thousand individuals consigned to refugee camps. On November 7, 1938 the son of one of the affected families assassinated a German diplomat in Paris. Between 8 and 10 November the Nazis used this as pretext to initiate a pogrom that resulted in the vandalizing of thousands of Jewish businesses, the burning of hundreds of

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<sup>23</sup> B 253/TD 181.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 258-259/185.



synagogues, many deaths, and incarceration numbering in the tens of thousands of members of the Jewish community in concentration camps.<sup>25</sup>

The history of the Holocaust is unevenly partitioned between Grass's and Wolf's novels. In *Die Blechtrommel*, overt mention centers on the figure of Mariusz Fajngold, a former inmate of the Treblinka death camp. In *Kindheitsmuster*, there are numerous entries referencing concentration camps, prominent figures such as Adolf Eichmann and Rudolf Höss, first commandant of Auschwitz, and the program of genocide in which they participated. The subtitle for Chapter 11 is "Final Solution." With the beginning of World War Two the Nazi regime considered a number of strategies to both dispose of German, and increasingly European Jews and possibly to use them for diplomatic and military advantage. In the end, plans for mass removal from Europe came to nothing. Jews in areas occupied by German forces were confined to ghettos or deported to concentration camps where they died of starvation, illness, and maltreatment.<sup>26</sup> *Kindheitsmuster's* recognition of this history is, as with other significant ideas in the novel, situated in relation to the bifurcation of Nelly and the adult fictive author. For the former there is, on the occasion of her confirmation in 1943, the lack of knowledge of the Warsaw ghetto uprising and the resistance activities of Roman Catholics, Sophie and Hans Scholl in Germany. For the latter there is not only knowledge but the at least partial equation of the living conditions of African-Americans with those of Jews in the ghettos and ascription of

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<sup>25</sup> (a) Karol Jonca, "Kristallnacht," *The Holocaust Encyclopedia*, ed. Walter Laqueur (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001) 385-391; 390 (b) Michalka 717.

<sup>26</sup> Shlomo Aronson and Peter Longerich, "Final Solution: Preparation and Implementation," *The Holocaust Encyclopedia*, ed. Walter Laqueur (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001) 184-198; 188.

complacent racism to white Americans in not believing uprisings to be possible against their hegemonic rule.<sup>27</sup>

The implementation of the “Final Solution to the Jewish Problem” is considered to have begun with the murder by *Einsatzgruppen* [mobile killing squads] of targeted groups, then ever larger segments of populations, at first by shooting, then in mobile gas vans by carbon monoxide gas, and ultimately in camps with Zyklon-B gas. Wolf’s fictive author comments on her daughter’s generation’s affective distance from the Holocaust through discussion of the I. G. Farben company’s support for human experimentation at Auschwitz. A map of concentration camps elicits the observation that trains bound for Chelmno, Majdanek and Treblinka probably went through the town L. Yet Nelly never heard of such transports either during or after the war.<sup>28</sup> The adult author’s knowledge also encompasses the end result of not being that which Nelly knew she had to be: normal. The adult knows that methods pioneered in the Nazi euthanasia program were transferred to technology for the extermination of millions.<sup>29</sup> In this material fact, illustrated also by the need of some characters in *Kindheitsmuster* such as the Lehmanns to justify themselves as ‘Aryans’<sup>30</sup> the author implicitly knows a truth of Nazi ideology, expressed by Omer Bartov.

In this quest for perfection, everyone was potentially tainted, and no proof of ancestry could protect one from allegations of pollution . . . . The boundless definition of "purity" therefore made for an endless pool of potential victims [. . .].<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> K 400-401/PC 257.

<sup>28</sup> K 367-369/PC 235-236.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 310/198.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 371-373/238-239.

<sup>31</sup> Omer Bartov, “Defining Enemies, Making Victims: Germans, Jews, and the Holocaust,” *The American Historical Review* 103.3 (June 1998): 771-816; 786.

The danger of euthanasia is very real for ‘abnormal’ Oskar in *Die Blechtrommel*. Considering the range of symbolism embodied by this figure -- ‘every German’, a little Hitler, the outsider and non-conformist, etc. – the threat of annihilation effectively signifies the threat of the fascist personality to its own different manifestations and through externalization, the threat to exterminate others, for the imaginary ‘impurity’ that one cannot abide in oneself.

In *Kindheitsmuster*, the fictive author notes that at about the same time and on the same route that Nelly flees west from the advancing Soviet forces, SS units marched 30,000 prisoners from Sachsenhausen concentration camp and killed almost 10,000 on the way.<sup>32</sup> Surviving concentration camp inmates were evacuated in the wake of advancing Soviet forces during the last winter of the war, creating effectively death marches, in which malnourished and brutalized individuals could not but succumb.<sup>33</sup> The awareness of genocide on the part of the reader is assumed rather than detailed in *Die Blechtrommel*.

Katharina Hall has called the passages in *Die Blechtrommel* depicting Sigismund Markus’ death in the context of the 1938 November pogrom and Mariusz Fajngold’s experience in Treblinka “the moral heart of the novel.”<sup>34</sup> In the “Glaube Hoffnung Liebe” chapter the moral culpability of the German nation is clearly set forth.<sup>35</sup> In the postwar world Oskar dates the beginning of his “complex” to the pogrom but admits he failed, like most Germans at the time, to see the event as a portent of things to come.<sup>36</sup> In the analysis of Jack Zipes,

[. . .] Markus incorporates the German-Jewish symbiosis: he is in love with Oskar's

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<sup>32</sup> K 498/PC 320.

<sup>33</sup> Aronson and Longerich 197.

<sup>34</sup> Hall 68.

<sup>35</sup> B 253-264/TD 181-189.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 268-269/194-195.

mother and the city of Danzig, but this love is unrequited and . . . he eventually takes his own life. This loss, according to Grass, must be made good somehow by Germans, disturbing German amnesia and complacency.<sup>37</sup>

Fajngold, deeply traumatized, carries with him the memory of the dead – still alive and present to consciousness. His condition bears, in Hall’s words, “witness to the Holocaust from the alternative perspective of the Jewish survivor [. . .].”<sup>38</sup>

As the death of Sigismund Markus in the November pogrom attempts to situate the reader into the world in which the Shoah begins, the introduction of Fajngold attempts the same for the end product of the horror. The killing center of Treblinka II was established in 1942 about a mile from the previously built Treblinka I, a forced labor and labor education camp. Treblinka II had a small staff of German SS and police officials augmented by auxiliary units of former Soviet prisoners of war as well as Polish and Ukrainian civilians. German personnel from the T-4 euthanasia program were also present at Treblinka. Gas chambers ran on carbon monoxide and bodies were burned and buried in mass graves. In 1943 Treblinka was the site of a prisoner revolt but the majority of escapees were re-captured and killed. Later that year Treblinka II was closed. Estimates of the numbers killed at the camp range from 800,000 to over 900,000. There were fewer than 70 known survivors.<sup>39</sup> In Grass’s novel Fajngold is one of several inmates whose regular job of disinfecting the compound allowed them, according to witnesses, to fill

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<sup>37</sup> Jack Zipes, “Contested Jews: The Image of Jewishness in Contemporary German Literature,” *South Central Review* 16.2/3 (Autumn 1999): 3-15; 11.

<sup>38</sup> Hall 70.

<sup>39</sup> (a) Judith Tydor Baumel, “Extermination Camps,” *The Holocaust Encyclopedia*, ed. Walter Laqueur (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001) 174-179; 179. (b) United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Treblinka,” *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005193>, accessed 25 May 2015.

their pumps with flammable fuel and set fire to the camp during the August 1943 revolt. Names mentioned in the text in connection with this event, such as engineer Galewski, are also based on eyewitness accounts.<sup>40</sup> Oskar, characteristically, displays no propensity for critical evaluation of Fajngold's story.<sup>41</sup> The reader must situate the text within the world-context.

### 7.2.3 Ordinary Germans

As moral challenge to her compatriots, *Kindheitsmuster's* adult narrator develops the discussion of the negation of responsibility in the guise of reading the notebooks of Rudolf Höss while taking a cure at a medical spa. She notes the calm and scientific manner in which her doctors view the book. She notes how her own logical mind absorbs and incorporates the facts of genocide. But she juxtaposes against this habituation the psychological effects of horror apparent in dreams and the cognitive associations of words and phrases that recall the gassing of millions. It then occurs to her that the medical staff with whom she works could dispassionately have participated in the Holocaust. Indeed, this event is characterized by

[. . .] not only crimes committed against masses of people but also a massive surge of perpetrators and accomplices.<sup>42</sup>

Bartov notes that Germans perceived themselves toward the end of the war also as victims and “postwar Germany strove to neutralize the memory of the Jews' destruction so as to ensure its own physical and psychological restoration.”<sup>43</sup> Although concentration camps were officially overseen by units of the SS (and other police units), the removal of the Jewish population of

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<sup>40</sup> (a) B 543-544/TD 394-395; (b) Yad Vashem, *The Nizkor Project, Proceedings of the Fourth Yad Vashem International Historical Conference: Jewish Prisoner Uprisings in the Sobibor and Treblinka Extermination Camps*, Jerusalem, 1980, 1984; web.

<sup>41</sup> B 523-550/TD 379-399.

<sup>42</sup> PC 240/K 376.

<sup>43</sup> Bartov 788.

Europe to killing centers such as Auschwitz and Treblinka, as well as camps with less official genocidal designations like Bergen-Belsen and Dachau required significant expenditure of German personnel and material resources. It also required the coordination of transportation and the initiation of diplomatic measures between the German Foreign Ministry and the governments of occupied nations.<sup>44</sup>

In the opinion of Raul Hilberg, the Holocaust was facilitated by the successful organization of individuals willing to be complicit in murder.

Whether they were in command or lowly placed, in an office or outdoors, they all did their part, when the time came, with all the efficiency they could muster."<sup>45</sup>

Jürgen Kocka writes that "[t]he large majority of Germans . . . remained indifferent, cautious, disoriented or defensive, and, from a national point of view, defiant."<sup>46</sup> Perhaps *Die Blechtrommel's* major contribution to this line of thought are the significations, considering Oskar as symbolic stand-in for the ordinary German, inherent in Oskar's slight but measurable growth in stature that terminates with the formation of a hump.<sup>47</sup>

In both Western and Soviet occupation zones Nazi activists and leaders were dismissed from positions and often tried for war crimes. Statistical summaries vary in relation to those sought, those tried, and those punished. Kocka states that in the Western zones approximately 5,000 individuals were convicted of war crimes. Of these around 800 were sentenced to death and approximately 500 actually executed. In the Soviet zone around 13,000 were convicted with

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<sup>44</sup> Aronsen and Longerich 193-197.

<sup>45</sup> Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders* (New York: Harper, 1992) 28.

<sup>46</sup> Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship* 71.

<sup>47</sup> B 551-564/TD 400-401.

no enumeration of punishments.<sup>48</sup> Edgar Wolfrum states that by 1948 about 520,000 suspect individuals had been dismissed from public offices and private industry, most successfully in the Soviet zone. He notes however, that by the beginning of the 1950s very many former Nazis were able to regain prominent positions in government and industry.<sup>49</sup> Mary Fulbrook cites a study of women's immediate postwar diary entries as evidence that at least a segment of the population at the moment of defeat, had "an almost total incapacity to think of any future beyond Nazism."<sup>50</sup> Wolfrum estimates that there were at this time approximately 6.5 million Nazi party members.<sup>51</sup>

For those actively interested in a new beginning, the necessity of re-building cities and creating new governmental structures meant that experienced professionals could be accepted into positions of responsibility with little attention to denazification procedures.<sup>52</sup> *Die Blechtrommel* summarizes the tenor of this period by Oskar's continuation of education at night school, "in the company of thousands determined to learn."<sup>53</sup> In an implied challenge to the reading audience for sincerity Oskar, like others, discusses

[. . .] collective guilt with Catholics and Protestants, shared that guilt with all who thought: Let's get it over with now, be done with it, and later, when things get better, there'll be no need to feel guilty.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship* 72.

<sup>49</sup> Wolfrum 27.

<sup>50</sup> Fulbrook, *German National Identity* 168.

<sup>51</sup> Wolfrum 44.

<sup>52</sup> Konrad H. Jarausch, "The Conundrum of Complicity: German Professionals and the Final Solution," Joseph and Rebecca Meyerhoff Annual Lecture, 11 June 2001 (Washington, D.C., United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2001) 13.

<sup>53</sup> TD 415/B 570.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* 416/570.

By 1947 Oskar is through with school and “Pastor Niemoeller” as symbol of a reformed ecclesiastical establishment that earlier had been strongly nationalistic but after the war moved toward acknowledgement of guilt and fostered ecumenical associations.

Julia Hell imputes to the conceptual constitutions of East and West Germany a "founding discourse" of anti-fascism.<sup>55</sup> At the founding and re-founding of German political parties at the end of 1945 in the several zones of occupation all major entities repudiated not only National Socialist policies but also its implied thought associations. An appeal to the citizenry from the Christian Democratic Union includes the following acknowledgement.

Groß ist die Schuld weiter Kreises unseres Volkes, die sich nur allzu bereitwillig zur Handlangern und Steigbügelhaltern für Hitler erniedrigten.<sup>56</sup>

A similar document by the Free Democrats places blame on the imperialist “Zwangsstaat” but reassures the German people that they should not lose confidence in themselves or their ability to produce a truly democratic German “Reich.”<sup>57</sup> The Social Democratic Party, as champion of the working class but eschewing class warfare, agreed also that Germans must bear the consequences of the Nazi war of aggression and its victimization of other nations.<sup>58</sup> The Communist Party addressed itself to workers somewhat more stridently than the Social Democrats and declared that most Germans bore a significant portion of guilt and accountability

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<sup>55</sup> Hell 2.

<sup>56</sup> Theo Stammen, ed., “Aufruf der Christlich-Demokratischen Union an das deutsche Volk,” *Eingkeit und Recht und Freiheit: Westdeutsche Innenpolitik 1945 – 1955* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1965) 82-85; 83.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., “Programmatische Richtlinien der Freien Demokratischen Partei vom 4. Februar 1946,” 108-110; 108.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. “Politische Leitsätze der SPD vom Mai 1946,” 120-126; 120.



for Nazi crimes in proportion to their support for the regime.<sup>59</sup>

In the West, accountability became submerged rather quickly in apathy about the Nazi past amid the economic concerns attendant upon the creation of material prosperity.<sup>60</sup> The inability of ordinary Germans to authentically come to terms with the Nazi period and their own feelings, be they of guilt or loss, is parodied in *Die Blechtrommel's* "Onion Cellar" chapter, which concludes with the focus not on this idea but rather how easily the patrons revert to infantile behavior in company to Oskar's drumming.<sup>61</sup> The contingencies of the developing Cold War between the Soviet Union and the Western powers also dampened enthusiasm for denazification. One form of the abnegation of responsibility asks how one may be accountable for actions that were also engaged in, if not initiated, by large numbers of professionals -- some convicted war criminals, others untried -- who were welcomed into the military and industrial establishments of the Allies for the exploitation of their accomplishments (e.g. rocket technology, nerve gas development) during the Third Reich.

In the East, anti-fascism became the structural core of official ideology.<sup>62</sup> As such it could foster a negation of responsibility by emphasizing the very real victimhood of workers, socialists, and Communist Party activists under Nazism and connecting these survivors with the establishment of the East German regime. In this way every conscientious East German citizen became heir to Nazi victimization without needing to claim any particular solidarity, other than pro forma, with the murdered Jewish population of Europe. *Kindheitsmuster* adopts a dual situating strategy for this problematic. On the one hand the novel details examples of anti-

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., "Aufruf des Zentralkomitees der KPD vom 11. Juni 1945," 127-133; 128.

<sup>60</sup> Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship* 75.

<sup>61</sup> B 704-706 /TD 510-511.

<sup>62</sup> Ihme-Tuchel 18.

Semitism and refers to Jewish victims at appropriate points in the narrative.<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, freed concentration camp inmates that Nelly meets in her flight are not characterized, other than to note their indifferent demeanor. This passage does, however become an attempt by Nelly to feel empathy with these individuals.<sup>64</sup> At other points such inmates are described as Communists.<sup>65</sup> The adult fictive author shows empathy in her analysis of survivor's guilt among former inmates in a passage referencing Theresienstadt and Auschwitz, by implication, Jewish survivors.<sup>66</sup>

On ideological and economic grounds the GDR could also distance itself from culpability through the interpretation of Nazism as still latent in the West, as a legacy of capitalism.<sup>67</sup> In Wolf's novel, there is empathy for those who against their will became Nazis only because they were poor.<sup>68</sup> The placement of this passage, commencing with Lenka showing surprise that their could be National Socialist Party members who were not convinced Nazis, appears to mirror the Soviet zone categorization of 'active' and 'nominal' Nazis.<sup>69</sup> In the same way, the FRG could claim, as a "founding myth" its economic success as simultaneously the product of its antipathy to the "totalitarian" GDR<sup>70</sup> and grounds for absolution from the guilt of Nazi era crimes. None of this should cast doubt on the earnestness of ordinary Germans on both sides of the Cold War divide who accepted versions of these narratives combined with genuine anguish about the

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<sup>63</sup> K 507-508; 520/PC 326-327; 334.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 504 /324.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. 517/332.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. /334-335.

<sup>67</sup> Fulbrook, *German National Identity* 49.

<sup>68</sup> K 531/PC 347.

<sup>69</sup> Fulbrook, *German National Identity* 54.

<sup>70</sup> Ihme-Tuchel 19.

Holocaust; of interest is the process of narrativization itself from which disparate discourses of cultural and national identities could be introduced into political parlance.

### 7.3 Negotiation

With the beginning of the Cold War era, the respective governments of the two separate German nations with two officially different identities, in the words of Jürgen Kocka, “made their peace with the mass of former small and not so small Nazis.”<sup>71</sup> In small ways at first, then more fulsomely as time passed, Germans began to negotiate, more than deny the significance of the Nazi era for their present and their future. In the Federal Republic the 1950s continued to be a period of “relative silence about and denial of the Nazi past.”<sup>72</sup> Although segments of the press, scholars, writers, and artists began discussing the legacy of crimes, victims were seldom heard. Under *Law 131* civil servants of the Third Reich could continue employment or receive pensions in the Federal Republic.<sup>73</sup> The Adenauer administration initiated restitution payments to the government of Israel but in general, West Germans spoke more of their sufferings than those they had caused during World War Two.<sup>74</sup> Fulbrook asks how restitution [*Wiedergutmachung*] could possibly be made for the millions of lives lost. She also critiques the state documents involved in this transaction as indicative of drawing a firm distinction between ‘Germans’ and ‘Jews’.<sup>75</sup>

In the German Democratic Republic, the imputation of the causes of Nazism to the capitalist system signified the innocence of the socialist citizenry in this regard. The Holocaust

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<sup>71</sup> Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship* 74.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* 75.

<sup>73</sup> Fulbrook, *German National Identity* 60.

<sup>74</sup> Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship* 76.

<sup>75</sup> Fulbrook, *German National Identity* 65-66.

was therefore primarily perpetrated by others representing powerful interests and there was little reason to consider *us* guilty in any significant way.<sup>76</sup> Fulbrook describes the situation thus.

As far as their own roles were concerned, there was a real (if often idealized) basis for the founding anti-fascist myth of the GDR. But along with the (in most cases well deserved) myth of heroism and resistance of the communist leaders went the myth of innocence of the workers and peasants.<sup>77</sup>

East Germany did not participate in financial restitution. After the free elections of March 1990, however, the Volkskammer issued a declaration acknowledging shared guilt for the crimes of the Nazi era.<sup>78</sup>

In the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s a fuller engagement with the Holocaust occurred in West Germany precipitated by events such as the capture and trial of Adolf Eichmann and the so-called Auschwitz trials held in Frankfurt. The Ludwigsburg Center for Judicial Inquiries and Research on Nazi Crimes had already begun amassing evidence against ordinary citizens who might have committed war crimes. This resulted in a series of trials running from 1963 to 1965, 1965 to 1966, and 1967 to 1968 charging 25 defendants [20, 3, and 2, respectively] under German penal law for their roles as mid- to lower-level officials at Auschwitz-Birkenau. This began a period of public discussion about the Holocaust and German guilt in the media, in the courts, and in parliament.<sup>79</sup> In Kocka's words,

[. . .] these were the arenas in which the identity of the Federal Republic was, in a way, renegotiated in the 1960s and 1970s by changing its collective memories, its relation to

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 75.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 55.

<sup>78</sup> Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship* 81.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. 77-78.

the Nazi past.<sup>80</sup>

The student rebellions of the late 1960's and 1970's manifested in Germany also as the post-World War II generation's reproach of their elders both for having committed such crimes and for failure to be honest with their children about their roles during the war. Most of the focus of this time period was perhaps less on Nazi genocide than the evils of militarism, Americanism, and the consumer society. Willy Brandt initiated a policy of acknowledgement of German war guilt and became the first German chancellor to visit Israel.

The 1978 American television series *Holocaust*, was seen also in West Germany and provoked further discussion of German guilt and attitudes. This occurred in a national mood of searching for roots and traditions as a way to achieve a cultural identity, in both Germanys, East and West, and concern [*Betroffenheit*] for the events of the Holocaust was identified in the media as a necessary part of forming the German cultural or national identity. During this period memorials began to be planned for victims. On the 40th anniversary of the surrender of Germany President Richard von Weiszäcker spoke of that date as 'liberation' rather than 'capitulation' as his predecessors had.<sup>81</sup> In the 1980s, during the so-called *Historikerstreit* some German historians argued that the crimes of the Nazi era were not unusual, were comparable to purported Soviet crimes under Stalin, and could be regarded as defensive measures against the extension of communism into Germany. Socially concerned historians and philosophers argued against this view and any relativizing of German responsibility for World War Two and genocide.<sup>82</sup> Although taking place thirty years ago, the impact of this debate is evident in the manner in which German culture processes the memory of the Holocaust in the twenty-first

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid. 78.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. 79-80.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. 81.

century.

Negotiation with the significance of Nazi instigated crimes against humanity occurred also in the arts and literature. *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*, to the extent they deal with the Holocaust, situate themselves relative to other such works. Serious writing on the Holocaust might be divided into two main categories: (a) that by victims, survivors and their descendants, (b) that by non-victims, perpetrators, and their descendants. There is a qualitative difference between the two. Writing by survivors encompasses witness and the processing of deep trauma from the infliction of horrific cruelty. The Holocaust depictions by non-Jewish Germans are differentiated from the former group in terms of perspective. For the non-Jewish German author who was not in a camp, or who may have been among, or at least affiliated with the perpetrators of atrocity, the sources and nature of trauma are much different. In particular, identification with victims raises deep ethical questions. Among second-generation non-Jewish German writers there is an attempt also to appropriate and alleviate their own sense of trauma, or even their sense of victimhood, breaking the taboo of identification with the victims, as a form of expiation of guilt.

*Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* may be linked dialogically at different levels of reader cognition and textual allusion to representative texts that form the genre of Holocaust literature as such. Textually, however, both works are situated within the historical circumstances of their production and the resultant 'archive' of texts by and narrated from, the perspective of non-Jewish Germans who were adolescents during the Nazi regime and whose treatment of the Holocaust is embedded in a larger narrative. Obviously, this is a narrow subset of German language and world Holocaust literature. Within this subset, contemporaneously with works in the broader genre by survivors, exiles, and the persecuted, Ilse Aichinger, Paul Celan,

Nelly Sachs, and Manès Sperber, as well as the early versions of Elie Wiesel's *Night*, the treatment of Nazi crimes in non-Jewish German literature was expressed more narrowly and more in terms of perceived societal interests. A popular genre for dealing with the war experience in all zones and later in both Germanys was the war novel centering on the usually innocent but dutiful German soldier.<sup>83</sup> Indeed the first film produced in occupied Germany after the war, Wolfgang Staudte's *The Murderers are Among Us* (1946), depicts a guilt-ridden soldier returned to civilian life, who plots revenge on his Nazi commander who *forced* him to execute innocent civilians. The pervasiveness of the theme of the ordinary soldier's innocence is illustrated by the dictum of Karl Jaspers that the soldier who served faithfully "darf etwas Unantastbares in seinem Selbstbewußtsein bewahren."<sup>84</sup> With the publication of over 350 West German war novels in the 1950s it has been observed that in official, popular, and literary discourse only the voices of the victims were silent. During the 1950s in works like Wolfgang Koeppen's *Tod im Rom*, Albrecht Goes' *Das Brandopfer*, Heinrich Böll's *Billard um halb zehn*, and Grass's *Die Blechtrommel*, some of the voices of some victims appear, if fleetingly.

The manner in which *Die Blechtrommel* incorporates sensitivities involved in the figural depictions above into its alternative historiography has raised questions. Ernestine Schlant, finds in the novel "an insensitivity to those who suffered . . . in a language where silence is veiled in verbal dexterity . . . rooted in pre-Holocaust aesthetics."<sup>85</sup> Dagmar Lorenz, analyzes the appropriate sections of the novel in terms of narrative conceptualizations that she feels are problematic for the depiction of Jewish individuals in this novel and often in German literature

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<sup>83</sup> Helmut Peitsch, "Towards a History of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*: East and West German War Novels of the 1950s," *Monatshefte* 87.3 (1995): 287-308; 289.

<sup>84</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Die Schuldfrage: Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Frage* (Zürich: Artemis-Verlag, 1946) 42.

<sup>85</sup> Ernestine Schlant, *The Language of Silence: West German Literature and the Holocaust* (New York, London: Routledge, 1999) 71.

as a whole. Reading the texts portraying Sigismund Markus closely, one sees the toy dealer, in the descriptive detail for which the novel is known, as a stereotypical character. He is a merchant, he is obsequious, he speaks a Jewish dialect, he is physically unappealing and obviously unsuccessful in romance.<sup>86</sup> The serious critique involved here is the assertion that the figure Markus “defines the range of what and who is German”<sup>87</sup> in *Die Blechtrommel*. One could reply that the Markus figure as stereotype and as a member of the community at that level, compels the reader to consider what an ethical consideration of the display of *otherness*, entails.

The obvious stereotyping might be said to ironically foreground the racism of the society through negative signification. If one negates the diversity of cultural manifestations what is the point of an inclusive society? All would simply be reflections of oneself and would in no way challenge one to accept difference. Does the lack of compassion shown by Oskar become symptomatic of the Germans' progressive inability to admit feeling anything as brutalities multiply [compare Bauman's idea of *progressive* depersonalization of anti-Semitic measures under the Nazi regime]?<sup>88</sup> Amir Eshel provides perhaps a twofold riposte to the thrust of this critique. Namely, in “acting out the world’s chaos” Oskar’s role is that of observer, not analyst, and his reflections are not only on German history and society but “‘about’ the process through which categories such as ‘guilt’ and ‘innocence’ are constructed and construed[,]”<sup>89</sup> and by implication also the categories of ‘difference’ and ‘compassion.’

Fajngold as figure is the signifier that points to the Shoah as that which German society

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<sup>86</sup> Dagmar C. G. Lorenz, “Teaching the *Tin Drum* from the Perspective of Jewish Cultural Studies and Holocaust Studies” *Approaches to Teaching Grass's The Tin Drum*, ed. Monika Shafi (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2008) 150-163.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. 156.

<sup>88</sup> Bauman 75ff.

<sup>89</sup> Eshel 186.



refuses to see in itself in its prewar future and refuses to admit to itself in its postwar past. The historicity of the Treblinka revolt registers as an intimation of the 'real' in the midst of the more comfortable 'magical realist' mode of narration. Yet Fajngold is also a Jewish stereotype with stereotypical behaviors.

When Herr Fajngold saw the corpse, which he had turned on its back, he clasped his hands to his head in the same expressive gesture Oskar had seen his toy merchant, Sigismund Markus, make years ago.<sup>90</sup>

That these stereotypes were extant in the *Bundesrepublik* of the 1950s, and later, is well documented.<sup>91</sup> It could be argued that the manner in which Jews are depicted in *Die Blechtrommel* merely exposes that fact. At what point however, does evocation of the stereotypes of German cultural memory, even as narrative distantiation, actually marginalize anew, as a speech act, the Jewish community in the mind of the reader, discursively denying centuries of cultural and social interactions that obviate essentialist distinctions between various traditions in German society? Lorenz finds her position summarized by the following.

Grass uncovers plenty of malice among Germans of the Nazi era, which is why his novel is generally considered socially critical. But drawing an extensive social portrait of Germans, he does not explore Jewish German history.<sup>92</sup>

Zipes, to cite a different perspective, situates himself by positing that post-World War Two non-Jewish German writers, including Grass, have been primarily interested in how the historical experience has unfolded from the perspective of non-Jewish Germans and the manner in which

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<sup>90</sup> TD 380/B 524.

<sup>91</sup> Wolfrum 178-179.

<sup>92</sup> Lorenz 162.

they “have used Jews to identify themselves.”<sup>93</sup> Zipes uncovers the heart of the matter by referencing the works of Peter Härtling, which, he believes, in consideration of the presence and contributions of members of the Jewish community in and to German society, “forces readers to ask why Germans want to distinguish themselves from Jews.”<sup>94</sup>

At the time Christa Wolf began writing *Kindheitsmuster* both German and world literature had witnessed many substantial attempts to come to terms with the Holocaust. German language contributions, to mention only some of the better known, included Rolf Hochhuth’s *Der Stellvertreter*, Peter Weiss’ *Die Ermittlung*, and Jean Améry’s *Jenseits von Schuld und Sühne* [*At the Mind’s Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and its Realities*]. Even in East Germany the 1970s witnessed engagement with the Nazi era on a broader level than the ‘victory of socialism’. Jurek Becker’s *Jakob der Lügner* was published in 1969 after its screenplay had been rejected by DEFA, the East German movie studio. DEFA filmed the novel in 1974. Yet despite debate and writing on the theme of the continuation of the fascist mentality in the GDR by authors like Franz Fühmann, Hermann Kant, Heiner Müller, Anna Seghers, and Christa Wolf, Wolfgang Emmerich concludes that the boundary of this engagement was and remained the mass murder of the Jewish population, so that the Shoah was relegated to a subordinate roll in picturing the fascist past.<sup>95</sup>

In *Kindheitsmuster* Nelly finds that she cannot hate on demand.<sup>96</sup> The fact that her hatred should be directed against both Jews and communists enlarges the official GDR roster of victims

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<sup>93</sup> Zipes 7.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 13.

<sup>95</sup> Emmerich 319-320.

<sup>96</sup> K 203-204/PC 128.

of Nazi aggression to actually include Jews.<sup>97</sup> That she eventually produces mental images of a described Jewish youth in association with an image of an earlier encounter with an exhibitionist is meant to show the manner in which racist irrationality begins. In distinction to *Die Blechtrommel* the narrator of *Kindheitsmuster* actually describes the genesis of hate. The same is done with Nelly's experience of *Kristallnacht* where empathy becomes submerged in fear.<sup>98</sup> The reader may compare her own experiences with indoctrination and the necessity to live a split existence.<sup>99</sup> It could be argued that there is a contradiction in the authenticity of this affective appeal for tolerance. Christa Wolf has admitted that as a girl, at the end of the war, she did not personally have the maturity to see things in this light.<sup>100</sup> In fact, it is this admission that establishes subjective authenticity with a broader audience, in that few also saw things so clearly at the time. It is the fictive author/narrator who transposes the empathy back into the voice of Nelly as a strategy to overcome the discontinuity engendered by fascism. As noted, the attempt to negotiate the gap in authenticity makes the affective appeal rather ironic. There is thus a "linguistic impotence"<sup>101</sup> at work, that opposes a 'split life' to character development over time, and thus despite all intentions to the contrary [e.g. *Kindheitsmuster*, Chapter 15] makes association with the National Socialist past ambivalent, in this reading. In other words, through a perverse signification by absence, the narrator's inability to say 'I' in relation to the figure Nelly, might communicate not necessarily that the 'I' has changed but that the narrator never was the 'I' of that youth in any meaningful way and therefore not culpable in the present.

Yet as seen earlier *Kindheitsmuster* does present the circumstance of a youth

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<sup>97</sup> (a) Herf, *Divided Memory* 164; (b) Pinkert 25.

<sup>98</sup> K 253/PC 160-161.

<sup>99</sup> Firsching 77.

<sup>100</sup> Wolf, "Eine Diskussion über *Kindheitsmuster*" 91.

<sup>101</sup> Pinkert 25.

indoctrinated in Nazism as a manifestation of guilt and the proximal source of the discontinuity between childhood and adult consciousness. The chapter on the ‘Final Solution’ is straightforward in its reflection on the Holocaust and in its own way conceptually, if not literally, parallels the “Glaube Hoffnung Liebe” chapter in *Die Blechtrommel*. Wolf’s novel dwells at length on the psychology of Adolf Eichmann, the role of I. G. Farben as proprietor of the Buna plant at Auschwitz-Monowitz, human experimentation, the distribution of concentration camps throughout Europe, and the use of poison gas for extermination of Europe’s Jewish population.<sup>102</sup> Neither does the novel spare the bigotry of Nelly’s relatives nor the role of Nelly herself. An episode is recalled in which she assisted in the potato harvest with Ukrainian women forced laborers. Would she have shared her more nutritious meal with them? The thought simply did not occur to her; the “temptation” for altruism was no longer a part of her thinking or behavior.<sup>103</sup>

*Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* may bear criticism for lack of direct involvement with genocide; it is also the case that the Holocaust has been called “an event without a witness.”<sup>104</sup> Agamben characterizes the concentration camps as so exceeding the “juridical concept of crime” that the judicial structure in which the crimes took place is insignificant.<sup>105</sup> If much writing by survivors encompasses witness and attempts to come to terms with individual and communal trauma born of terror, much writing by those whose compatriots inflicted the terror can only search for an adequate expression. Even the witness of a survivor, in the estimation of Katja Garloff must somehow re-invest a language debased by “bureaucratically

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<sup>102</sup> K 365-379/PC 233-242.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. 389-390/248-249.

<sup>104</sup> Katja Garloff, “The Emigrant as Witness: W. G. Sebald’s *Die Ausgewanderten*,” *The German Quarterly* 77.1 (Winter 2004): 76-91; 77.

<sup>105</sup> Agamben 166.

administered genocide” with the ability to *address* anew in order to recover its lost "ethical dimension."<sup>106</sup> In line with that thought Ruth Klüger re-purposed her *weiter leben. Eine Jugend* in English as *Still Alive: a Holocaust Girlhood Remembered*. In so doing she must face once again the trauma of Auschwitz and address a new audience with what she feels is the appropriate content to communicate her experience.<sup>107</sup> That this experience will be conveyed differently to the American audience is a part of the intertextual history of the works, by which the author's relative engagement with the memory of trauma between the two editions may be gauged. Reading *Kindheitsmuster* against Klüger's work, with a twenty-year interval between their respective publications, illustrates the enormity of fiction's task to find communicative sufficiency to cogently address concerning, and to appropriately situate the critical elements of, the issues embodied by the memories of the *lived* Holocaust event.

#### 7.4 Normalization

The question of reception for the modes of expression utilized by *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* to convey a sense of the Nazi era and address anew does not escape the novels. *Oberleutnant Herzog*, thoughts revolving around strategies whereby the German military had repulsed the Normandy invasion, would seem to typify an individual immune from the insights that *Die Blechtrommel* attempts to find in recent history.<sup>108</sup> Herr X telling the narrator in *Kindheitsmuster* that Germans did not commit war crimes because they had no time and such things weren't part of the German nature,<sup>109</sup> suggests the question: whose narratives ultimately constitute the cultural memory and for what purposes are they compiled? The narrator

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<sup>106</sup> Garloff 77.

<sup>107</sup> Rosa Pérez-Zancas, "Von *weiter leben* zu *Still Alive*: Ruth Klügers fortgesetzte Unvollständigkeit," *Revista de Filologia Alemana* 16 (2008): 211-228; 212.

<sup>108</sup> B 718-719/TD 520.

<sup>109</sup> K 558-560/PC 360-361.

transposes the unwillingness of Herr X to come to terms with German guilt into a disquisition on the “falsification of history” within Soviet apologetics. With a jab at Communist Party insularity and dogmatism she enunciates a principle that applies in both cases, that

[. . .] the honest speaker depends on an honest listener, and . . . the person who hears the distorted echo of his own words eventually loses his honesty.<sup>110</sup>

To consider the question that Herr X refuses to consider: “the possibility of the German debt being greater, if it ever came to a settling of accounts”<sup>111</sup> is at the root of the larger question of the historiographic *normalization* of the German cultural and national experience. To approach this question, following Wolf’s reasoning, one must not depend for dialogue on the reflected echoes of one’s own preconceptions.

The term ‘normalization’ when applied to German post-World War Two cultural and political history can mean different things depending on context. William Collins Donahue refers to the double usage of the term to signify the Federal Republic’s official and ceremonial acknowledgement of guilt and simultaneous historicized distancing from Nazi perpetrators, as well as the opinions of those who view the term as essentially denial of responsibility.<sup>112</sup> Many within late twentieth and early twenty-first century German language culture find the legacy of the Holocaust to be too restrictive a narrative in relation to which a cultural and national identity should be constructed. The desire to have a national discourse that treats Germany as a ‘normal’ nation is of course, not new. The relatively late emergence in 1871 as a nation state, compared to other European nations and the *Sonderweg* thesis, whether viewed positively or negatively, underline the fact that Germany has been considered in some sense special throughout much if

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<sup>110</sup> PC 362/ K 562.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. 361/561.

<sup>112</sup> William Collins Donahue, *Holocaust as Fiction: Bernhard Schlink's 'Nazi' Novels and Films* (Palgrave/Macmillan, 2010) 2-3.

not most of its history. The formal unification of the two Germanys on 3 October 1990 gave renewed impetus for the review of that problematic narrative. The relationship between *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* and this newer issue is one in which the novels of necessity become latent influences rather than active participants. In this regard they form part of the reader's horizon of expectations in regard to later texts and, to use Said's term, 'worldly' problematics.

Already in the *Historikerstreit* of the 1980s attempts were made to emplot the narrative of World War Two in a more favorable and 'normal' manner regarding Germany. The West German historian Ernst Nolte argued that the Holocaust was unique only in the means used, that it was comparable to other genocides such as in the Soviet Union and Cambodia and constituted a defensive action against a Soviet threat.<sup>113</sup> Andreas Hillgruber published essays asking empathy for German soldiers on the Eastern front as defenders against communism and essentially characterizing the Holocaust as an event comparable to the expulsion of Germans from Eastern Europe.<sup>114</sup> Another conservative, Michael Stürmer called for, in Fulbrook's words, "the reappropriation of history for the construction of national identity."<sup>115</sup> These ideas were countered by Habermas and historians Martin Broszat, Hans Mommsen, and Hans-Ulrich Wehler, among others. Hayden White answered on the basis of his theories of narrative history that conservative attempts at relativization of Nazi crimes and consequent normalization of German history were contradictory and incoherent as narrative.<sup>116</sup> Yet even Broszat had argued for a more normal historiography of Germany that removed the uniqueness of German wartime

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<sup>113</sup> Nolte.

<sup>114</sup> Andreas Hillgruber, *Zweierlei Untergang: Die Zerschlagung des Deutschen Reiches und das Ende des europäischen Judentums* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1986) 64f.; 98-99.

<sup>115</sup> Fulbrook, *German National Identity* 126.

<sup>116</sup> Hayden White, *Figural Realism* 32-33.

conduct in relation to other nations. In response, Saul Friedländer worried that Broszat's call for a more technical and "refined evaluation" [Fulbrook's phrase] of the Holocaust might lead to the historiographic diminution of its criminality.<sup>117</sup>

As the 'historians' dispute' subsided, newly unified Germany engaged in finding a new place in the world and a valid conception of itself. This endeavor has included a public commitment to an open, tolerant, and inclusive civil society against outbreaks of xenophobic, anti-immigrant, and anti-Semitic, as well as anti-Muslim demonstrations and violence. The 1990s witnessed the popularity among the young of 'neo-Nazi chic' in music, clothing, and vocabulary. Many older Germans also re-evaluated whether Germans could appropriately mourn their losses in World War II and ask if the Allied bombing campaign did not make them also victims of the war. Popular discussion of these topics prompted writers like Günter Grass [*Im Krebsgang*] and W. G. Sebald ["Luftkrieg und Literatur"] to express themselves also on aspects of German history that many regarded as having been unjustifiably repressed. Jürgen Kocka has addressed the view that Allied bombing was equivalent in some manner to the Holocaust. Kocka calls the bombing "cruel, devastating, and morally questionable" but designed to hasten the end of the war's "senseless and criminal mass murder."<sup>118</sup> According to Kocka, Germans must be clear about "responsibility and consequences"<sup>119</sup> in that they were the initial aggressors.

Edgar Wolfrum has pointed out that the media has become a strong influence on the memory of the Holocaust. Movies such as Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993) and Bernd Eichinger's *Der Untergang* (2005) became international hits and prompted much discussion in

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<sup>117</sup> Fulbrook, *German National Identity* 128.

<sup>118</sup> Kocka, *Civil Society and Dictatorship* 95.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*



Germany. Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, despite methodological controversy, became a generally successful media and marketing event in Germany as elsewhere. Wolfrum believes that the memory of the Holocaust is becoming internationalized as an abstraction, an exemplar of genocide in general, and often as a banality obscuring the events of which it consists.<sup>120</sup> Since German unification, Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum and Peter Eisenman's design for the Berlin Holocaust Memorial have been realized. The German government liberalized the legal procedures for obtaining citizenship and has participated in international efforts to relocate refugees and asylum seekers. After the September 11, 2001 attack on New York City, Germany participated militarily as a NATO member in the U. S. led war in Afghanistan, but not in Iraq. The country has continued to have demonstrations and counter demonstrations against a perceived threat to the integrity of the culture from the acceptance of immigrants, as have other nations such as France, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Sigrid Weigel posits that views on the place of the fascist past in the discourses of German history divide along the fault lines of generational difference and sometimes, conflict. Weigel defines 'generation' as "jahrgangsverwandte Kohorte" whose lives at a certain point were affected in commonality by a defining historical experience.<sup>121</sup> The generation born around the time of World War One fought the Second World War and preferred not to communicate their experiences in meaningful ways to their children, who were generally born during or around the end of the war and afterward. This second generation of heirs to the Nazi legacy were those who were generalized as rebellious, politically left leaning, skeptical, and harshly

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<sup>120</sup> Wolfrum 497-498.

<sup>121</sup> Sigrid Weigel, *Genea-Logik: Generation, Tradition und Evolution zwischen Kultur- und Naturwissenschaften* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2006) 50.

critical of their parents' acceptance of Nazism and silence about their complicity. Not all members of this generation fit that description. Some, were rather conservative, and others, became critical of the so-called '68ers' (after the student protests of 1968) in their maturity. Interposed between these generations are those born in the 1920s, the so-called *Flakhelfer* or *Hitlerjugend* generation, raised under National Socialism. This is the generation that has elucidated most consistently and critically the horror of Hitler's regime and the Holocaust as politically 'engaged' intellectuals and public figures. In common estimation, this generation as a whole, dominated the discourse about the Nazi era until relatively recently,<sup>122</sup> the legitimacy of which is increasingly being questioned, primarily by those younger than the generation of 68ers, as their contribution to Holocaust discussion.<sup>123</sup> The protagonists of Grass's and Wolf's novels also record generational discord. Nelly has little respect for her father, the compliant citizen and soldier. Oskar's symbolic relationship to his supposed German father is literally fatal.

By the end of the twentieth century the political consciousness of the second generation after the war, now in late middle-age, was relatively mixed but certain intellectuals found their niche in relation to their elders by breaking taboos, which by this time were typified by the relatively liberal views promulgated by the *Hitlerjugend* generation. Those who attained prominence after 1968 were often influenced by Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Foucault more than Marx and Adorno, and became fascinated once again, after a brief radically 'modernist' phase, with the once discredited charms of aestheticism.<sup>124</sup> Botho Strauß for instance, has probed the

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<sup>122</sup> Fritz J. Raddatz, "Warum die Alten an der Macht bleiben," *Cicero – Magazin für politische Kultur*, 28 September 2005, web.

<sup>123</sup> Stephan Braese, "Im Schatten der 'gebrannten Kinder'," *Chiffre 2000 – Neue Paradigmen der Gegenwartsliteratur*, eds. Corina Caduff and Ulrike Vedder (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2005) 81-106; 90.

<sup>124</sup> Beutin et al. 645.

productivity of mythology for engagement with modern life in the revivification of suppressed codes. Strauß's quest to jettison the restrictive aporias of Enlightenment thinking has led to charges that he also wishes to deny normative values of humanity embodied therein.<sup>125</sup> He has supported the idea that German consciousness of the Holocaust should move away from a stance of collective shame toward a more 'normal' cultural disposition.<sup>126</sup> On the other hand, W. G. Sebald dealt with German war trauma and associated themes in a manner considered exemplary by many critics in an aesthetically creative writing style. The Austrian writer Elfriede Jelinek has maintained a socially committed and feminist cultural-critical stance throughout her career. The daughter of a Jewish father and Catholic mother, she has opposed relativization of Holocaust responsibility in any form. While *Die Blechtrommel* certainly probes the productivity of myth in conceptualizations around Niobe and the *Schwarze Köchin*, attempts to disengage from social issues was not greeted favorably by Grass the author as demonstrated in works such as *Mein Jahrhundert* [My Century (1999)]. Wolf's *Kassandra* and *Medea* actually present intensified social engagement as feminine consciousness of patriarchal subjugation.

Verena Stefan's 1975 *Häutungen* [*Shedding*] became an important work within the feminist movement. In 2011 she co-edited a study on Jewish exiles from Nazi Germany living in Canada. Cultural critic and philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, working with Nietzschean themes, has steadily moved toward a conservative stance on major issues. His *Zorn und Zeit* [*Rage and Time*] employing the concept of *ressentiment* ends with a call for an "open culture of ambition"

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<sup>125</sup> Michael Wiesberg, *Botho Strauß, Dichter der Gegenaufklärung*, Perspektiven, Band 3, Karlheinz Weißmann and Götz Kubitschek eds. (Dresden: Edition Antaios, 2002) 15, 88.

<sup>126</sup> Botho Strauß, "Anschwellender Bocksgesang," *Der Spiegel* 6/1993 (8 February 1993): 202-207.

which balances “elitist and egalitarian forces.”<sup>127</sup> An article for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* characterized European social democracy as a “fiscal kleptocracy.”<sup>128</sup> Sloterdijk supports allowing Germans to view themselves as heirs to a normal European culture and history. In 1995, a German jurist of moderate views, Bernhard Schlink, an exact contemporary of Strauß and Sebald and slightly older than Sloterdijk, published a novel which re-imagined, as part allegory and part wish fantasy, the identity of the Nazi perpetrator in relation to that of the postwar generation. *Der Vorleser* [*The Reader*], attained marked popularity, particularly in the United States and became an equally popular film in 2008. In the intervening interval, however, it was a member of Grass’s and Wolf’s generation, Martin Walser, a literary colleague in the project of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, whose remarks on the place of Holocaust memory in German cultural life sparked dismay and debate.

Amir Eshel has recounted and analyzed the so-called Martin Walser - Ignatz Bubis debate in 1998. In that year Walser was awarded the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade. In his acceptance speech in the Paulskirche in Frankfurt he denounced Germany’s memory culture in relation to the Holocaust by averring that Auschwitz should not be a routine threat or a moral club. Walser proposed that the continual linking of the Holocaust with German culture was a ploy by unnamed forces to damage Germany and that it was now time, not to view the pictures of atrocities any longer but to look away.<sup>129</sup> Eshel gives the following synopsis.

[. . .] the chronic injury inflicted by the moral weapon called Auschwitz must be healed,

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<sup>127</sup> Peter Sloterdijk, *Rage and Time*, trans. Mario Wenning (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010) 229.

<sup>128</sup> Peter Sloterdijk, “Die Revolution der gebenden Hand,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 13 June, 2009, web.

<sup>129</sup> Amir Eshel, *Jewish Memories, German Futures: Recent Debates in Germany about the Past* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana State University, 2001; Robert A. and Sandra S. Borns Jewish Studies Program) 10-11.

and the rituals of memory must cease. Proceeding from the philosophy of Martin Heidegger, Martin Walser then completes his decisive argumentative turn: no one should involve himself in questions of other people's consciences.<sup>130</sup>

Walser's formulation and other incidental remarks repudiated the concept of the politically engaged intellectual and particularly the narrative of national identity centered on the Holocaust.<sup>131</sup> Walser had said that when confronted with pictures from Auschwitz, Germans must not look away.<sup>132</sup> Ignatz Bubis, Chair of the Central Committee of Jews in Germany registered disagreement with Walser in strong terms in a press release, resulting in a running debate between the two over a two month period. Walser's position was that Bubis had misunderstood. Eshel interprets this as signifying that to Walser one who interprets Walser differently "places himself outside the national discourse."<sup>133</sup> Eshel then diagnoses a "tendency toward *hermeticism* within German public discourse"<sup>134</sup> that excludes those with variant interpretations from appreciating the claimed intent. Eshel delineates the debate as representative of two divergent perspectives: "Walser's right to *personal* memory and a *solitary* conscience" versus "a culture of memory . . . [that understands] the past as eternally present" and that the Nazi era "must remain . . . an immanent piece of the present."<sup>135</sup>

Could this analysis also reflect the manner in which language is used in *Die*

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>131</sup> Thomas Kovach and Martin Walser, *The Burden of the Past: Martin Walser on Modern German Identity -- Texts, Contexts, Commentary* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2008) 89-90.

<sup>132</sup> Eshel, *Jewish Memories* 10.

<sup>133</sup> Eshel, *Jewish Memories* 13.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. 12.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

*Blechtrommel*? On the one hand arguments of similar 'hermeticism' are parodied in the work<sup>136</sup> but on the other, the aforementioned depiction of Jewish individuals such as Markus and Fajngold, also partake of Walser's arguments in their inability to really understand -- which condition separates them from the German nation. From another perspective, Wolfgang Müller-Funk, in explicating the concept of cultural memory, addresses Walser's aims, in his later novel, the roman à clef *Tod eines Kritikers* [Death of a Critic], to subvert "the common sense of political correctness in German cultural memory."<sup>137</sup> While denying the use of anti-Semitic material the novel uses pejorative phraseology reminiscent of anti-Semitic language. Müller-Funk faults Walser for his "inability to work out the critique" without hurting victims of the Holocaust,<sup>138</sup> which seems a very diplomatic appraisal of patently offensive material. Much the same might be said of *Die Blechtrommel*, if such apologia is needed.<sup>139</sup>

In 2008 Martin Walser produced an essay titled "Über Erfahrungen mit dem Zeitgeist" in which he complains that through the years he had been misunderstood, that he had been correct in championing German re-unification, that his work had been unfairly critiqued by Marcel Reich-Ranicki, and – in opposition to prevailing leftist sentiment, citing Sloterdijk – he had been right about normalization of German history, only ten years ahead of the public mood.<sup>140</sup>

With Bernhard Schlink's *Der Vorleser* (The Reader), the second generation of non-Jewish Germans after the Holocaust, the 1968ers, come to terms with their parents' perpetrations

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<sup>136</sup> Preece *Life and Work* 45.

<sup>137</sup> Müller-Funk 213.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.* 214.

<sup>139</sup> Eshel's argument above provides counterbalance here.

<sup>140</sup> Martin Walser, "Über Erfahrungen mit dem Zeitgeist," *Kinderspielplatz* (Berlin: Berlin University Press, 2008) 33-70; 39, 49, 56, 70.

of and apathy towards mass murder.<sup>141</sup> In this reading, the protagonist, Michael Berg, as representative of his generation, may also claim victimhood by both validating the trauma of the Jewish people and allying himself with them, as a temporally delayed victim at the psychological level.<sup>142</sup> Although technically a 'realist' novel, there is obviously much allegory.<sup>143</sup> The perpetrator in this novel, Hanna Schmitz fulfills a condition not noted by real life perpetrators, at least not to such an extent: she is illiterate. Symbolically for her generation, she is morally illiterate.<sup>144</sup> Taken as a statement on perpetrator guilt, the novel enacts a legal obfuscation. Hanna may not be legally or at least exclusively guilty of the crimes for which she is convicted but psychological factors, viz. defensiveness about her illiteracy and her compulsion for preserving order, which is also the basis for the commission of her crimes, prevent a defense. Is this an implied philosophical explanation for Holocaust perpetrators in general? Berg knows that Hanna is illiterate, what is his responsibility to inform the court?<sup>145</sup>

Donahue observes that Berg follows the Kantian *categorical imperative* and thus respects Hanna's wishes, as a morally autonomous human being. Donahue also argues that this fact makes Hanna and by implication the perpetrator generation responsible for their own deeds, freeing the 1968ers from complicity or even responsibility. They are "morally enjoined *not* to intervene."<sup>146</sup> Walser's *Friedenspreis* speech echoes this point, that each person's conscience is

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<sup>141</sup> (a) Donahue 129; (b) Erin McGlothlin, *Second Generation Holocaust Literature: Legacies of Survival and Perpetration* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006) 203.

<sup>142</sup> Donahue 130.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. 124.

<sup>144</sup> Bill Niven, "Bernhard Schlink's *Der Vorleser* and the Problem of Shame," *The Modern Language Review* 98.2 (April 2003): 381-396; 383.

<sup>145</sup> Bernhard Schlink, *Der Vorleser* (Zürich: Diogenes Verlag, 1995) 104-157.

<sup>146</sup> Donahue 104-105.

inviolable.<sup>147</sup> The real narrative here is actually, similar to Walser but in a more humane manner, the normalization of the Holocaust problem. Saul Friedländer cites a letter from Hannah Arendt to Karl Jaspers to the effect that humans are not equipped to deal with guilt (of the perpetrators) that exceeds the definition of crime, and innocence (of the victims) that likewise exceeds all concepts.<sup>148</sup> Berg is ultimately faced with an "impossible dilemma"<sup>149</sup>: comprehending the incomprehensible and drawing lessons from his parents' generation's crimes.<sup>150</sup> This impossibility absolves him and his generation not only of those crimes but allows him and them to reconcile with the parents' generation, denying the 1968ers' rebellion as self-righteous. In his monograph *Guilt About the Past*, Schlink makes this point in another context as an expression of his overall philosophy.

[. . .] the years of moral and political zeal, and the naive belief that the older generation is guilty and principally in the wrong and our young one is innocent and in the right were over.<sup>151</sup>

While this statement may reflect the realities faced by an aging idealist in the face of the requisite level of cant and hypocrisy for success in a professional career, it also evokes Wolf's lament about the inability to be honest in her East German and Soviet dominated society.

Essentially Berg is *Kindheitsmuster's* Nelly, generationally once removed. His life is similarly split between attachment to Hanna, symbolizing the older generation, who victimized him by passing down collective guilt as cultural memory and legal/ethical precepts that define

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<sup>147</sup> Eshel, *Jewish Memories* 11.

<sup>148</sup> Saul Friedländer, "History, Memory, and the Historian: Dilemmas and Responsibilities," *New German Critique* 80 (Spring – Summer 2000): 3-15; 8.

<sup>149</sup> Donahue 148.

<sup>150</sup> McGlothlin 204.

<sup>151</sup> Bernhard Schlink, *Guilt About the Past* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2010) 115.



his professional and personal development. Julia Hell registers the following opinion on the (in)equations implied in Schlink's novel.

One can speak of the traumatic experiences on the part of non-Jewish Germans, as long as the differences between these incompatible historical experiences [*of the Jewish survivors*] are not forgotten and, most importantly, as long as the trap of transforming Germans into the victims of National Socialism is avoided.<sup>152</sup>

Analysts have situated *Der Vorleser* into a number of problematics and interpretative schemata. Donahue avers that the questions raised must be individually answered.<sup>153</sup> Citing authorial intent he views the effect of the novel as reducing focus on Holocaust victims in favor of a discussion of the costs to ensuing generations of non-Jewish Germans of a continuous legacy of shame, that would prevent their attaining "a healthy sense of national identity."<sup>154</sup> But how can this be achieved?

Regardless of authorial intention or other obvious parallels, the text situates the non-Jewish German reader into the world of the Shoah by means of a thought experiment that re-narrativizes select contrary-to-fact aspects of that world in order to instantiate a discourse on the limits of responsibility and for those not responsible but contingently associated, shame. If there are no limits and responsibility and shame are collective and eternal then considering the magnitude of the Holocaust as a crime, the "greater debt" of Christa Wolf's "settling of accounts" becomes too onerous for the individual and too destructive for German society in fracturing social relationships. It is this conceptual impasse that becomes the narrative of post-Holocaust German identity for succeeding generations, more than the Holocaust itself. Berg and

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<sup>152</sup> Julia Hell, "Eyes Wide Shut: German Post-Holocaust Authorship," *New German Critique* 88 (Winter 2003): 9-36; 14.

<sup>153</sup> Donahue 151.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.* 8.

his generation are subjectivized in relation to their inability to reconcile the irreconcilable. Then, as German citizens thus delivered, through the impossibility of its moral demands, from the Holocaust as their narrative of identity, a normal state of cultural memory, unencumbered by historical associations with criminality, is finally attained.

Not all post-Holocaust authorship by second generation non-Jewish Germans seeks to ambiguate issues of guilt and responsibility. Katja Garloff comments on one of W. G. Sebald's works as follows.

*Die Ausgewanderten* has been hailed as a book that balances the claims of memory with the injunction against Holocaust representation, and the desire to understand the victims with the necessity to avoid a facile identification with them.<sup>155</sup>

The same could be said of another work, *Austerlitz*, which chronicles the search of a Jewish man Jacques Austerlitz, sent to England in the 1930s on one of the children's transports, for evidence of his family and his past, of which he has no memory. The novel consists of prose deeply layered with multifaceted significations for German and European history. Its text is augmented by photographs, focalizing the concept of the 'gaze' and the implications of voyeurism in relation to Holocaust representation throughout. Austerlitz visits Terezín in the present Czech Republic, the Theresienstadt concentration camp. At Terezín the dead are present through signification by absence, which purports to be chronicled photographically.

Sebald commented in an interview, "[t]he moral backbone of literature is about that whole question of memory."<sup>156</sup> Memory is also the hallmark of identity. Since Austerlitz lacks his early memories, he lacks true self-knowledge and therefore a stable identity. He is alienated from the society in which he finds himself and subject to debilitating bouts of depression. His

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<sup>155</sup> Garloff 76.

<sup>156</sup> Maya Jaggi, "The Last Word," *The Guardian*, 21 December 2001.

assumed identity crumbles with the dissolution of the props, adopted family, schooling, and friends that gave an illusionary viability to his life. As clues to Austerlitz' true identity come into his life, he begins to recover memories. His resolve to face the past without repression of memory leads him to Prague, where he begins to recover his language, personal history, and a modicum of true identity. Yet his memory is even more of a reconstruction than the average person's since it consists in possibly relevant photographs and descriptions by strangers who knew his family. The novel is far too complex to adequately explicate here with its evocations of Walter Benjamin, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and the places of Nazi brutality such as the fortress at Breedonk. What Sebald accomplishes is the mixture of fact, fiction, and historical frames, not in order to represent or identify with the victims of the Holocaust, whose trauma could not be shared, but to bring the present generation into contact with the artifacts of that trauma for the purpose not of German identity affirmation but of questioning. Nor is this necessarily a negative stance; perhaps Sebald's contribution is typified by a quote from another work. "The depiction of calamity encompasses the possibility of its overcoming."<sup>157</sup>

The Holocaust continues to engage the attention of German citizens. This engagement is frequently in the form of television or film dramatizations like the 2013 Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF) production of the miniseries *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter*, released in the U. S. under the title *Generation War*. Although well received by German audiences the production provoked protests from the government of Poland for its portrayal of wartime anti-Semitism in Poland and complicity in the murder of Jews by Polish freedom fighters. Without addressing the weaknesses of a plot that finds five young Germans, one of them Jewish, at the beginning of

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<sup>157</sup> W.G. Sebald, *Die Beschreibung des Unglücks: Zur Österreichischen Literatur von Stifter bis Handke* (Salzburg: Residenz, 1985) 12; quoted in Amir Eshel, "Against the Power of Time: The Poetics of Suspension in W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*" *New German Critique* 88 (Winter 2003): 71-96; 96.

World War Two constantly and ‘randomly’ finding each other on the Eastern Front while disobeying their superiors’ orders to kill civilians, the following from a review in the English language edition of *Der Spiegel* addresses not only the movie but reveals something of the state of present day *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in popular discourse.

Perhaps the most forceful lesson that the five friends . . . convey is the critical question asked by future generations: "What would I have done?" And it is stripped of any moral pretension, even exposed as ultimately banal or at least marginal. No one, even the most sophisticated, decent, well-meaning or well-educated, would have remained untouched. As in Jean-Paul Sartre's play "Dirty Hands," there is no hero who can remain clean under such circumstances. Everyone becomes guilty to varying degrees.<sup>158</sup>

Except perhaps the victims -- and those who did resist or were able to emigrate?

The review says relatively little about the miniseries itself but proceeds with an essay recapitulating the stages of Holocaust awareness in Germany from the end of the war to the present. It posits the idea that since the facts of the Holocaust are so well known, the factor that will facilitate the “transfer between generations” of that knowledge in today’s world is emotional involvement.<sup>159</sup> The characters in the drama are thus presented as ordinary individuals with whom one can readily identify. The problem is, none of the five appear to be convinced Nazis, although there are quite a few lurking behind the scenes making life miserable for the principal figures. The article concludes that the Nazi era must not be forgotten but “we must put an end to guilt.”<sup>160</sup> The essay finishes with the idea that Germany’s permanent “culture of atonement” must not be allowed, by becoming perfunctory, to paralyze a real engagement with responsibility

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<sup>158</sup> Romain Leick, “Next-Generation WWII Atonement,” trans. Christopher Sultan, *Der Spiegel* 28 March 2013, web.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

for actions.<sup>161</sup>

## 7.5 Evaluations

What then can be said about the place of *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* in the linked discourses of German cultural and national identity, Holocaust remembrance, and individual responsibility for political actions? The works have been praised for acknowledging the role of the individual German in the implementation of the policies of Nazism. This idea found its real world situation in the controversies over Christopher Browning's *Ordinary Men* and Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. From the vantage points of the societies in which they were produced, a number of Grass's and Wolf's novels provoked a level of discomfort and controversy. Some of this appears retributive for unpopular stances on issues of critical importance such as German unification. Grass's opposition to this event on the basis of German political immaturity seemed to be well founded in the wake of the outbreaks of anti-immigrant violence and murder in the 1990s. Wolf's opposition in the name of a reformed communism found resonance as resentment between 'Ossis' and 'Wessis'. *Kindheitsmuster's* pointed reference to slave labor and human experimentation by German firms found concrete expression in the refusal of German industry to admit complicity and the refusal of German courts to award reparations. Lawsuits from the United States representing victims were needed to force policy and legal changes whereby "ein 'in finanzieller Hinsicht abschließendes Zeichen ihrer moralischen Verantwortung für die damaligen Geschehnisse'" was accomplished.

*Die Blechtrommel's* "Onion Cellar" referenced the trope of the inability to mourn a decade before its sociological explication by the Mitscherlichs.<sup>162</sup> Critics have questioned these

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit zu Trauern: Grundlagen kollektiven Verhaltens*, 21st ed. (Munich: Piper, 1990).

achievements, differently for the two works, at the level of tone and distance from the memories of Holocaust victims.<sup>163</sup> A number of questions may only be answered by the manner in which the critical reader situates the textual problematics within the perceived facticities of the world around her. Some of these issues are instances of whether a work of art, in enacting a critique, vitiates its own oppositional stance through that enactment. Others involve the use of stereotypes in *Die Blechtrommel* and yet others involve *Kindheitsmuster's* self-admitted accommodations with the limits of communication (and by implication the social structure of its society). Do the communicative strategies of certain German works, more than in other literatures, signify a linguistic "hermeticism" or cognitive impasses for sensitive issues? In one sense, the former may be seen as symptom of the latter. In *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* this impasse may manifest itself in paradoxical portrayals. In works such as Walser's *Tod eines Kritikers* the impasse becomes denial of paradigm validity altogether; public critique of the speech of the private conscience to itself becomes illegitimate, if it questions the legitimacy of the narrative that grounds that conscience's subjectivity: cultural identity.

In Schlink's *Der Vorleser* the post-Holocaust non-Jewish German generation becomes victim, temporally delayed, but victim surely in needing to construct subjectivity in relation to a cultural identity whose 'normal' state appears to be the acceptance of irreconcilability of viewpoints and the continual negotiation of difference in narrative perspective, in regard to the National Socialist era and the Holocaust. Interestingly it is Christa Wolf and Günter Grass as persons who situate themselves in relation to this problematic. Wolf's *Stadt der Engel* [*City of Angels*] reveals the quest to understand how one became and becomes as one is, as a lifelong project. Considering the multigenerational longevity of this quest in relation to the fascist past,

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<sup>163</sup> (a) Schlant 71;( b) Pinkert 32.

as revealed in various media, her story would seem to parallel the interests of many Germans yet today.

Grass's admission of service in the Waffen-SS demonstrates already before Schlink's generational difficulties, the impossibility of reconciling, for Grass's *Flakhelfer* cohorts, two mutually exclusive paths in life: Nobel prize winning moral authority and undisclosed soldier in the Waffen-SS.<sup>164</sup> In the wake of criticism that followed upon this disclosure and Grass's subsequent admission of shame too great to admit, it went largely unnoticed that this fact situates Grass into the problematic presented in *Der Vorleser*. Perhaps fittingly, considering his in-between generational status he partakes of both Hanna Schmitz's conundrum and Berg's inability to reconcile incommensurables. Yet this may be exactly what defines Grass and his generation as members of and witnesses to the degradation of the past, without which status they would possibly have had no specific moral authority in relation to their fellow citizens since they would not have shared the common experience. Grass always admitted to being a convinced National Socialist yet the failure to admit the modality, when that was required of those he criticized, adds the charge of hypocrisy to his pronouncements. That this hypocrisy was perhaps a generational attribute gains currency by the imputation of similar associations for other members of that generation including also Martin Walser.<sup>165</sup>

In the wake of the controversies involving those that conservative commentators like Frank Schirrmacher had seen as too young to be guilty and liberals as too committed to an honest accounting to be questioned, younger German theorists have declared the *Hitlerjugend* generation to be irrelevant to the continued project of coming to terms with the past. As persons, this is no doubt true. Christa Wolf died on 1 December 2011, Günter Grass on 13 April 2015.

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<sup>164</sup> Parkes 209ff.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid. 220.

Stephan Braese in 2006 essentially declared the end of this generation's importance as societal influence by virtue of their presence in the Nazi era. Braese felt that the entire enterprise is now one of history, that literary interest in the Holocaust has become localized and Europeanized. The de-emphasis on German specificity demarcates the end of an era; "[s]ie ist vergangen aber nicht hintergebar."<sup>166</sup>

There is no way to foretell what authors will continue to have relevance or after long periods of eclipse have their reputations revived. Without the ability to see what significance a future generation accords the works of Grass and Wolf, one can nevertheless assert that they embody in *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* the historical record of their generation's experience with the phenomena of fascism and genocide in ways that for the Cold War era, secured the moral authority of the works and their authors within and without their respective societies. What the novels accomplish in their different manners is to so narrativize the facts of the Nazi era in relation to their contemporary societies, German history, constructs of subjectivity, cultural and national identity, and the Holocaust that they produce conceptual discourses of dialogical significations and dialectical alternatives, that fictively parallel historiographical, sociological, and political discourses on these topics in German society.

These form a constellation that leads through the steps indicated by the dissertation's individual chapter problematics to an analysis of Grass's and Wolf's novels as essentially a narrative that uncovers the fact of the Holocaust at the conceptual core of each novel despite few explicit references to the event itself. This constellation functions such that: (1) the magnitude of the Holocaust event implicates its presence negatively, as the void in all discourses throughout *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* in which historical circumstances, the problematics of

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<sup>166</sup> Braese 105-106.



the texts, and/or the horizon of expectations of the reader will plausibly read its absence as an aporia within the cognitive constructs under consideration, (2) this constellation (from Chapter 3) recognizably signifies the Holocaust as a whole, in such a way that a choice of response is posed to the reader, a type of dialectical image, that situates the reader in a particular manner (such as one's recognition and cognitive response to a 'racist' remark) to all elements, and (3) the novels' levels of engagement with the Holocaust [latent, explicit, as moral challenge] parallel and have relevance as argued for the historical record of German society's engagement, here encapsulated as negation, negotiation, and normalization.

Of course this configuration and constellation of elements is wholly the product of the dissertation's set of narratives worked into a discourse on the location of the Holocaust at the effective heart of *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*. There is no claim to absolute truth value here, the thesis is explored rather than 'proven.' This is the natural result of a methodology that recognizes the self-reference inherent in the relation of theory to its results and has chosen to accept the contingency and sometimes the paradoxes present in any configuration of world, text, and reader as also a theoretical construct of the texts themselves (as noted for *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* in Chapter 5 of the dissertation). The epistemic validity claimed in analysis is that derivable from a process, as outlined in Chapter 1 of the dissertation of situating the elements into a number of contexts in order to call forth and configure discussion over the possibilities and their supporting assumptions.

The critical reader will thus determine whether Grass's and Wolf's novels have continued relevance to contemporary problems. A question of relevance is always one of for whom and on what basis? When Braese, cited earlier, diagnoses the 'Europeanization' of the Holocaust discourse, he refers to Imre Kertész' Nobel Prize acceptance speech in which he saw Auschwitz

as a human problem rather than a unique occurrence.<sup>167</sup> Other examples exist of the localization and universalization of the Holocaust problematic, e.g. Jan Gross' *Neighbors*. No doubt memory of the Shoah among non-Jewish Germans will fade over the years and be re-narrativized in literature and media. One need only look at the historical literature about the American Civil War and European Middle Ages, not to mention the literatures from and about the long recorded histories of China, Japan, and other countries to see that changes of emplotment from one generation to another often reverse the roles of heroes and villains, or at least convert the latter into empathetic figures.

The longing for a narrative of a normal German history congruent with the generalized discourse of the formation of the European nation state bespeaks, as noted, a number of motivations. At one level is the understandable desire by succeeding generations of Germans not to have their culture, their nation, and by implication, themselves, defined by a historical event, that as time proceeds may or may not be viewed as a unique occurrence that was the product of a much earlier generation. Most Americans and Europeans do not wish to be defined by the narratives attendant upon the institutions of colonialism and slavery. Yet history, as Koselleck's memory of experience,<sup>168</sup> is sometimes an unforeseen encumbrance when one attempts to move beyond historical controversies, e.g. the role of the Confederate battle flag in American culture or the commemoration in Northern Ireland of the battle of the Boyne. In both cases issues that have become latent over time re-surface in uncomfortable ways in relation to certain discourses of cultural identity. At another level, 'normalization' becomes the default logic of the intolerable situation of being guilty of nothing but being subjectively determined by the guilt of others, as

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<sup>167</sup> Imre Kertész and Ivan Sanders, "Eureka!: The 2002 Nobel Lecture," *World Literature Today* 77.1 (April – June 2003) 4-8; 7.

<sup>168</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Samuel Presner et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002) 56.

diagnosed of Schlink's protagonist in *Der Vorleser*. At yet a third level appears the desire to maintain identity with cultural traditions, but those somehow cleansed of criminal complicity, as evidenced in the *Historikerstreit*.

For contemporary German discourse normalization may be the equivalent to the presence of the *Schwarze Köchin*. This shadowy figure has been variously described as a destructive power in life, an abstract existential force, a fairy tale figure, and the symbol of specific historical features. The figure has been interpreted as indicating a pessimistic fatalism or even a complete nihilism in regard to the historical process.<sup>169</sup> Giving full weight to either of these extremes obviates the need to write a novel like *Die Blechtrommel* except as an act of masochism on the part of the author. Grass has said that the figure grows with the times.<sup>170</sup> In this sense growing with the times unfolding in the twenty-first century may be the rejection of moralistic viewpoints and a conception of the Holocaust as an unparalleled act of evil.<sup>171</sup> The *Schwarze Köchin* as a type of *Zeitgeist* then becomes a signifier for the epistemic problem of differentiating a 'real' among seemingly infinite differences of opinion. In this case Kierkegaard's existential 'either/or' becomes the undecidable of that which is neither one nor the other or perhaps something in between or paradoxically both at once, as intimated earlier in the dissertation. Later in the "Conclusion" it will be apparent that *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* situate themselves also into this complex of themes. Ultimately becoming disentangled from unwanted historical influence may involve a rejection of the paradigm altogether.

At some point Grass's and Wolf's works and those of the *Hitlerjugend* generation will

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<sup>169</sup> Nury Kim 96-109.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. Grass quotation 98.

<sup>171</sup> Leick.

cease, if they have not already, to engage the intellectual needs of the future but engagement with and narrativization of the Holocaust as material event will only cease to have relevance when, like other historical tragedies, the likelihood of its recurrence and the hatreds that enabled it, have also ceased to be an actual threat within German, European, and world societies. Saul Friedländer reminds us that we must not forget the victims' testimonies.

[. . .] they put Nazi behavior in its full perspective; they describe the face to face encounter of the perpetrators with the victims during the persecutions, the deportations, and the killings.<sup>172</sup>

This may be a challenge for non-Jewish Germans over time, perhaps too great a challenge in terms of costs and benefits to the society.

Garloff suggests that "rather than more exacting words, we need new communal and communicative relations to get beyond the impasses of Holocaust representation."<sup>173</sup> She believes Sebald accomplishes this task in *Die Ausgewanderten* precisely by "accepting the gap between the speechless and the speaking" rather than trying to erase the difference between the experiences of Holocaust victims and perpetrators.<sup>174</sup> A younger generation, however, skeptical of all that has gone before and perhaps measuring experience against its own mirroring in digital and social media, may find such ameliorative strategies uncongenial to its sense of self. It may be that a societal need for an unproblematic collective memory or 'picturing' (to use Fulbrook's term) of German history will lead to a general acceptance of Karl-Heinz Bohrer's claim that the entire discussion in both historiographic and literary terms has been too moralistic and has

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<sup>172</sup> Friedländer, "History, Memory, and the Historian" 15.

<sup>173</sup> Garloff 87.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid. 88.

distorted the perception of German history.<sup>175</sup> One ‘take-away’ from *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* might be that those who seek to become unencumbered by history must guard against “[h]istory’s accursed tendency to repeat itself.”<sup>176</sup> In evaluating the relevance of historical narratives suitable for the informing of a discourse of ‘normalization’ one might consider whether true disentanglement from the Holocaust involves a paradoxical abandoning of the quest and an embrace of the inability to forget, as a cultural and national ‘identity’. Edgar Wolfrum summarizes the debate thus.

Deutschland hat keine Aussicht darauf, eine “normale Nation” zu werden. Aber benötigt die Welt noch eine weitere “normale Nation?”<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Eshel, “The Past Recaptured” 181.

<sup>176</sup> PC 170/K

<sup>177</sup> Wolfrum 496-497.

## **Conclusion: Either/Or**

What, then, has been gained through the foregoing approach to *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*, what have the novels communicated? In exploring these through a perspective conscious of its own narrative construction, areas of concern suggested by the texts have been related to each other in a way that situates the works within their respective societies and the wider critical literature, and inserts them into discussions of critical issues for twentieth century historiography: the rise of National Socialism and the implementation of the Holocaust. They do so by problematizing human subjectivity, the family, and the relationship of both to the historical experience and cultural memory of German society. Viewing the novels through the comparative lenses of multiple theoretical constructs also foregrounds the differences in their respective textual ontologies. The two novels obviously function in different ways. Ultimately both attempt to situate their worlds, their texts, and the reader rather differently but with differences, similar to the separate societies in which they were produced, that exhibit commonalities. These are revealed in the underlying communicative strategies of *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*. Both are in search of a language and a mode of expression that is capable of addressing the Nazi period and the horror of the Holocaust while simultaneously critiquing their respective postwar societies.

The solution in each novel regarding the situation of the reader's horizon of expectations is to present a paradoxical *either/or* appeal to reader decision-making. Either *Die Blechtrommel's* outlook is nihilistic or it seeks to enlighten by negative valorization, purposely creating conceptual voids whereby the reader must engage the problematic. Either Oskar's narrative modalities can be regarded as performative critiques of the 'aestheticist' literary trends of figures like Gottfried Benn and others of the 'inner emigration' still prominent in postwar

Germany<sup>1</sup> or as a response to Adorno's 'crisis of the novel'<sup>2</sup> or perhaps both at once. Similar analyses may be found for *Kindheitsmuster*. Wolf's novel seeks to either convince that re-narrativization of memory allows one to come to terms with oneself, even oneself incarnated as a Hitler Youth member – to heal the rupture between child and adult – or that the “limits of the expressible”<sup>3</sup> doom the enterprise from the beginning. The interrogatory is the novels' *modus operandi* throughout. The decision belongs to the reader. Locating the sense of the texts as a calculus between the cognition of the reader, the construction of the text, and the materiality of the social environment also locates the *raison d'être* for the writings themselves within the authors' biographies.

Considering their experiences and the manner in which they inform the novels' character and plot development these biographies become conceptual surrogates for coming to terms with personal involvement, even if at a more or less remote level, in a genocidal regime. The mechanism that determined the authors' actual life trajectory might be seen as a continual negotiation of an 'either/or' principle. The realization of the factors involved in life directions, whether purely contingent or a matter of choice, place the authors into a state which radicalizes and ironicizes Kierkegaard's dictum that “if a person could continually keep himself on the spear tip of the moment of choice . . . there could be no question of a choice at all.”<sup>4</sup> For Grass and Wolf making an absolute choice for themselves, authenticity in the existential sense becomes an endeavor fraught with fear that the forces of history actually make the choices, dismay, guilt, and shame over where earlier choices actually led them, and anxiety that one is always “on the tip of

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<sup>1</sup> Nury Kim 27ff.

<sup>2</sup> Eshel, “The Past Recaptured” 184.

<sup>3</sup> PC 407/K 638.

<sup>4</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or, Part II*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987) 163.

the moment” and must make the right choices to “come to grips with oneself”<sup>5</sup> as the *Schwarze Köchin* comes nearer.<sup>6</sup>

The relationship between author biography and textual inception is, of course, a standard ingredient in explications of *Kindheitsmuster*.<sup>7</sup> Making this claim for *Die Blechtrommel* requires explanation. Looking at Wolf’s novel and her own life history reveals the material and conceptual similarities. Wolf sets the novel in her birthplace where her childhood was, like Nelly’s, molded by National Socialism, membership in the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (BDM), and flight to Mecklenburg as Soviet forces advanced.<sup>8</sup> Like Nelly, Christa Wolf was treated for tuberculosis in a sanatorium in 1946. The car trip to Gorzów Wielkopolski in 1971 is likewise autobiographical as an event, as are, broadly, the reading tours and general travel itineraries referenced in *Kindheitsmuster*. The reflections of the fictive author in writing the novel are, naturally, Wolf’s reflections adapted to the purposes of narrative structuring. That structuring encompasses, obviously, the setting of events into three time levels, three narrative voices, progressive revelation and interrogation of the role of memory in establishing a personal history and sense of self, and critically, the influence of early exposure to fascist behavior patterns in determining that subjectivity.

The two end timepoints for the adult fictive author, 1971 and 1976 thus encompass the real personal history of Christa Wolf, as briefly outlined in Chapter 2 of the dissertation, to each, as implied experiential background. Wolf said in 1984 that she could not express the figure Nelly as an “I” since Wolf no longer was that child and no longer identified with that character.

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<sup>5</sup> PC 406/K 638.

<sup>6</sup> TD 563/B 779.

<sup>7</sup> Firsching 71.

<sup>8</sup> Magenau 32-33.



Wolf averred that since 1946 she fully identified with her life choices and any subsequent autobiographically influenced writing would not need to be in the third person.<sup>9</sup> It is not apparent from a surface reading of *Kindheitsmuster* that the time periods in Wolf's life ending in 1971 and 1976 respectively, encompassed an interval in which she became not only a successful author, with a following in the West but that these included several rebuffs from the East German regime and gradual disenchantment with governmental decisions, as well as outright protest over the Wolf Biermann affair.

For Wolf, the young idealistic supporter of the 'victory of the proletariat', whose intellectual background in the 1950s, like others in the GDR, was euphorically shaped not only by Marx and Lenin but by the spirit of the young Goethe, Lenz, and *Sturm-und Drang*,<sup>10</sup> the question of *subservience* raised in *Kindheitsmuster*<sup>11</sup> becomes a self questioning of the stakes involved in living in an uncomfortable society in the hopes of a future utopia. The issue of whether dependence on ideology and regimes is a psychological trait instilled early in life is still current for Wolf in her last major work. But here she sees dependence as an integral aspect of Western culture; only conformity to societal ideals are possible, the society limits even the concept of utopias to either 'more' or 'less' of the same but not anything outside the system.<sup>12</sup> The childhood patterning of Nazi Germany left one dependent on a political regime that used absolute obedience as the tool of mass murder. In Wolf's mind, after the war she chose political engagement by joining the Communist Party in response to the passive complicity of her parents

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<sup>9</sup> Wolf, "Eine Diskussion über Kindheitsmuster" 95.

<sup>10</sup> Magenau 47.

<sup>11</sup> K 295ff./PC 188ff.

<sup>12</sup> Christa Wolf, *Stadt der Engel oder the Overcoat of Dr. Freud* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010) 88-90.

with fascism.<sup>13</sup> The either/or dynamic became critically important for the development of an ethical self-image.

In *Kindheitsmuster* the West is pictured as insufficiently aware of and only tepidly repentant about the facts of the Nazi era. The implication is that the East, with its imperfections, is at least not a society that prominently harbors those who visited the Nazi horror not only upon its victims but also psychologically upon its children. As adults they will be suspected and will suspect themselves of a degree of complicity and will be unable to trust their judgments about the proper response to authority. In this respect, the Holocaust functions as the basis of the writing itself, having for Wolf a therapeutic function,<sup>14</sup> an overcoming of self-alienation rooted in the knowledge of her childhood assent through indoctrination to a genocidal culture, a knowledge that does not indicate *Mitschuld* but certainly *Mitverantwortung*.<sup>15</sup>

Günter Grass also attaches this latter word to himself and his generation in the autobiographical *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* [*Peeling the Onion*].<sup>16</sup> Considering the drastic difference in writing style between *Kindheitsmuster* and *Die Blechtrommel* the issue arises of biographical elements that might be determinative for the genesis of the text as personal testament also in the latter novel. Quite aside from debates on the irrelevance of an author to a text, Grass has proven an unreliable source over the years for answering this question, by his own account. In 1976 he denied that he wrote the novel for any type of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* but rather, initially, for the ability to set narrative to prose. Yet even

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<sup>13</sup> Magenau 44.

<sup>14</sup> Wolf, "Eine Diskussion über Kindheitsmuster" 95.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 92.

<sup>16</sup> Günter Grass, *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* (Göttingen: Steidl Verlag, 2006) 127.

this disclaimer is qualified by allusions to ‘personal’ reasons and keeping some information from the reader.<sup>17</sup> In short, the successful author is here playing the part of one who cannot resist the lure of telling a good story. There are not really parallels between Oskar and Grass in *Die Blechtrommel* but a distillation of life experience that informs the text in terms of birthplace, family origins, observations on the Nazification of the German citizenry, adult travels, etc.,<sup>18</sup> from which the figure Oskar emerges as symbolic stand-in for a wide range of authorial fantasies.

Chief among these is the idea that Oskar, always the child, is not accountable for either his or society’s misdeeds. Preece notes that this makes Oskar “a wishful retrospective self-projection”<sup>19</sup> for Grass and for those artists who have claimed freedom from responsibility. Assembling this idea with Grass’s self-declarations one could paint a portrait of Grass as purely motivated by the lure of authorial invention and the need to make money as the main motivating factors for writing. This view, if valid, would convert the novel into an opportunistic and ethically undeveloped appropriation of the Nazi period within a setting of pure irony. Interestingly, the absence of any moral perspective or ‘enlightening’ purpose would, considering the subject matter, foreground these very qualities through absence. It would also read into Grass’s interviews and utterances more than they actually say and confuse the idea of initial intent with a gradual realization of purpose during the four-year span of the novel’s writing. Such a view makes nonsense of Grass’s readings of Camus, association with others in the *Gruppe 47*, acquaintance with Paul Celan, and affinity for Döblin. It also makes insincere and

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<sup>17</sup> Grass, "Looking Back at the ‘Tin Drum’"84-88.

<sup>18</sup> Grass, *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* 242.

<sup>19</sup> Preece, "Biography as Politics"12.

craven Grass's story of gradual acknowledgement of German war crimes after the Nuremberg trials.<sup>20</sup> Thus Grass's comments in 1976 and others similar, actually accentuate comparison with Oskar, reveling in the role of unreliable narrator. This role, both in *Die Blechtrommel* and in life seems to combine elements both shamanistic and Socratic: the effort to enlighten proceeds by forcing the reader to resolve Grass's paradoxes and in so doing examine one's own life and attitudes. In this respect the moment of choice is transferred to the reader.

Not acknowledged by Grass until 2006 is his wartime service in the Waffen-SS. The controversy produced by this late life revelation occasioned both condemnation and apologetics. Taberner analyzes Grass's disclosure from two perspectives. On one side, the reader might accept Grass's apologies for not relating the matter earlier on the basis of too great shame, realizing that the actual service was the result of youthful foolishness by one indoctrinated and hoping to escape a stultifying home environment. In seeming exculpation Grass reminds one that he was not alone and that his entire generation shares "joint responsibility" for such attitudes.<sup>21</sup> Considering similar pronouncements from Christa Wolf, Magenau suggests that generational solidarity becomes a strategy for the ambiguation of individual responsibility.<sup>22</sup> In Taberner's view, Grass's identification in *Beim Häuten der Zwiebel* with the common experience of Germans his age coupled with his repudiation of the Nazi era and life of humanistic engagement, actually, in Grass's own view, enhances his stature as *representative* moral authority, even if the average reader might see this as finessed hypocrisy.<sup>23</sup> The second

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<sup>20</sup> Volker Neuhaus, *Günter Grass: Schriftsteller, Künstler, Zeitgenosse* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2012) 87, 146.

<sup>21</sup> Stuart Taberner, "Günter Grass's *Peeling the Onion*," *The Cambridge Companion to Günter Grass*, ed. Stuart Taberner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 139-150; 141-143.

<sup>22</sup> Magenau 28.

<sup>23</sup> Taberner 143-144.

perspective suggested by Taberner sees Grass's life and obfuscations,

[. . .] defined by the errors of his youth and subsequently (and literally) writ large as representative of an entire nation's folly, and as a reflection on the personal cost of this.<sup>24</sup>

One subtext of *Die Blechtrommel*, then, is the author's knowledge, that he was not, like Oskar, the wartime entertainer, but also not a resister to a system of atrocities. Indeed as envisioned in the later *Kopfgeburten* [Headbirths], if Grass had been a little older with the same martial attitudes, he could have become a perpetrator of atrocities. The entire Flakhelfer generation, from former West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt to Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Pope Benedikt XVI, stood at the tip of this divide, and when called to service, the moment of choice.

Considering the stakes for the authors' lives the Holocaust cannot but be the underlying principle behind the writing of both Wolf's and Grass's novels as well as the chief element that conceptually situates the critical reader into their world. The authors, like many others, refer to the rule of the National Socialist Party as fascism. This appellation, borrowed from Mussolini's National Fascist Party and its successors and emulators, denotes an authoritarian, nationalist, corporatist, and traditionalist ordering of society that theoretically describes also the government of Nazi Germany. What distinguishes the latter, however, is obviously the fostering and implementation of industrial scale genocide and the either willing or passive involvement of the German citizenry as a whole in significant aspects of the program. In acknowledging this fact, *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*, in their separate ways, implicate aspects of traditional German life and attitudes, as well as the behavior patterns of segments of the early twentieth century populace as explanatory paradigms for Nazism and its crimes. Locating 'failures' of

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 150.

German society in this way invites comparison with real world explanatory paradigms.

In Chapter 7 it was noted in passing that controversy had been aroused by two studies in the 1990s dealing with such explanatory paradigms: Christopher Browning's *Ordinary Men* and Daniel J. Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. Browning's work comprises an investigation into the mass killings of Jews in Poland in 1942 by a unit of the German Order Police. Goldhagen sets the same information within a larger historical perspective on anti-Semitism in Germany. Both studies attempt to understand the motivations of 'ordinary' Germans to participate in the Holocaust. At this level, one could draw a general parallel with the approach in fiction of Grass and Wolf. Browning even evokes Grass by averring that such research into human behavior requires the "rejection of demonization."<sup>25</sup> In the end, the author concludes (to oversimplify) that peer group pressure played a large role in impelling the particular individuals involved to murderous action they might not have engaged in under other circumstances and in justifying their behavior to themselves.<sup>26</sup>

Goldhagen describes his objectives as an attempt to answer three primary questions: "Did the perpetrators of the Holocaust kill willingly? If so, what motivated them to kill and brutalize Jews? How was this motivation engendered?"<sup>27</sup> Goldhagen's findings are based on a methodology that self-consciously seeks to foreground perpetrators, their backgrounds, and the nature of German society under Nazism, more than abstract causes or actions.<sup>28</sup> He concludes (again to oversimplify) that the Holocaust was the result of a culture of German anti-Semitism

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<sup>25</sup> Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper, 1992, 1998) xx.

<sup>26</sup> Browning 188-189.

<sup>27</sup> Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Vintage/Random House, 1996, 1997) 375.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* 5-8.

that, instrumentalized by the Nazis, allowed an entire generation of Germans to sanction and engage in genocide without moral qualms.<sup>29</sup> Despite much criticism by historians, Goldhagen's book was received in Germany with some interest by readers, allowing them, in Fulbrook's opinion, to measure their own attitudinal distance from the World War Two generation.<sup>30</sup> Even here, there is an apparent 'either/or' dynamic. Either one subscribes to a functionalist or an intentionalist account of the Holocaust. Validating the former might allow some measure of compassion for the perpetrator generation. Accepting the latter makes this a more difficult proposition. Is there a range of options?

Peer pressure, the drive to conform, and anti-Semitism form much of the implied and actual discourses in *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster*. This literature derives from the historical experience and narratives of Holocaust perpetrators and can never acquaint the reader with the trauma apparent in the literature of survivors. The perpetrators' perspective might be said to actually aid in imagining what has been described as unimaginable. One is aware of murderous ethnic hatreds throughout the world and throughout history into the present time. Goldhagen's thesis gains plausibility when one considers the depredations of majority against minority populations at particular times, or over particular time spans, and places. Yet there is the residual feeling that the Holocaust is somehow different and perhaps inexplicable in that difference. Some, like Zygmunt Bauman, have sought explanation in the workings of technological and bureaucratized 'modernity'. At the temporal remove of the twenty-first century all explanations are competing or complementary narratives of available data. More precise elucidations require historical analysis, which in turn, must secure its foundations in order to claim more than narrative veracity. *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* present

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 28; 416ff.

<sup>30</sup> Fulbrook, *German National Identity* 230.

fictional explications, located within certain problem areas of German society as their authors saw them. Perhaps more pertinent issues involve the use that will be made of these into the future.

Yet the *either/or* motif, the figure of absolute choice might appear not only too stark a dichotomy for a generation that has no problem with the concept of virtual reality but is also undercut in *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* by the significance of the protagonists themselves. Oskar as multivalent figure and polysemic narrator is a challenge to literary theory. He is neither a victim nor a perpetrator, a symbol of every German or a willful child, he is all of these and more. The figure contravenes logical principles: it may simultaneously be itself and its opposite, it may simultaneously signify something and its opposite. Likewise *Kindheitsmuster's* three voices, although ostensibly the historical stages of one personality, question the concept of integration altogether and suggest that their configuration rests with the interplay of chance and choice. If Nelly, and Wolf, had been slightly older, would they have become secretaries in the office of a Nazi functionary and shared a disgraced or criminal fate at the end of the war? What of the reader of the novels, seeking sense and navigating the decision making process between alternative scenarios? Neither Oskar nor Nelly are contradictions; they extend the range of sense and often by throwing that which they are not into bold relief by comparison. Against all constellations of *either/or* within Grass's and Wolf's novels there is one problematic that, after Kierkegaard, serves no secondary or pragmatic purpose as a choice, that is absolutely senseless as a rational decision, that always positions the authors, their worlds, the texts, and the reader at the point of the "moment of choice" – something that it is absolute to itself and offers no real choice to accept or not: the *experience* of the Holocaust.

The manner in which the Holocaust experience is central to both *Die Blechtrommel* and



*Kindheitsmuster* was explored in Chapter 7 of the dissertation as three levels of engagement with the issue. The fourth, only implicitly articulated in the texts, is the authors' ancillary engagement with and entanglement in the Holocaust as those who assented, for whatever reasons, to Nazi ideology. For Grass and Wolf the proximity to genocide and the possibility of their full complicity is that which in the texts subtracts itself from all rhetorical devices. For the authors, nearness to mass murder is the impasse of metaphor and symbolism. It is not like walking on the edge of a precipice blindfolded, it *is* walking on the boundary of precipitous consequences without moral insight. When such is gained there is no possible relativization of the situation. Considering where their early choices could have led Grass and Wolf, the Holocaust is that which stands out in the novels, against the many levels of signification, as the 'real'.

For the generations that come later, the interconnections of history, memory, and narrative, whether refracted through the metaphorical prisms of Fulbrook's historical pictures or collective discourses,<sup>31</sup> Koselleck's collective experience,<sup>32</sup> or Halbwach's and Assmann's collective and cultural memories, respectively, will always lead, by the contingency of new experience, to new configurations of cultural and historical consciousness. Often, regarding the Holocaust, this manifests itself as a desire to manage the past. Germany has, and continues, to dedicate monuments to the memory of victims. Yet the 1997 exhibition on Wehrmacht war crimes sparked outrage and demonstrations.<sup>33</sup> Müller-Funk suggests that Holocaust memory in the German cultural area should be allowed to become "latent," rather than obviously present, that new "narrative strategies" are required more than a focus on the events themselves,

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<sup>31</sup> Fulbrook, *German National Identity* 146.

<sup>32</sup> Koselleck 51.

<sup>33</sup> Fulbrook, *German National Identity* 230.

spawning perpetual right-wing reaction.<sup>34</sup> Latent memories are essentially dormant memories, which like the debate about totalitarianism in the 1990s may be reawakened, but what of the issues in the meantime?

New narrative strategies must, like *Kindheitsmuster's* narrative voices, overcome historical divisions and the alienation of communities in order to even *be* new narrative strategies. The drive for purity and division is the hallmark of failed options. To be latent means by definition that there are not circumstances in play that prevent latency, namely the actualization of a problem. Thus for Holocaust memory and associations to become suitably latent requires a modicum of the absence of associations (e.g. anti-Semitic discourse or other xenophobic or politically repressive initiatives) that keep Holocaust memory actual, not as Walser's *Moralkeule* but as an alarm that rings too often for comfortable dormancy to transpire. This is not a peculiarly German issue. Germany is the place where the world encountered a particular form of genocide carried out with modern industrial and institutional tools. Perhaps one measure of the internationalization of Holocaust perception should be the re-thinking of the event as a sign not only of a localized experience but of a potential more generally present when appropriate alarms are allowed to fall silent. Whether discourses on the National Socialist past and its genocide recoverable through readings of *Die Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* will be relevant to the contingent configurations of future socio-political landscapes is an open question. If allowed to become dormant one may imagine their latent influence, as with older authors, become once again actuated in response to issues optimally situated within the novels' discourses. To the extent that the constellation of world, texts, and readers are able to recover from these novels a sense of the proximity to the almost unthinkable, the Holocaust, *Die*

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<sup>34</sup> Müller-Funk 224.

*Blechtrommel* and *Kindheitsmuster* will continue to offer something determinate in a world of seeming infinite indeterminacy.

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