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Nora M. Alter
University of Florida

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Abstract

This essay looks at the poetry of Erich Fried in the context of tensions within contemporary cultural studies. Fried's contemporaneity is linked to his status on the margins of various cultures, media, and ideologies—thus making both his life and his works appear as exemplary paradigms for the postmodern condition, with its various theoretical celebrations of "exile," "border crossing," "transgression," "deterritorialization," and so forth. Yet, at the same time, seemingly in contrast with his labile identity is Fried's rigid Marxist political ideological core which surfaces in his political poetry. Focusing, in particular, on Fried's poems directed against the Vietnam War, this essay seeks to situate the tension between these two positions as a deep structure already in his work.

Keywords

Erich Fried, contemporary cultural studies, tension, context, contemporaneity, margins, culture, media, ideologies, postmodern condition, exile, "border crossing", "transgression", "deterritorialization", labile identity, identity, Marxist, political, ideological, political poetry, poetry, Vietnam War, tension

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The Poetry of Erich Fried
and the Structure of Contemporaneity

Nora M. Alter
University of Florida

The publication in 1993 of Erich Fried's *Gesammelte Werke* (*Collected Works*) in four volumes raised anew—ironically—the question of the longevity and contemporaneity of a large body of work inscribed by a poetic intent that was occasional and tendentious, by an obsessive concern to be contemporary and hence not necessarily to outlive its contingent social moment and *raison d'être*. To perceive such an intent simultaneously canonizes and destroys it, insofar as it was designed—mainly if not exclusively—to have immediate impact. Is, then, Fried's poetry still contemporary? An affirmative answer must lie not in each individual poem, nor in the occasion for which it was conceived, but rather in deeper structures of contemporaneity which might be convertible and applicable across time, in other spatial conjunctures that, according to Fried's poetic, would have to be co-produced by poets and critics to come. A further implication is that there are no "major" or "minor" poems in Fried's *œuvre*: all have equal weight with regard to this structure and its intended consequence.

The question of Fried's contemporaneity is intimately linked to his status on the margins of various cultures, media, and ideologies, thus making both his life and his works appear as exemplary paradigms for the postmodern condition with its various theoretical celebrations of "exile," "border crossing," "transgression," "inappropriate/d otherness," "blurring of boundaries," "undecidability," "deterritorialization," and so forth.¹ Yet the apparent ease with which Fried becomes contemporary in *this*

postmodern sense is belied by his modernist commitment to a Marxist political ideology and poetic practice which, to the postmodern sensibility, may seem *precontemporary* in the sense of simply outdated. A contradiction informs current cultural studies between the positive valorization of “hybrid,” “indeterminate,” and “exile” identities and the caveat that these same identities are not necessarily disruptive or subversive but rather products of transnational capital as “the ultimate power of ‘deterritorialization’ which undermines every fixed identity.”² Attacks against “essentialism” thus can conceal deeper structures of identity and manipulation. Placing Fried and his poetry in contemporary terms—namely, in the interstices between these two, apparently incompatible theoretical stances—requires locating his body and the body of his work. If to be truly “contemporary” today is to be in some sense an “exile,” then Fried may be nothing if not contemporary, albeit as part of a theoretical and empirical structure that is anything but formally simple or politically indifferent.

I. Body as Text as Body in Exile

A body is not a fixed unit with a stable or static internal structure. On the contrary, a body is a dynamic relationship whose internal structure and external limits are subject to change. What we identify as a body is merely a temporary stable relationship.

—Spinoza (cited in Hardt 92)

The desire to spotlight and critique boundaries comes, in part, from the growing observation that nationalism is back on the global agenda with a vengeance, in its traditional form consecrated by two centuries of militant discourses as well as in its still volatile form of neo-tribalism.³ Questions of “nature” and “national identity” have become burning issues within and without the academy.⁴ As Eric Hobsbawm has noted in *The Age of Empire* (1987), though nationalists try to suppress or repress it, historic constructions of the Western nations have often been carried out at the nation’s margins and by the migrant exiles (esp. ch. 6). In response to the problematic of nationalism, various attempts have of course been made to destabilize potentially dangerous ideologies such as stable national

and/or tribal identity, though without offering any convincing substitutes—except perhaps for an international communism before its collapse into various socialisms in one country that themselves are collapsing, *and* a transnational capitalism which appears all-too-“victorious.” It is a sign of our times that Jacques Derrida, commonly seen as the originator of text-based deconstruction (“there is nothing outside the text”), in his recent autopsy of the collapsed beliefs of modernity, commits himself to the call for a “New International.”⁵

How might Fried respond? His view of “exile” is characteristically complex: deeply felt yet without self-indulgence, always striving to locate the *tertium quid* between his own experiences and more universal ones. Thus, for example, an early poem “Landlos” (*GW* 1: 157-63) describes not only a condition of being “without a country” but also a site, if the exile were to attempt to return, of physical and moral devastation, “without land,” to which return is virtually impossible. Hence the deeper structure of Fried’s experience of exile is reencountered everywhere he travels—physically, cognitively, poetically.

In one “voluntary” mode—as a form of individual or group protest against an oppressive regime—some people chose isolation without leaving the country: such an inside/outside condition used to be called *exile intérieur* or *inneres Exil*. The usual meaning of “exile,” however, referred principally to members of a nation (country or State) who were displaced, by force or by choice, beyond its borders and lived in a “foreign” country, a foreign society, and a culture. Despite some basic differences, especially in the area of language or dialect, present tribal exiles continue in many ways the alienating experience of these earlier exiles whose representative figures may be seen as proleptic images of exiles in our postmodern fragmented age. Such a figure was Fried, who aptly embodies, willingly as well as unwillingly, a cultural paradigm of today’s “exile.”

While the life and writings of Erich Fried (1921-1988) are exemplary in many ways, none of them is extraordinary. His image certainly cannot match the powerful figure of Paul Celan, his contemporary, friend, and brother in exile. They did have certain traits in common. While in exile, they both kept on writing in German. And as Jews they shared the horror of the Holocaust. But Fried’s personal existence appears barely dramatic in comparison with Celan’s tragic life. For, from his birth in Czernovitz to his

suicide in the Seine at the age of 49, from German camps back to Czernovitz and Bucharest after the war, then from Vienna to Paris, Celan uncannily illustrated the dark curse of the archetypal Exile, the Wandering Jew forbidden to rest in any land, anywhere in this world. At the same time Celan was an extraordinary poet, and the general admiration for his lucidly hermetic visions of explosive violence and exnomination (words losing their capacity to refer), death and dehumanization, has raised his human figure to heroic proportions, against his poetic will. But if the image of tragic heroes tends to glorify fixed identities and values—for example, simplified fates of nations or tribes clearly defined by their boundaries even when they are transgressed and whenever they eject exiles—then, precisely because it is tragically heroic in some respects, the “Celan” paradigm cannot fully account for the postmodern predicament, including its constitutive paradigm of undecidability. Not unlike the Holocaust itself, “Celan” bears witness to a past that must not be forgotten, lest it be repeated, but that is, in its very horror, a simple past and should stay that way.⁶ Readers of Celan are continually reminded by his work that its peculiarly “hermetic” quality does not mean that it does not refer to other realities. As Theodor Adorno noted in Celan’s regard, “to understand hermetic poetry one has to hypothesize a connection between it and society” (443). In only partial contrast, “Fried” stands as a more symptomatic prefiguration of postmodern exile in the ways it eludes fixed ideological clichés, fashionable literary or cultural approaches. Paradoxically, however, Fried’s very elusiveness embraces remarkably “decidable” political and ideological convictions that appear far more modernist than postmodern, and hence “*un/zeitgemäss*” ‘un/timely.’

Born a Viennese Jew, Fried left Austria in 1938 (after his father was kicked to death by the Gestapo). He settled in London where he led a relatively comfortable life until his death. His bread-and-butter work was for the BBC, broadcasting German-language programs to the German Democratic Republic. He became fluent in English and an accomplished translator.⁷ He continued to write in German, publishing his poetry both in West and East Germany. His initial exile was not voluntary; his choice to remain abroad, was.⁸ Exile, he often repeated, is not always externally imposed; *part* of his own was of his own making. Similarly, not necessity but free choice motivated him to keep on writing in German although from

its national outside. He did not want to be folded back entirely into

the postwar Austria or Germany (East or West) but hoped, as in/outsider, to remain active in the cultural intellectual politics of German-speakers. Yet the circumstances of his death ironically marked the contingency of such (and other) plans. Invited to West Germany in November 1988 (exactly a year before the Berlin Wall came down), to give a speech on the 50th anniversary of Reichskristallnacht (and 50 years after his forced departure from Vienna), Fried collapsed and died in a hospital in Baden-Baden. But this was not to be a reunion of body and land—Fried had insisted that his body be returned to London for burial in Kensal Green cemetery.

His irrevocable decision to remain at the periphery of German/Austrian culture had forced Fried to re-center his words to fit both the German language canon and the British place of exile. Such a “dual perspective” surely eludes two old-fashioned stereotypes of the exiled: the assimilated new patriot, embracing the culture of the new land or the first generation immigrant, clinging to the ways of the old country. More appropriate for Fried may be a third and more flexible model of a restless traveller, moving from one place to another and thus escaping all cultural constraints. Edward W. Said, himself a kind of exile in establishment America (though writing in English), favors this third model, reflecting the awareness of postmodern fragmentation and the resulting popularity of multiple forms of otherness:

The exile knows that in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity. Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience. (365)

This portrayal of an identity defined as a changing shape, and paradoxically fixed in its very elusiveness, applies to Fried on some levels but not all. Politically and ideologically he did cross several borders, experimenting with new ideas, some more radical than others. Basically, however, he remained on the Left. In his life as a writer, he also chose to remain within the familiar German language territory and hence has remained an object limited to German literary studies. On the other hand, in other ways, he also seems to conform to, and thus confirm, Said's paradigm of exile, which is closer to a postmodern cultural studies problematic that is

international in scope. In his activities as a broadcaster, and even more as a translator, Fried was indeed a (techno)cultural facilitator, mediator and untimely traveller jockeying back and forth between cultures, languages and identities. To that extent, Fried exemplifies Iain Chambers' notion in *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (1994) that to:

come elsewhere from "there" and not "here," and hence to be simultaneously "inside" and "outside" the situation at hand, is to live at the intersections of histories and memories, experiencing both their preliminary dispersal and their subsequent translation into new, more extensive, arrangements along emerging routes. (6)

This "traveling" within and between cultures was both intellectual and physical, as Fried was moving back and forth from Britain to both Germanies and Austria—by voice, text, and body. More generally, it can be argued that even his own poetry could be read as "travelogue" insofar as its topics move not only from one country to another but also, in Chambers' words, "across the threshold between event and narration, between authority and dispersal, between repression and representation, between the powerless and the power" (11). This oscillatory motion has also an internal psychological dimension: its various sites must not be hierarchized, implicitly or explicitly, by relatively stable notions such as "center" versus "margin," "freedom" versus "constraint." Fried was quite conscious that he lacked real freedom as an emigrant even though his poetic power was free, but he also felt that *both* freedom and creative power were extremely ambivalent in the light of what they *could* be in a better world but *were* not in ours. The German/English phonetic reading of his name duly connotes both "peace" (*Friede*) and "freedom" (freed).⁹ Exile enables and disables.

Many leading theorists in cultural studies such as Trinh T. Minh-ha and Chambers, and literary critics who appeal to it from within German Studies such as Russell Berman, now want to do away with older polarities and binary oppositions such as "margin" and "center." For example, Berman argues that "an adequate approach" to German cultural studies would "neither advocate cohesive identity nor celebrate the marginal as somehow heroically oppositional" rather, from this perspective, "innovation and

stability are not incompatible but always interwoven" (4). And Trinh sharply and appropriately challenges the upholding of the center-periphery binary against both those who prematurely celebrate marginal positions and also those who stubbornly defend the canon out of self-interest.¹⁰

Fried's resistance to appropriation is at least as manifold, his exile operating on multiple levels. His status thus becomes analogous to that of the exile Trinh, who would empower the position of the previously weak and marginal by imbuing it with the power of the "inappropriate/d other"—one who refuses to be appropriated by the dominant discourse and then becomes inappropriate.¹¹ To try to label and/or appropriate Fried, to bestow upon him any fixed identity or embodiment (whether it be "Austrian," "German," "Jew," or "Communist," "BBC Propagandist," "Translator" or even "Poet") does appear to miss the power—actual or, as important, potential—of what he was both as a private man and as a published writer. To understand him, to grasp the full range of his possibilities, we must discard ready-made categories—whether old or new, totalizing or fragmented—and look at what remains relatively stable throughout his changing ways and changing futures: that is, the body of his texts.

II. *und Vietnam und*

The war in Vietnam takes place not only in Vietnam; it is everywhere.

—Robert Havemann¹²

The whole of this contradiction—revolutionary anti-colonialism; the most advanced socialist political practice in the most backward peasant country; the direct, historic, prolonged combat between socialism and imperialism; the utterly unequal balance of forces—was condensed in the Vietnam War.

—Aijaz Ahmad (28)

Fried published more than 50 collections of poetry, producing it, as he liked to say, the way rabbits reproduce. And he scattered their topical sites all over the world, signaling their geographical distribution, each with the name of a different country in the title,

confirming his sense that exile is a deep structure of the human condition across space and time. *Deutschland*, his first collection appeared, in 1944, soon followed by *Österreich*. His later poems (with the partial exception of his love poetry) comment on topical political issues: from the student demonstrations and murder of Benno Ohnesorg in Germany in 1967 to Israel's policies in the Near East in *Höre, Israel!* (*Hear, Israel!* 1974) to war in Central America in *Wo Liegt Nicaragua?* (*Where is Nicaragua?* 1987). But already earlier, programmatically with *und Vietnam und* (1966), he had distanced himself from his direct experiences of World War II, Germany, and Austria, moving outside the European context to a nation—or “imagined community” (Anderson)—that he had never visited and that perhaps never existed as he imagined it. The topic of Vietnam was one that Fried returned to throughout his poetry.¹³ But *und Vietnam und*, written between 1962 and 1966, represented a breakthrough in his work.¹⁴ It inaugurated a literary and political project that was to continue until his death: to expand his vision to cover a more or less conscious “geopolitical aesthetic,” pointing toward identities and totalities beyond differences (Jameson 1992). The “und . . . und” in Fried's title applies to his entire oeuvre, its deep structure, and its contemporaneity.

The simple word “and” is the most properly Friedian of all words: it both separates and brings together, depending on how one reads it (Holzner 120). To the extent that it fuses together temporal and spatial relationships, one might speak of its “metaphoric” axis; to the extent that it holds things apart, keeping them contiguous in space and time, the “and” is “metonymic”—but obviously there is considerable overlap between the two tropes. A relatively late cycle of Fried's work published in 1981 has poems elliptically entitled “. . . und Politik . . .” “. . . und Terror . . .” “. . . und Literatur . . .” and, finally, “. . . und Liebe” (*GW2*: 533-620). But *und Vietnam und* was the first signpost pointing the way. His project was marked by ambiguity from the beginning, since, like Fried's own life, it combined the conflicting demands of fixed identity and multicultural plurality, creating a source of more or less productive contradictions.

For some readers, the most “scandalous” of such contradictions, or conflictual positions, concerned Fried's association of the Holocaust with the policies of Israel. This “taboo” topic was broached directly in the 1967 poem “Höre, Israel!,” generating an enormous outcry because Fried associated Israeli treatment of

Arabs in Palestine with Nazi treatment of Jews in Europe. Later, however, he distinguished, in the introduction to the eponymous collection when it appeared in 1974, between his *comparisons* and the notion of *equation* (*GW* 2: 93-96).¹⁵ The poem was taken to imply that the Holocaust was not a unique event in history, or at least not absolutely so.¹⁶ The question, for Fried and all who remember World War II is how can one grasp both the uniqueness and the comparability of monstrous human experience, collective or individual? How does one negotiate the perilous waters between the Charybdis of claiming that an experience is so exceptional that it cannot be repeated and thus taking the terrible risk that it might recur, and the Scylla of comparing the experience with others, and thus denying the lived specificity and agony of that event? Readers overlooked the fact that “Höre, Israel!” was not the first Fried poem to raise this question. Already in *und Vietnam und* he had compared the war to the Holocaust. And his tiny word “und” was no doubt his response—modest and immodest at once—to the challenge of “poetry after Auschwitz.”¹⁷ But for Fried this problem is not to be confined to history; for, as Fredric Jameson has remarked, “death is everywhere and omnipresent, perhaps above all in this late capitalist society after Auschwitz; but on the other hand we seem to have eliminated the very thought of it from the fabric of everyday life” (Jameson 1990, 111).¹⁸ It was Fried’s task to keep this thought alive in his poetry.

One may wonder what drew Fried to “Vietnam,” beyond his general hatred of injustice. He did not know the land himself, could not perceive the resemblances between the real Vietnam and Germany.¹⁹ It seems he compared the two countries on what Michel de Certeau once termed an “imaginary landscape of inquiry,” which:

is not without value, even if it is without rigor. . . . It thus keeps before our eyes the structure of a social imagination in which the problem constantly takes different forms and begins anew. (41-42)

Fried’s version of this rather abstract notion brings it down to the poetic earth of *und Vietnam und*, introduced with: “Wenn man die Augen zumacht / und völlig stillsitzt // kann man von weitem sehen / was in dem Land geschieht” ‘When you close your eyes / and sit very still // you can see from afar / what is happening in the country’

(*GW* 1: 364). In the poem “42 Schulkinder” (“42 school children”), he writes in the same vein: “Ich habe Guernica gesucht auf der Karte / weil ich mir Man Quang / anders nicht vorstellen kann” ‘I sought Guernica on the map / because I could not imagine Man Quang otherwise’ (*GW* 1: 367-68). The allusion is to the bombing during the Spanish Civil War, both because it introduced technowar to civilians, consolidated international protest by the Left, and because Picasso’s “Guernica” stands as sign for artistic struggles to represent, to image, the unrepresentable. In the same poem Fried asks more explicitly “Wie weit war es / von Guernica nach Warschau / Von Hitler bis zu wem / und zu welchem Land?” ‘How far was it / from Guernica to Warsaw / from Hitler to whom / and to which country?’ (*GW* 1: 368). “Gleichheit Brüderlichkeit” (“Equality fraternity”) is even more direct, beginning with the bitter remark that “Vietnam ist Deutschland / sein Schicksal ist unser Schicksal / Die Bomben für seine Freiheit / sind Bomben für unsere Freiheit” ‘Vietnam is Germany / its fate is our fate / The bombs for its freedom / are bombs for our freedom,’ and that “Unser Bundeskanzler Erhard / ist Marschall Ky / General Nguyen Van Thieu / ist Präsident Lübke” ‘Our Federal Chancellor Erhard / is Marshall Ky / General Nguyen Van Thieu / is President Lübke’ (*GW* 1: 392). The poem also contains the stanza “Saigon ist Bonn / und Westberlin ist Da Nang / Ein grosser Teil des Landes / ist finsterer Urwald” ‘Saigon is Bonn / and West Berlin is Da Nang / A large part of the country / is dark jungle’ (*GW* 1: 393). This identificatory metaphoric is further intensified metonymically because Fried puns characteristically on the double meaning of German *Land*—countryside and nation state, a pun that invokes not only the often bloody tension between the premodern agricultural “third world” and the post/modern industrialized “first world” but also the no less complex tensions between agriculture and industry in both “first world” West Germany and its “second world” East German “other.” Noticeably Fried favors neither “option,” keeping to a pattern of undecidability—but only up to a point. Today, after the German re/unification that Fried did not live to see (not to mention the assassination of Rabin), he would likely think that the jungle of oppression is still growing and that real freedom seems indefinitely deferred around the globe. In “Unsere Entfernungen” (“Our Distances”), published in the collection *Gegen das Vergessen* (*Against Forgetting*, 1987), he further problematizes our common sense of geographical and temporal distance by drawing an

equilateral triangle between Vietnam, Nicaragua, and the Nazi concentration camp Esterwegen (*GW* 3: 288). In this late poem, Fried creates a poetic/political space or imaginary landscape of inquiry called “Nicaragua” just as two decades earlier he had created “Vietnam.” He also turns this principle loose on his “own” people. “Wir Juden sind gross / so gross wie die grössten Völker / Wir haben Marx und Heine / und Freud und Einstein / Wir haben Meir-Har-Zion / den grossen Arabertöter / und Mordechai Ra’anán / und Joschua Zetler / die Sieger von Deir Yassin / die jeden Vergleich bestehen / mit Leutnant William Calley / dem Besieger des Dorfes My Lai / und Jürgen Stroop, SS / dem Besieger der Warschauer Ghettos” ‘We Jews are great / as great as the greatest peoples / We have Marx and Heine / and Freud and Einstein / We have Meir-Har-Zion / the great Arab-killer / and Mordechai Ra’anán / and Joschua Zetler / the victors of Deir Yassin / who hold their own in any comparison / with Lieutenant William Calley / the victor of the village of My Lai / and Jürgen Stroop, SS / the victor of the Warsaw Ghetto’ (*GW* 2: 125).

Before lumping Fried together with any “revisionist historian,” it is crucial to stress Fried’s notion of the re-creation of a signifying system: whether it be Vietnam, Nicaragua, the Near East, or the Nazi concentration and death camps. These spaces of horror become consciously constructed systems of signs and significations in a way isomorphic to what Roland Barthes constructs as “Japan,” which he then relies on to analyze the “Orient” but also the Occident that constructs it.²⁰ For Barthes, in this circular trajectory of deconstruction, “Japan” provides a certain number of determinate “flashes” that have “afforded him a situation of writing” (4). Similarly, the war in Vietnam and its atrocities affords Fried a “situation of writing,” “allegory,” or “geopolitical aesthetic”—risking being frozen in a fixed historical identity as “Vietnam” but resurfacing revitalized with Nicaragua in its state of siege. More generally, to talk about a current situation, as in Vietnam, involves for Fried talking about a past one, in his case ultimately the German-speaking world. Therefore, the primary tension in Fried’s work, both as a whole and within individual poems, is not so much intrinsic within the language as in “hermetic” poetry (if that exists), as historical and extrinsic, between contemporary, precontemporary, and postcontemporary sites of signification. The apparent simplicity of his version of “language poetry,” the lack of “poetic”

density, produces a certain transparency of historical articulations and reflections, to which we will return presently.

Past and present, too, commingle around the axial “and,” and this principle can become a way to talk about another nation related to Vietnam but closer to home for some of us: The United States.²¹ In “Neue Rangordnung” (“New Order of Rank”), the explicit connection between Hitler’s Germany and the USA is stated with particular acuity: “Vor dem Treffen mit Präsident Johnson / kam Hitler an erster Stelle / dann kam lange / nichts / und dann erst Präsident Johnson” ‘Before the meeting with President Johnson / Hitler was first in line / then for a long time / nothing / and only then President Johnson’ (*GW* 1: 389). Like Vietnam, Nazism also moves outside of the nation space of Germany to the United States, to “us.” As Fried’s title “New Order of Rank” suggests, a new world order is emerging with the dominating American presence not only in Europe but throughout the world.²² We must also recall that the term “new order” is not necessarily Fascist or Nietzschean: “ordine nuovo” was a rallying cry of Italian Communists in 1919-20. In other words, Fried’s *own* poetology and ideology cannot be exempted from the thematic at hand. Finally, in “Pastor R. in Hamburg,” the condemnation of the USA is rather more ambivalent, oscillating between a nostalgic praise for the past and a warning for the future: “und warum die Amerikaner / die uns erlösten von Hitler // Aber wie lange / kann ich noch sagen ‘Freunde’ / ‘Freunde ihr habt euch geirrt / in Vietnam und Santo Domingo’” ‘and why the Americans / who liberated us from Hitler // But how long / can I still say “Friends” / “Friends you’ve erred / in Vietnam and Santo Domingo”’ (*GW* 1: 366). Although the question is obviously merely rhetorical at one level, at another—that of the “and”—it is also sincere. Neither quite undecidable nor decidable, it is intended to open discussion up to other informing principles of Fried’s project.

III. Between “Transparency” and “Friendliness,” Toward Alienation and Montage

We who wanted to prepare the ground for
 friendliness could not ourselves be
 friendly.

—Bertolt Brecht²³

Shortly before his death, in conversation with East German writer Heiner Müller, and speaking of his nearly absolute commitment to freedom of thought and expression Fried recalled that during the Vietnam war:

I had enormous sympathy with a young neo-Nazi who, when Kiesinger said "We Germans are the last ones to be allowed to criticize our American friends, who are defending Berlin in Vietnam," replied: "Yes, Hitler couldn't tolerate the Communists, and Hitler did some nasty things [Schweinereien]. And that was entirely in order, because it was in the fight against Communism. Now the Americans are doing some nasty things, and it can be said that that's in order, maybe. But why should anyone prevent me from thinking, don't we Germans have a right too?" (Fried and Müller 49)

"And all this is of course *correct*," the anti-Fascist Fried concludes, "even if one was oneself a Nazi in younger years. One can deny *nobody* the right to think. It's absurd, we ought to be ashamed. Terrible" (49).

Now, this problematic remark can be explained, if not justified, by one of the two principles governing Fried's work: *Freundlichkeit*, translated not merely as "friendliness" but also as "generosity of spirit," and *Durchsichtigkeit* or "transparency." Friedian *Freundlichkeit* is a surprisingly complicated concept to unpack. It is not clear whether Fried intends by it a certain personality trait that he admires or a way of writing, translating political commitment into poetry adequate to it aesthetically, and, vice versa, translating aesthetically successful poetry into progressive political action. In short, politics and poetry for Fried are, or ought to be, on "friendly" terms. Not that a poem needs to be explicitly political to have progressive effect; in his words: "art is not the handmaiden of politics, for the sake of politics" (14-15). On the other hand (there is normally an "other hand" with Fried), he also claimed to prefer his non-political poems, including his love poetry (which was quite erotic), to the more overtly political (Fried and Müller 38).²⁴

This dual commitment has prompted fellow poet-critic Helmut Heissenbüttel to suggest that there are only two "basic themes" in Fried's work, with "our language" as their "common denominator" (Nünning) First, "the unconscious" (i.e., eroticism, sexuality, the

libidinal, the spontaneous, the subjective), leading to the love poems; and second, “the political” (public agitation, social theory, satire) leading to the political poetry (Heissenbüttel 3). It has become quite common to apply such a model to Fried, particularly in West German criticism—which, after his death, has become well-disposed toward him. One critic finds throughout Fried’s work the “*reconciliation* between rhetoric and poetics” (von Bormann), and another a “*dialectical* movement of thought” (Rothschild).

Yet there is no simple opposition in Fried between “autobiographical truth” and “fiction”—such a view is inadequate to grasp his insistence that they are mutually imbricated, though not easily “synthesized.”²⁵ Similarly problematic is the notion that there is a fairly straightforward teleology in his life and work “*from solipsism to engagement*” (Kane), as if his mature politics did not continue to be haunted by solitude, as if solitude were not sometimes a political act. I would prefer to argue that *all* binary templates (which posit that there are two independent spheres which then require mediation and dialectical synthesis) are insufficiently complex to do justice to Fried’s project, or even perhaps to literary and cultural studies generally. From Fried’s perspective, in any case, it is a mistake to view a subjective preference, say for his own love poetry, as a devaluation of his other verse. As to Heissenbüttel’s “*our language*,” Fried always pricked up his ears when hearing such phrases, demanding to know just who “we” are, just who is speaking and why.

Fried’s commitment to “friendliness” inclines him to use various voices in addition to his own, including—paradoxically—voices of his bitter opponents, even, as we have begun to see, Nazis and neo-Nazis. Hovering over him is Brecht’s famous plea in “To Those Who Come Later” for retroactive “understanding” following times that have made “friendliness” difficult, if not impossible, in the very battle for it. This deep ethical problematic of means-and-ends, with its curious resolution, shadows all Fried’s work.²⁶ It can be explained completely neither by a tension between two fixed values, nor by the diversification of roles and lyric voices that Fried was taking on. In that sense, the self-destructive nature of Fried’s “friendliness” is as emblematically enigmatic as the very figure of the exiled that he exemplifies.

The *formal* poetological equivalent of “friendship” is Fried’s technique of “montage.” Actually, Fried’s own term “montage” is something of a misnomer, given the sequencing logic and narrative

quality of his poetry. The term does make sense, however, as a description of his way of working from sources: before, that is, they undergo substantial secondary revision in and as texts. The latter are different formally from the montages, say, in the films of Sergei Eisenstein or in surrealist poetry—though Fried shares with them the concern to produce unexpected political or conceptual collisions and juxtapositions. In any case, Friedian montage captures and reflects the pluralism and polynymity of his personæ, the diversity that cannot be made to fit a single definition. Furthermore, the “und . . . und” structure captures and reflects the additive, collocational procedure of montage. As manifestation of “friendship” and the multiple roles of exile, montage allows different voices to speak for themselves, and—whatever critics have said—does not necessarily require or receive “dialectical reconciliation.” Instead it foregrounds contradictions and tensions of the kind that, for Fried, art cannot be expected to resolve by itself and must address nonetheless. Montage is also for him a way for poetry to respond to the mass media generally, as well as to specific political media.²⁷ Fried’s poetological use of montage can both assist the reading of his work and annotate its stress on transparency. For there have been important misreadings and misunderstandings of Friedian friendliness and transparency.

For the West German cultural power broker Marcel Reich-Ranicki, Fried’s poetry, particularly on the Vietnam war, was overly didactic and tendentious, even to the extent of forfeiting its claim to literature and literature’s perennial mandate to strive for “transcendent value.” Writing in 1982 in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Reich-Ranicki complained that “nothing made access to these verses difficult, not the least effort was demanded of anyone” (Reich-Ranicki). In other words Fried’s poetry was being attacked retroactively (and at the time) for being *excessively* “transparent.” Other critics have dealt with Fried’s alleged didacticism by comparing him (positively and negatively) to the far more oblique Celan.²⁸ Still others have attempted to demonstrate (effectively) that “even” Fried’s most apparently didactic-sounding verses, including those about Vietnam, are informed by highly complex rhetorical structures. In the special issue of *Text+Kritik* devoted to Fried in 1986, a critic showed that his verses contain a veritable encyclopedia of rhetorical techniques as old as classical antiquity. As a result of Fried’s “(tendentious) return of poetry to rhetoric,” his Vietnam-poems exerted “a nearly surrealistic shock

effect: no one had believed in the redemption of the (avant-garde) dream that reality and art would so meld together” (von Bormann 16). In other words, Fried becomes a kind of “technician of the sacred.”

In the spirit or ideology of Fried himself, however, such well-meaning “defenses” must be deemed double-edged. They may be welcome insofar as they reveal his craftsmanship as a poet and help to situate him squarely within the tradition of not merely German or Austrian but European letters. Nevertheless, this canonization (reinforced by the 1993 publication of his “collected works,” which, symptomatically enough, does not include his many political speeches) obviously risks occluding any differences Fried may have had with that same tradition. More important, for him, this cooptation defuses the specific aesthetico-political “friendship” he sought to forge with the rest of the world. With specific regard to his collection of poems on Vietnam—its on-going contemporaneity—the irony has been that the two basic critical responses come to much the same end, since dismissing their explicitly political content as insufficiently literary is ultimately no better than revealing their profound literariness. The upshot is the same: that is, to continue under the guise of literary criticism to refuse to discuss the *issues* raised not just by a handful of Fried’s poems but, in this case, by the war in southeast Asia and, even more important, its continuing legacy around the globe. In short, not merely were his own specific political points about one war lost in the literary critical shuffle, but any deeper confrontation with it and its “continuation by other means” continue to be (a)voided by his readers. Yet, in the last analysis, it was *this* confrontation that Fried fervently desired to help produce, not *just* poems, never mind canonization.

In Fried’s terms, the purpose of all writing (literary and critical), in both its “transparency” and its “friendliness,” is to fight “alienation” (*Entfremdung*), a universal target of Western or Hegelian Marxism. Among the major producers of alienation were, for Fried as for many others, the mass media, underpinning with their “simulacra” what has been called “the society of the spectacle.” Friedian montage was to be a major weapon against that alienation, though he recognized that it was itself a *product* of the hegemony of mass media, their own “alienation effect.” Opposed to all claims of “autonomous art” despite this apparent contradiction, Fried had no choice but to fight fire with fire. As he explains in the

introduction to the 1969 English translation of his *On Pain of Seeing*, he was ready to enlist “even” old-fashioned and transparent political poetry in this homeopathic struggle:

But even committed poetry in the narrower sense is in my view always justified when it really fights alienation, which must of necessity include avoiding alienation in one’s own use of language and imagery unless as a deliberate means: quotation, parody, allusion, “montage.” (10)

For Fried, working primarily in the “old fashioned” medium of printed verse, such “montage” is necessarily confronted by the far more powerful technologies that threaten its very existence and audience. By re/presenting and re/contextualizing mass media as yet another form of art and fiction, but one that disguises its fictionality and artifice, Fried pits the media against themselves. He does so in order to despectacularize them, thereby contributing (as a necessary but insufficient act) to the re/creation of what he hopes is not yet another simulacrum (hence his scare quotes around “montage”) but an effective aesthetic-political practice. By “re/setting” newspaper language, removing it from its official context, Fried shows how newsprint words (“all the news that’s fit to print” and “print to fit”) in fact often lie, and how in a different context a new meaning can emerge. In “Pressekonferenz LBJ, Frühjahr 1966” (“Press conference LBJ, Spring 1966”), one of the poems in *und Vietnam und*, he is inspired by the sight of Johnson’s political tears at a press conference; and in “Aktion Strategische Dörfer” (“Operation Strategic Hamlets”), he evokes concentration camps to censure the use and abuse of the notion of “strategic hamlets”: “Der Versuch / eine ganze Nation von Bauern / anzusiedeln / in geschlossenen Lagern / nachts hinter Stacheldraht / tagsüber auf Außenarbeit / unter Bewachung / durch Befriedungseinheiten” ‘The attempt / to relocate / an entire nation of farmers / into closed camps / at night behind barbed wire / daytime working outside / under guard / by peace keeper troops’ (GW 1: 373). Here, as throughout his poetry, he emphasizes the emptiness of press reports and attempts with his poems to restore the feeling of a personal tragedy to what had become an international spectacle for the world only passively to watch: “the first television war.” The duplicitous relationship between official language and alternative fact is then x-rayed by a short poem from *und Vietnam und*:

17.-22. Mai 1966 (May 17-22, 1966)

Aus Da Nang
 wurde fünf Tage hindurch
 täglich berichtet:
 Gelegentlich einzelne Schüsse

Am sechsten Tag wurde berichtet:
 In dem Kämpfen der letzten fünf Tage
 in Da Nang
 bisher etwa tausend Opfer

From Da Nang
 five days running
 it was reported daily:
 sporadic single shots

On the sixth day it was reported:
 In the fighting over the last five days
 in Da Nang
 up to now around a thousand casualties. (*GW* 1:373)

The poem works ironically and parodically—following Genesis—to conflate the two “reports” in indirect discourse into one, linked by the use of the passive voice without agent—as if, in this case at least, *all* reports produced by the press come from a single unidentified ideological source, that cynically contradicts itself, revealing its relative truth only when it can no longer conceal it: a clear case of “montage” in Fried’s sense. At another level of “and,” however, this time ricocheting off himself, the same verses refer back to Fried’s own bread-and-butter work as a BBC broadcaster to the GDR. For he, too, was always hearing, and even forced himself to use, Orwellian “Newspeak”—both as a conscious strategy and as a curse.²⁹ One may also note the allusion to the *sixth* day—the day when the Biblical rest after creation has not yet come, perhaps will not come.³⁰ In any case, this poem seems to confirm a point made recently by Chambers when he writes:

To set language against itself, noting the diverse inhabitation of the very same medium, for example “English,” is to wrest from language itself the truth that is always partial and partisan: it speaks for someone and from a specific place, a habitat, a sense of belonging and being at home. (24)

A peculiarly alienating “home,” Fried would add.

Several of Fried’s “montages” were assembled as multilayered critiques of contemporary Germany. In 1970, the leader of the CSU, the Bavarian wing of the Christian Democrats, and later German Minister of Defense, Franz Josef Strauss, made some notorious remarks about the German past in relation to the “economic miracle.” His incredible *bons mots* were incorporated by Fried in the first stanza of a poem, followed by a censoring coda:

National-Ökonomie

Franz Joseph Strauss sagte
 “Ein Volk, das diese
 wirtschaftlichen Leistungen
 erbracht hat
 hat ein Recht darauf
 von Auschwitz
 nichts mehr hören zu wollen”

Demnach hätte Adolf Hitler
 nur grössere Wirtschaftserfolge
 erzielen müssen
 um für sein Drittes Reich
 das Recht zu erwerben
 auf achtungsvolles
 Totschweigen seines Auschwitz

Political Economy

Franz Josef Strauss said
 “A nation that has accomplished
 such economic achievements
 has a right
 not to want to hear
 anything more
 about Auschwitz”

According to this argument,
 Adolf Hitler would have only had
 to have aimed for greater economic success
 in order for his Third Reich
 to have won the right
 to solicitous dead silence
 about his Auschwitz (GW 3: 588)

It is interesting to note that Strauss was, according to secret East German polls at the time, the most popular Western political figure in the German Democratic Republic after Willy Brandt. In this and other ways, this sharp little poem of 1970, to which I'll return shortly, has taken on proleptic meaning for Germany—and not only Germany—in today's world conversion to a market economy. In this respect, too, Reich-Ranicki was simply wrong about the “transparency” of Fried's political verse; it could and did “transcend” its immediate occasion after all.

In fact, one might argue that any real effectiveness (and hence contemporaneity) such poems may have always derived to some extent from their “excessive” accessibility. But this transparency is often deceptive, and not only in terms of Fried's transparent and hence often overlooked rhetorical virtuosity. For his poems are not as transparent as they first appear either aesthetically *or* politically, though they are no doubt “dogmatic,” particularly from the perspective of knee-jerk “undecidability.” Part of Fried's evident transparency lies in the fact (and is belied *by* the fact) that he generally writes in a clear, colloquial German. Also, starting with *und Vietnam und*, he often provides explanatory notes to his poems (appropriating a trend in modernist verse dating back at least to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*), additionally appending in that case a historical chronology of Vietnam history. Paradoxically, the effect of such apparent didacticism is both to direct the readers' response (in ways that may well make many feel uncomfortable) yet also to challenge them to imagine *other* responses that Fried might have missed or left unstated in the spirit of deeper levels of undecidability “*and*” decidability. By showing that his poems emerge from the public record and media pool, he also encourages readers to interrogate all media critically—to write their *own* “poems,” so to speak.

A line in the introductory poem to *und Vietnam und*—“In ihrer Hauptstadt Sodom / regiert ein Soldat der *mein Kampf*lernt” ‘In the capital city of Sodom a soldier rules who studies *Mein Kampf*’ (*GW* 1: 363)—is documented by a note in the appendix, according to which on July 6, 1965, General and South Vietnamese Prime Minister Ky delivered himself of the opinion that “I have only one model: Hitler” (*GW* 1: 649). Fried cites this remark from a newspaper to show that it is part of the public record, overlooked or repressed though it may be. But he is also refiguring the “Oriental” General Ky in Saigon as a puppet of “Western” civilization in an

allusive trajectory that leads back at least to the Biblical Sodom. A common ideology in the West held that the Vietnamese—due no doubt to some “natural” and “oriental” deviousness—were responsible for the war and its violence, whether in the North or South. This poem is Fried’s way of “bringing the war back home” and making it contemporary, in this case to Europe and its cultural, religious, and literary canon: from the Bible to *Mein Kampf*, a scandalous enough genealogy in its own right. “We,” too, the Ancient Jews “and” the exiled Jews like Fried, are co-responsible for Ky. We must “read” an encoded message which cannot be *clear* because it must be re/produced in *our* imagination, in *our* actions within our own spatio-temporal constraints. As Trinh has said, “The space offered is not that of an object brought to visibility, but that of the very invisibility of the invisible within the visible” (187). Fried’s space and time of the “and” is thus strictly in/visible.

Returning to the poem “Political Economy,” two further points are telling. The first involves Fried’s *own* politico-economical analysis of the Third Reich. He seems to believe, as some historians do, that the economy of Hitler’s Germany, as a version of The New Deal, had been stretched to its limits by 1936-38. The fact that Hitler was *not* able to have “greater economic success” led him to engage in the world war and cause the annihilation of millions. The second point Fried is implicitly making (beyond the transparent censure of the popular Strauss as a type of neofascist) is that it is *we* who must define “political economy.” This challenge is especially acute at a time when, as in Fried’s analysis, Germany’s postwar “economic miracle” has—once again—run its full course, replacing the promise of plenty with alarms about the future. This point is *not* explicitly stated, however, but is reflected in the tension between the promise of the title—announcing the huge topic of “political economy”—and a minimal and disappointing content reduced to a few words by a politician. The Marxian-sounding title logically suggests that Strauss *qua* individual is merely a puppet (much like General Ky in the other poem) of a much larger structure of history: transnational capital. But the ultimate crisis “shown” in “Political Economy” resides not in the more or less transparent association between Strauss and Hitler (or Ky), but rather in the implied apathy of the reader’s mind and absence of action—*our* minds and actions. What *is* to be done about the historical continuities and afterlife of Nazism and Fascism—in the political economy but also in all of social life?

IV. On “Dogmatism”

Gewaltloser Verzicht auf Gewaltlosigkeit

Es ist falsch
 auf die Steiniger
 keine Steine zu werfen

Nonviolent Renunciation of Nonviolence

It is wrong
 to throw no stones
 at the stoners (*GW* 2: 85)

The identification of Fried as an exile with many faces belies an earlier tendency of literary criticism to fold him back into simple paradigms that might be called “pre-cultural theoretical.” But I want to stress that Fried’s life and work is at the same time *too easy* to shoehorn into most postmodern paradigms of “undecidability,” and that one ought not to rush to do so without fully taking account of his comparatively adamant ideological core. After all, Fried was at once Austrian, German, Jewish, Poet, communist (writ small not large), and other things besides—no matter how much he resisted these and other categories, no matter how much he sought connections and possibilities between and beyond such “boundaries.” But before embracing him as a postmodern compatriot we must not forget Fried’s warning, based on painful personal experience, that *no* “identity” is something one just “has;” very often it is thrust upon one by one’s worst enemies—a point made by Jean-Paul Sartre with regard to anti-Semitism. In the Introduction to *Höre, Israel!*, Fried notes that it was the Nazis, after the *Anschluss* of 1938, who “transformed an Austrian secondary school student into a persecuted Jew” (*GW* 2: 93); before, he did not consider himself to be a Jew, in a sense was not. On the other hand, Fried himself was particularly adamant (and “transparent”) about his loyalty toward something *like* the Left wing of the political spectrum, as critical as he sometimes was of its dogmatic aspects. While open in principle to most ideological positions, in practice his own was weighted to leftist movements as *und Vietnam und* makes it clear in the poem “Vordruck.” The title means literally “pre-press,” in the sense of “pre-publication,” but it is also a printing term for “ellipsis” or “blank,” as in a blank space on a page that needs to be filled in. The poem begins:

Links ist Platz geblieben
 auf den man schreiben kann
 Rechts steht . . . *sind unser Unglück*
 Wie fing die Zeile an

On the left space has been left
 on which you can write
 On the right it says . . . *are our misfortune*
 How did the line begin (*GW* 1: 395)

The reader is required to fill in the blanks, connect the highlighted dots. Which stereotypes shall we use as scapegoats for all that ails us? The poem proceeds to give some examples. Some are presumably people whom Fried disliked (“De Gaulle,” “The Neutralists”), but the large majority represent either people (or ideological constructs) with whom he more closely identified (“The Jews,” “Those from the Afro-Asian zoo” [an allusion to a phrase of Gottfried Benn’s], “The Polacks,” “Guest Workers”), including “The Bolsheviks,” “The Easter Marchers,” “The Reds.” The political scales of the poem are distinctly tipped—figuratively and literally—to the ideological “Left.” The series of possible “ands” is very long but *not* wholly infinite, troublesome to decide but not undecidable. In short, the characterization of Fried’s poetry as “writing without anchor” is definitely off the mark (Hamburger 94-97).

Which is not to say that everyone will like where Fried chose to put down or weigh anchor. Coming to his defense with the claim that he was “against dogmatism” (Rothschild 26) is also not quite right. Part of Fried *was* dogmatic, for worse or better. As a permanent exile, Fried was in a privileged position of not having to position himself in relation to any concretely defined center—and yet also doomed to that position. While he did appreciate aspects of liberal democracy and pluralism, which he initially found “less harmful than Stalinism,” Fried also noted that he soon became disillusioned with both, that “bourgeois democracy was not a real democracy” (“Poetics and Politics” 60-62). He attacked all forms of imperialism and injustice, but *especially* capitalism, adding:

I could mainly fight against each injustice as it came up,
 whether it was the the *Berufsverbot* in Germany, or the Vietnam
 war, or the Zionist behavior against the Palestinians, or the

Contras in Nicaragua, or the attack on the student movement, or the murder of the Baader-Meinhoff people—with whom I did not agree—in jail. (68)

At root, then, Fried remained committed to “history,” “reason,” “economic determination,” “class struggle”—in life as in poetry. This relatively consistent position makes his work difficult not so much for rightwing critics (who generally ignore him), nor even for the Center (which is busily integrating his work into various literary canons), but for any critic of today whose sensibility, including on the Left, legislates too precipitously against “master narratives” of the kind to which Fried seems ultimately committed. It seems to me in the final analysis that our question to Fried (indeed his own question to himself and to us) is not: Can Fried still be contemporary, even readable, under postmodern conditions? Rather, the question is: How can *we* do justice (without necessarily expecting to find any easy mediation and synthesis, perhaps not any at all) to both “aesthetics *and* politics” or “rhetoric *and* poetics,” both in Fried’s oeuvre and more generally, in ways that neither celebrate nor ignore the term and reality of “undecidability” and its cognates? By his poetological design, Fried’s contemporaneity resides not in any one poem or group of poems, not even in his collective works, but rather in a dynamic structural principle that links poetic rhetoric to thought and action in the rest of the world.

Notes

Earlier versions of this article were presented at a symposium on “Canon and Periphery in Austrian Literature” at Stanford University, May 1992, and at the American Comparative Literature Association Annual Meeting on “Borders, Exiles, and Diasporas” in Claremont California, 1994. I am grateful to Neil Donahue for his useful criticism. The translations that follow are my own.

1. In contemporary cultural studies, the resulting “indeterminacy” of this focus is perhaps most eloquently expressed by Trinh T. Minh-ha, herself embodying a position of multiple exile. A Vietnamese-born filmmaker, cultural theorist, and feminist critic now living and working mainly in the United States, she is Distinguished Professor in Women’s Studies at Berkeley and teaches filmmaking at San Francisco State University. Her films include *Surname: Viet, Given Name: Nam* (1989). She writes: “Whether we choose to concentrate on another culture, or on our own, our

work will always be cross cultural . . . above all because of the heterogeneous reality we all live today, in postmodern times—a reality, therefore, that is not a mere crossing from one borderline to the other or that is not merely double, but a reality that involves the crossing of an indeterminate number of borderlines, one that remains multiple in its hyphenation” (107).

2. This criticism of the common embrace of “deterritorialization” is succinctly put by Slavoj Žižek, the Slovenian-born philosopher, Lacanian psychoanalyst, film and media critic, and political analyst. He has been a Researcher in the Institute of Sociology at the University of Ljubljana, ran as a candidate for the Presidency of Slovenia in 1990, then part of Yugoslavia, publishes, lectures, and teaches widely in Europe and the United States. He writes: “The elated ‘deconstructionist’ logomachy on ‘essentialism’ and ‘fixed identities’ ultimately fights a straw man. Far from containing any kind of subversive potentials, the dispersed, plural, constructed subject hailed by postmodern theory (the subject prone to particular, inconsistent modes of enjoyment, etc.) simply designates *the form of subjectivity that corresponds to late capitalism*. Perhaps the time has come to resuscitate the Marxian insight that Capital is the ultimate power of ‘deterritorialization’ which undermines every fixed social identity” (216).

3. Whether tribalism is an exacerbated form of nationalism, or a deadly virus working from the inside to fragment and destroy established nations is a moot question. There is little question, however, that tribes are on the move everywhere, laying down an ever-more complex network of new boundaries, sometimes political but mainly social and cultural, that define, surround and protect the growing tribal identity. By the same token, an increasing number of people who were integrated inside the geographical borders of traditional nations or states now find themselves, within the same borders, outside the geographical boundaries of their own small tribe: social and cultural exiles, as it were, within their own country—a “fourth world” within the more traditional Big Three.

4. According to Sheehan, national identity manifests itself in three concentric circles: (1) legal: “a nation composed of those living in a particular state” (though this definition excludes foreigners born in that state, e.g., in the case of Germany, Turks); (2) cultural: “A nation is composed of those living in different places, but believing somehow that they belong together”; and (3) moral, ideological, and racial (164). For a theory of the concepts of “Nation,” “nationality,” and their cognates, see Bhabha. On how German national literature, and hence Germanistik, was already constructed in the nineteenth century see Hohendahl.

5. The main title of Derrida’s work, *Spectres de Marx: L’État de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale*, alludes back, of course, to

the opening of the *Communist Manifesto*, for Derrida argues that the spectre of Marx is hardly laid to rest, still haunts not only Europe but the world. His subtitle refers to three things: the desolate state of the post-Socialist world; the “work of mourning” that is one result; and, finally, the “new International” that is being formed to initiate this work and to put the progressive aspects of Marxism back on the global agenda.

6. For a discussion of that point and of Celan as “witness” in multiple senses, see Felman and Laub 25-42.

7. Fried was a translator in the strict sense, translating over 30 works from English into German by authors such as Dylan Thomas, T. S. Eliot, Richard Wright, in addition to major translations of Shakespeare. In that process, too, Fried was transposing metaphors of one culture into another, again exercising authority as a controller, interpreter, and regulator of the flow and reception of a national tradition. For an analysis of Fried’s work as a translator, see Reichert.

8. Within the German language context, Fried’s exile was typical of other exiles in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, producing a large body of Leftist literature: from Heine and Marx to Brecht, Weiss and members of the Frankfurt School. Of course, one need not be an exile or an engaged leftist to experience exile, which has internal as well as external forms. One thinks conventionally of Kafka for example, whose “exile” was in the shape of multiply intersecting concentric circles: a non-believing Jew, speaking and writing German among Czechs, living in what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and so on.

9. The importance of puns on authors’ proper names in relationship to various forms of “exile” was suggested to me by Matei Calinescu in, “Saint John Perse and the Modernist Poetics of Exile,” a paper presented at the American Comparative Literature Association Annual Meeting, 1994.

10. In Trinh’s words, “The margins, our sites of survival, become our fighting grounds and their site for pilgrimage. Thus, while we turn around and reclaim them as our exclusive territory, they happily approve, for the divisions between margin and center should be preserved, and as clearly demarcated as possible, if the two positions are to remain intact in their power relations. Without a certain work of displacement, again, the margins can easily recomfort the center in its goodwill and liberalism; strategies of reversal thereby meet with their own limits” (17).

11. See, for example, the essays anthologized in *She, the Inappropriate/d Other*.

12. “Der Krieg in Vietnam findet nicht nur in Vietnam statt, er ist überall.” As cited by Fried as the motto of his poem “Im Pentagon” (GW 1: 390).

13. As late as one year before his death, e.g., Fried returns to Vietnam in the collection *Gegen das Vergessen* (1987), in which the poems “Unsere

Entfernungen,” “Kleiner Tiger,” and “Amerikas Vergessen” appear alongside poems about current atrocities in other regions, including Latin America (“Völkermord”) and Northern Ireland (“Kind in Nordirland”).

14. See GW 1:361-400. Whether this or any other of his many anthologies should be treated as a random collection of previously published poems or as a coherent cycle, is a debatable question, and bears on the problem of reading each poem. I would argue that ultimately each poem should be read, to the extent possible, *both* in its own right (including in the social context in which it was first published in newspapers and journals) *and* in relation to the other poems with which it reappears (and its new historical context). For further discussion of this hermeneutic problem, see Rothschild.

15. For further discussion of this anthology and the controversy it generated, see Kaukoreit.

16. Less controversial was his attempt to extend the right of free speech to the Red Army Faction (RAF), even though he was critical of its actions. But whereas some Leftist intellectuals, notably Habermas, attacked the RAF for comparing itself positively to the Viet Cong (worrying about its “Left-Fascism”), Fried was far more willing to allow such comparisons, at least for the sake of argument. And he was particularly intrigued by the work and figure of Ulrike Meinhoff. See, e.g., GW 2: 269-71.

17. For Fried’s own, rather different reflection on Adorno’s famous phrase, see his poem “Fragen nach der Poesie seit Auschwitz” (Questions about poetry since Auschwitz) in his collection *100 Gedichte ohne Vaterland* (*100 Poems without Fatherland*, 1978) in GW 3: 393-94.

18. Later Jameson adds: “The question about poetry after Auschwitz has been replaced with that of whether you could bear to read Adorno and Horkheimer next to the pool” (248).

19. Fried was by no means the only intellectual to draw a parallel between Vietnam and European history. For the international response of playwrights and the mass media, see Alter.

20. For a related analysis of Barthes’ text see Trinh’s essay “The Plural Void: Barthes and Asia” (1982) in Trinh 209-222, and Chambers’ depiction of Barthes’ text: “We become aware that signs can be cast loose from their moorings in one system of thought, language, culture and history and acquire other, sometimes unrecognisable, perhaps incomprehensible, ones elsewhere. Such a semiotic movement of setting sign to sign, and appearance to appearance, on the surfaces of language and culture, does not avoid the question of significance, but rather supplements, extends and complicates it” (101).

21. Striking a similar chord, Pierre Schoendorffer’s self-reflexive documentary *The Anderson Platoon* (1966) opened with the narrative

voiceover stating, "I went back to rediscover the Vietnam I had left 13 years ago with the French Army, but except for a few poignant scenes I discovered above all America."

22. Fried located the origin of his ambivalent feelings towards America in the dropping of the first two atom bombs. Shortly before his death, in a posthumously published interview, he describes these bombings as "war crimes" ("Poetics and Politics" 60).

23. Brecht, "An die Nachgeborenen," in Brecht 41.

24. The topic of Fried's erotic poetry exceeds my essay, as does his take on women generally. Here let me say only that Fried was particularly acute in his criticism of poetry and literary criticism that in any way denigrated women. See his poem "Ein Frauenkenner" in GW 2: 324.

25. For a discussion of this relation, see Lorenz. Even his most erotic love poetry is not really subjective in any simple way, embodying as it does various *types and ideologies* of eroticism; and many themes with which a more subjective writer might have been obsessed (e.g., Fried's unsuccessful bout with cancer) were of surprisingly little interest to him in his poetry.

26. A poem in *und Vietnam und* responds directly to Brecht's. Entitled "Fragen eines später Geborenen" (Questions of one born later), it demands among other things—now in the context of protest against the Vietnam war—to know how long we must wait for the society of community and friendship that communism promises (GW 1: 398-99).

27. Within the ideological tradition in which Fried most specifically worked, we may think in the visual arts of John Heartfield, whose photomontages in the late 1920s and early 1930s cited verbatim the words of National Socialists—thus simultaneously allowing them to speak, but in a new context that deconstructed, redirected, and subverted their meaning. We can think also of more recent examples produced in the visual media, again by people presumably close to the spirit of Fried: e.g., Chris Marker in documentary films such as *Le joli mai* (1962/63), in which he shows the full ideological range of French response to the Algerian war by allowing those interviewed their unlimited say no matter what it might be. In German "documentary" theatre the work of Fried's contemporaries Rolf Hochhuth, Heiner Kipphardt, and Peter Weiss comes to mind; as does in photography that of, say, Barbara Kruger. Fried was also aware that his use of photomontage or journalistic technique in poetry has its parallels in American "language poets" such as Bob Perelman and Charles Bernstein. For a specific analysis of Fried's journalistic style and its specific applications to *und Vietnam und* see Holzner.

28. Actually, the two very different poets held each other in mutual if cautious respect. While this tack in dealing with Fried is by no means

universal, the tendency has been to show that it is too simple to say that Fried represents transparent political verse, whereas Celan represents apolitical hermetic verse—as if these were not hermeneutic categories both of which could be applied to both poets equally and not essential features, necessarily, of either writer's work. And we have begun to see that this complication of binary terms—"political" versus "apolitical"—would have been savored by Fried, at least up to a point. The problem, once again, occurs not so much when this critical trend becomes yet another way of folding the "marginal" Fried back into the canon by comparing him to a more "central" voice (to repeat, any form of cooption is to be expected sooner or later), but rather when critics thereby refuse to engage Fried's arguments and extratextual targets, which include themselves. This is certainly not to say that it is impossible or undesirable to compare Fried to other poets (and Celan may be more appropriate than most), only that this not be done to the exclusion of other possibilities of reading Fried and doing literary studies. In fact, Fried himself was passionately concerned with keeping the problematic of comparability and/or singularity, of marginality and/or centrality, alive throughout his itinerary as a writer. But he did so not just in the service of literature and literary criticism. For representative takes on the Celan and Fried relationship, see Holzner, Wellbery, and Goltschnigg.

29. Some of these strategies and traps, particularly as they pertain to his broadcasts to East Germany with the BBC German Service, are discussed in "Poetry and Politics" 61-62.

30. The appropriation and misappropriation of Biblical narratives and images is a dominant strategy of Holocaust and post-Holocaust poets, as is shown in the on-going work of Alvin Rosenfeld, Director of Jewish Studies at Indiana University.

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